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.

The Parliament 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 Parliament 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.

Through 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
Anti-Muslim monks: Sri Lanka redux?

Alex Bookbinder

Ashin Mettacara, a 29-year-old monk from Wanthoo 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 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-fu­ton 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 denial of any reflection on the state of ethnic relations in Myanmar and how acceptable outright hatred of Muslims had become.

We might be most surprising about this exchange is 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 Tamil 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 Buddhist’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 JHU to press the requisite ordination.

As in Myanmar, Buddhist monks 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 active in recent years. Their calls for ethnic and religious purity in Sri Lanka helped the government’s militaristic national-security agenda, and divert attention away from Rajapaksa’s systematic dismantling of Sri Lanka’s democratic institutions and national-security agenda.

While the Sangha in Myanmar have always played a role as both antagonists or advisors, its activism has 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 Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka would probably vehemently oppose the notion of 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 both sides during the 25-year-long civil war, has also been reduced to ostracism by nationalist monks and their supporters. Last September, monks and their supporters destroyed the ancient royal capital of Anuradhapura 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 Muslims 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 politised and polarised even before the war – took on a distinctly militant character as the war progressed. It is ironic that this virtul 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 18th 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 cozy 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 leadership needs 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.)
SHAN ethnic groups say the country’s current constitution must 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, 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 Os 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 Os.

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

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

SHAN call for federal union constitution

By El E Toe Lwin

In Tanintharyi townships, residents agreed that the Yadana gas pipeline to the Thai border, the coast, near the 63-kilometre-long pipeline, would receive assistance from the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Production (PTT-EP) and the Authority of Thailand Exploration and Production (PTT-EP) partners, Unocal, the Petroleum Authority of Thailand Exploration and Production (PTT-EP) and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).

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

“People are afraid to go home because of land mines. They can’t make their home because of land mines. People are told to pretend conditions are normal where ceasefire agreements have been signed,” said 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 K30 a unit and is available from 6:30pm to 10:30pm. If we had 24-hour electricity, we could learn how to use computers,” he said.

Ms Shah said Total planned to test 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 any more with solar in some households or villages,” she said.

Total E&P to boost socio-economic outreach
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 Letpadang Taung copper mine. The monks were protesting the planned expansion of the 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 Letpadang Taung mine during the early morning of November 29, more than 50 monks and villagers were wounded when police used water canons and incendiary devices to disperse the crowd. Two monks remain in critical condition.

“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.

Protesters that suffered 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 1am, 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 Okahtha, a monk from Masoeyein Monastery in Mandalay, arrived at the protest camps. Pic: Christopher Davy

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

Demonstrations on November 19. He urged for higher level official 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 or the president of the people. I want to see them come to an informed decision regarding the conflict over the Letpadang copper project.”

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 son 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.

“Translanted by Zaw Winn

From page 1
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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 capitalize 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 at the International Convention Centre-Myanmar on November 24 where they heard speeches from a wide variety of international experts, including academics from other ASEAN nations and Mr Saturnino ‘Jun’ Borras 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 Be, 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.

U Kyomin, the deputy director of the Forestry Department used the beginning of his presentation to praise the farmland law passed by the hluttaw 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 landowners, “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 terms.

U Win Tu, a lawyer from Yangon, told U Kyomin, “Only public officials understand the laws, the people don’t understand.”

He added, “[The public officials] who understand the laws only abusing 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 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 on Monday, 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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WASHINGTON — The most unlikely of political partners are driving an astonishing democratic transition in Burma.

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 neighbourbood's Cold War intrigue, as the Soviet Union, China and the United States each vied for strategic position and ideological corsairs.

Following a 1942 coup, the military justified the decades of misrule to come by the need to hold the country together with whatever force was 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 amvibiulence. She was delivered to the hotel from her solitary house arrest and we talked in the hotel's lounge until the sun set over the centre of the city, before I met privately with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as they had several times previously in Burma. Their partnership is an unlikely one, but 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,” the Nobel laureate said. “And so I met privately with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as they had several times previously in Burma. Their partnership is an unlikely one, but the symbolism of their encounter in New York was a powerful indication of the distance they, and their country, had covered.

Their relationship began with a shared hope 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.

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 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.

Their shared stake in a better future led both leaders to take off the gloves – she the indefatigable champion of international sainthood and he the insignia of the military institution that brought him to absolute power. Having done so, they can now proceed at a pace determined by each man and patriot, striving and struggling together for a new Burma. Along the way, they are inspiring us all.

The symbolism of their encounter in New York was a powerful indication of the distance they, and their country, had covered.
Lashio Declaration looks to improve national healthcare

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

GENERAL practitioners have signed the Lashio Declaration, which outlines actions in the medical field 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 a short- to medium-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 Practitioners’ Society of the Myanmar Medical Association.

“The first time for a declaration such as this and this is a milestone towards achieving our goals,” said Dr Myint Oo, secretary of the General Practitioners’ Society in Yangon.

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

The Lashio Declaration calls for urgent and effective steps to ensure all citizens can access the nation’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 five 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.

“People need to work at Lashio hospital. There’s no oxygen down there so we don’t think they’ve corroded,” said Dr Myint Oo added.

Aid archeologist Andy Brockman said it could be “one of the most fascinating discoveries in aviation archaeology”, while it would help fill in the picture about the war in southeast Asia and the commitment Myanmar was prepared to make.

British dig team hunts for buried Spitfires

By Robin Millard

LONDON – A British team preparing to dig for a rumoured host 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 believes there could be 36 of the iconic single-seat British fighter aircraft buried in sealed crates 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 is now 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 dads could potentially be the last remaining 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.”

“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 researcher and gathered eight eyewitnesses, including US servicemen who dug the holes and Myanmar locals who shifted teak timber to seal the crates in.

“There are no documents, they said they were coming back to Britain,” Cundall said.

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$6.6 million at present.

Cundall’s share of any planes found will be 30 percent, his agents will have 20 percent, while the Myanmar government will keep 50 percent, 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 a working order within three years. He said his understanding was that Myanmar’s Spitfires will be put up for sale.

Project leader David Cundall says there are more than 36 Spitfire planes may be buried at the site.

“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, its 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 December 1.

He added that the clinic plans to provide care to both Rakhine and Rakhine-Myanmars.

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 that started in June,” said U Than Tun.

Doctors Sans Frontieres (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 demanded 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 and local residents before opening the clinic. They will work with the Rakhine ART while 285 patients are receiving ART in Rakhine State and about 310 patients are receiving ART in Sittwe.

“We need resources 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 310 patients are receiving ART in Sittwe, he added.

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 service.

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

By phone on December 1.

“Unfolding a child’s full potential – English and Burmese”

“Sat, Wise, Sat, Wise, Sat”

“1000 minutes”

By Robin Millard

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, its 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 December 1.

He added that the clinic plans to provide care to both Rakhine and Rakhine-Myanmars.

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 that started in June,” said U Than Tun.

Doctors Sans Frontieres (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 demanded 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 and local residents before opening the clinic. They will work with the Rakhine ART while 285 patients are receiving ART in Rakhine State and about 310 patients are receiving ART in Sittwe, he added.

“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 310 patients are receiving ART in Sittwe, he added.

“We need the resources who are able to represent and speak for the people living with HIV/AIDS in Rakhine State,” 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 service.

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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 U Aung Mya.

“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

Death toll rises in train fire inferno

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

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

On November 9 at about 8.50am, six petrol tanks were loaded on to a train cart that departed from Mykanhun railway station to Myitkyina. The train cart was derailed near Chaukty Village in Kanbala township, 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 Kanbala Hospital on November 27.

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

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 the speed of the train during an interview with MRTV broadcasted on November 16. 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 Kanbala Hospital at 075-27013 and the head of the hospital on 09-4713070.

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 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 Hlut Khun from Nghetni 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 regional 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.
Balloons festival celebrates Tazaungdine

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 49 smaller 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 Thabeekyin 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 got excited as Tazaungdine nears. We were very pleased to see the balloon we launched flying into the sky,” said one balloon team leaders.

K3.5 million was given to the first prize winners, K2 million for the first place seinnapan balloon category and K2 million for the first place in the Tazaungdine balloon category.

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

“With the wind power, the balloons moved quickly towards the mountains” said U Kyein Aye, chairman of the Pyin Oo Lwin administration office. -Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Disables 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 will enable the racers to develop confidence and empower the racers both physically and mentally, so that the disabled in Myanmar are encouraged to pursue equal opportunities.

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 the 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 on because some businessmen have monopolised the land set aside for the development,” said U Mg Mg Tun Aung, chairman of Myingyan Industrial Zone’s Peace and Supervisory Committee.

The Myingyan Industrial Zone includes 20,000 square-foot plots. Of these, eight plots are being used as a municipal market, four are built as a Myaelat Yadanar Hall, security, four are built as a municipal market, four are built as a Myaelat Yadanar Hall, security, four are built as a municipal market, four have been granted ownership over by Mandalay City Development Authority, four have been granted ownership over by Mandalay City Development Authority, four have been granted ownership over by Mandalay City Development Authority, four have been granted ownership over by Mandalay City Development Authority.

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.

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**Stop police violence, says 88 Generation**

**By Ei Ei Toe Lwin**

THE 88 Generation Students have denounced the police for using excessive force to quell protests against the National Prosperity gold mines in Moehti Moemi, Mandalay.

Protestors in Letpadawng, who have been angry at the mine for almost two years, were attacked by police on Tuesday.

“This reason why we are angry at the police. They are using violence against the protesters," he said.

With police in Moehti Moemi on a night-time patrol near their compound in Letpadawng, the group of miners, who are unhappy with the Occupation forces in Letpadawng, said that they are violating the law.

The police said they were arresting the miners "to maintain public order." The miners have been in Letpadawng for a month.

They said that they were not contractors, but "local people," and that they were "just doing their job." They said that they were "not interested in fighting with the police," and that they were just "doing their thing.

The miners also said that they were not interested in fighting with the police, and that they were "just doing their job.

They said that they were "not interested in fighting with the police," and that they were just "doing their thing.

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THOUGH 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 Kyunsu township. “It will 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 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, Mawlamyine 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 resuscitating [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 fail 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 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 Hledan,” he said.

“Column strength can be detected only through specialist 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 Yadana Shwe Htun Construction in Botataung 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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**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 in southern Myanmar, remains a point of 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 wave of protests among residents in neighbouring Thailand who say a similar development has devastated their community and their health.

**Mab Ta Phut Industrial Estate**

Mab Ta Phut is a key economic development zone in Rayong province. On the other hand, local residents have long complained that the chemicals have also affected their health.

"Local residents in Mab Ta Phut said they had heard stories of deaths in the industrial zone there were made without full information. It's not even enough to just believe what is said," said Mr Loong.

**Local residents in Mab Ta Phut**

Local residents in Mab Ta Phut said they had heard stories of deaths in the industrial zone there were made without full information. It's not even enough to just believe what is said, "said Mr Loong.

"…we will be looking to President Thein Sein and Barack Obama at their historic meeting in Yangon on November 19. Pic: Kaung Htet

**Mr Della-Giacoma explained that while the award acknowledges the fundamental role President Thein Sein has played in the country’s transition, the ICG is well aware that this work will persist.**

"We will be looking to President Thein Sein and the Myanmar leadership to address the persistent 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 legitimate concerns 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 and encampments and uniformed military turning their backs on peaceful protesters at the Monywa copper mine provided an unwanted VIP presentation of the challenges Myanmar had hoped to avoid.

"As this week’s violent break- up of the copper mine protest demonstrates, it is time for us to look at how to proceed with the process of transition," Mr U Thein Sein the honour, but..." Mr Loong.

"We don’t feel sorry when we note that there are concerns about the project," said Mr Loong.

"We felt sorry when we note that there are concerns about the project," said Mr Loong.

Mr Loong Noi recounted his experience of living in Mab Ta Phut.
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 activism. As he quickly found out, it is a job that in Myanmar carries enormous consequences. He was first arrested in 1988 spending two years in Yangon's Insein Prison before being released and was not released until in September of that year and January. 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, including well-known democracy activist U Myint Aye, and members of Military Intelligence. In September, President U Thein Sein freed 514 political 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 over 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, 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 sell 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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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.

“Everyone’s trying to understand what is the right way to compete, how do we best promote our services and products and be able to understand what is the best action to take. I would expect a positive things,” said Mr. Jones, vice chairman of the MPU’s management committee.

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

JCB is also a future bright spot for the luxury car sector. Year-on-year sales of the high-end Jaguar Land Rover’s gaze is focused upon the luxury sports utility vehicle, despite a slowdown in sales this year.

“Everyone’s trying to understand what is the right way to compete, how do we best promote our services and products and be able to understand what is the best action to take. I would expect a positive things.” – Reuters

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 1999. 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 overtake Myanmar in the luxury car sector.

The government’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.

“Everyone’s trying to understand what is the right way to compete, how do we best promote our services and products and be able to understand what is the best action to take. I would expect a positive things.” – Reuters

Dilapidated transmission in power generation, planning; rehabilitation and the upgrading of coal- and gas-fired power plants in Yangon.

The assessment further says the construction of a 500kV transmission line from upper Myanmar to Yangon would be integral, comprehensive plan for the oil and gas subsector, and the rehabilitation and upgrading of coal- and gas-fired power plants, refineries, and natural gas and hydrogen power stations.

Clearly, strengthening Myanmar’s energy sector is critical to reducing poverty and enhancing the medium- and long-term development prospects of the country.

“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, excluding US$1.2 billion,” the assessment says.

“Everyone’s trying to understand what is the right way to compete, how do we best promote our services and products and be able to understand what is the best action to take. I would expect a positive things.” – Reuters

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

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

“Natural gas is Myanmar’s most important source of expert earnings and the oil and gas subsector accounts for a third of total foreign direct investment in Myanmar,” the assessment says.

“The first advantage is that we are trying to build up these facilities and be able to provide services for foreign and domestic banks are more easily to enter relationships with international banks, leaving them better able to provide services for foreign banks,” said U Mya Than, vice chairman of the MPU’s management committee.

After the United States eased its sanctions, many financial institutions from 60 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, have seen sales in Thailand overtake Myanmar in the luxury car sector.

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 1999. 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 overtake Myanmar 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. Jaguar Land Rover’s gaze is focused upon 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 the luxury sports utility vehicle, despite a slowdown in sales this year.”
MPT backtracks on mobile internet fees, for now

**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 Thet 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 MPT 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 Thet Wai said the company’s real estate businesses contributed K1.5 billion (about US$1.7 million) in dividends to the company – about 87 percent of its total revenues for the year. He added that the company’s agriculture divisions looked promising for future growth.

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

“We have been one of the few companies in the past 20 years to invest in the real estate business. We are going to build apartments for workers who are living in the center of the city,” he said.

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, as part of its medium-term planning, a functioning Myanmar stock exchange will emerge in 2015, which has approximately three years to go.

FMI plots bright future at AGM

**By Hto Aung**

MPT has announced its intention to change the system of mobile internet fees, which had been due to be recalculated.

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

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

Kyaw Thu, a 28-year-old IT officer, said: “I’m so glad to hear this news because if MPT uses a volume-based pricing system, it is going to be more expensive. We have to wait and see what pricing system MPT chooses to use in future,” he said.

Under the proposed changes users would be charged for the amount of bandwidth they used, 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 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 to see increased prices as a result of the proposed changes. Some had even requested permission to encourage businesses to up hold the price structure and prevent prices from increasing.

Yoma Bank regained its full banking license on August 1 and plans to resume banking facilities soon, he said. Yoma was one of four banks that were accused by monetary laundering in 2003 and had its license suspended.

U Htun Win, chief engineer of MPT’s Mobile Department, said: “The previous announcement has been cancelled.”

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Hitachi establishes Yangon branch

**By Aye Thidar Kyaw**

Hitachi have supplied power generation equipment to power plants here since the 1950s and have been selling refrigerators and other domestic appliances by foreign importers, Hitachi Asia Electronics opened a branch in the FMI Centre in Pabedan township, downtown Yangon, on November 22.

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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 re-establish, or in some cases re-establish, a presence in Myanmar was fired by KPMG, which hosted a cocktail party at 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’s 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 added.

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

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 something that doesn’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 last May. We apologise for any confusion caused by this error.

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U Kyi Win Associates

for MICHELIN RECHERCHE ET TECHNIQUE S.A

P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 372416

Dated: 3rd December, 2012
China manufacturing grows for second month

PARIS – A mammoth battle of brain power could leave the world's top steelmaker ArcelorMittal hobbled and damaged, raising doubts about its future, especially if the government is forced to follow through on its threat to find a buyer for two outdated 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 offers for the entire Florange site which has facilities which ArcelorMittal wants to keep.

The French government has confirmed it will 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, although Chirac would have speculated could be Russian.

ArcelorMittal has vowed 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.

Back down on closing the blast furnaces and cutting staff could prove damaging to Arcelor, which plunged into a quarterly net loss of US$709m in the third quarter from July to September.

"AnceIorMittal fights French govt

BELIING – 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 indicators 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 (PMI) reached 50.6 last month, up from 50.2 in October and 49.8 in September.

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

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

Premier Wen Jiabao and Commerce Minister Chen Deming have both said 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.

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India quarterly growth slows to 5.3pc

By Penny MacRae

NEW DELHI – India’s economy grew 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 recent 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 blit 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.

China reported last month third-quarter growth of 7.4pc, its weakest performance since the global financial crisis, but other data suggested budget 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 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 and mobile acceptance, and 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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U Kyi Win Associates

for Hyundai Corporation

P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 372416 Dated: 3rd December, 2012
By Stuart Deed

THE former Ministry of Railways head office and the surrounding 10 acres in Yangon has been sold to generate cashflow to Yoma Strategic to fund a new 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 luxury 4-star hotel.

“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-old listed sites in Yangon under the Heritage Trust, and there’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 Meeyahhta 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 apartment towers, two hotels and one retail mall. The expected cost of the project is about $250 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 upscale our investment. Given all the foreign investment interest in Myanmar now, we do see the potential 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 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 us 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 $81.101 million of equity by selling 192,803,000 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 $81.101 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 complete 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 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.

“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 190,000 square metres or so.

“However, it will be the focal point. In terms of the traffic, the ingress and egresses are designed so that you see as much of the front 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
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 ... 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."

"Right now the Grand Mee Ya Hta sits quite close to the middle of the site so without taking it apart we cannot space out the mixed use new buildings efficiently and sensibly."
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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 Netanyau 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 stinging verdict that sets up Prime Minister David Cameron for a political battle.

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 “wrecked havoc with the lives of innocent people” and ignored the codes that it had itself set up.

He said that while the press served the country “very well for the vast majority of the time”, its behaviour “at times, can only be described as outrageous.”

The prime minister was over 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.

Murdock was forced to close the News of the World newspaper over the scandal.

Victims of phone hacking and press harassment welcomed the inquiry’s findings and asked Cameron to implement them in full.

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

“I have some serious concerns,” 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.

Opposition Labour leader Ed Miliband also said 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 established 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
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 Kahlwaji, expert at the Institute for Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA).

“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 Riad Kahlwaji told AFP.

The jet fell on an olive grove (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 without 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.

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 Riad Kahlwaji.

The jet’s fall in rebel-held areas will become safe and insurgents will be able to go on the offensive without fearing the aerial threat.”

“Now the Russians will certainly give the Syrians more sophisticated equipment,” – AFP

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SHWE TAUNG DEVELOPMENT CO., LTD
WASHINGTON – Analysis by with lawmakers of both could have an enormous – but to allow rates for the – which threatened to trigger a – or unauthorised use of the said – or hair lotions. – to a bipartisan agreement – and dampen job creation. – for the White House, more

used to charges that Obama as president has been able to strike various interest groups in pursuit of passing legislation, divest fraud charges of grubby political maneuvering. 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. “Think it’s very important to frame this 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 then most 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 revenues 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 damaged job creation. The parties are also feuding about where to cut spending, with some Republicans opposed to any trimming of military budget and Democrats guarding sacred 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 forces serious bargaining in December. – 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. US 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 impairing 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 outside 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 hold 173 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 consumes more than $1 million a year – but also 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

Servicewomen fight for right to combat role

LOS ANGELES – Four US soldiers and 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 those women who want 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 security roles over the past decade in Afghanistan and Iraq, with more than 140,000 jobs. In February, the Pentagon announced changes to the regulations that will allow women to serve in more than 14,000 jobs, mostly in the Army and Marine Corps, that have 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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Leg restraints in an interview room at the detention centre at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Pic: AFP

Manning tells of suicidal thoughts

FORT MEADE, Maryland – WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning admitted at a pre-trial hearing on November 29 that he considered committing suicide as he took the stand on November 29 for the first time at a pre-trial hearing. 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 set to settle out of court

NEW YORK – Disgraced former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn will settle out of court with a Manhattan maid who accused him of sexual assault, ending a sordid 18-month saga, the New York Times reported on November 30. Quoting unidentified sources “with knowledge of the talks” 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
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 argues.

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

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.

But it also notes that the first reports on the raid killing Osama bin Laden came from a Pakistani 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 advertising, sponsored users, donors, patrons or phishing; 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 90,000 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 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 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 Ana Maria Villafañe, 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 is also on trial, including former interior minister Oscar Collina.

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
IN headier days, Ed Kennedy personified the hard-drinking, hard-charging war correspondent of another era. The first hard-drinking, hard-Kennedy personified the century.

By Manuel Roig-Franzia

The first hard-drinking, hard-Kennedy personified the century. The biggest stories of the censorship to file one of a star correspondent defied a moment of courage when of a singular awarded a Pulitzer to be posthumously

...of the military revoked his credentials, but that 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 his little phone that he happened to know wasn't monitored. He began to transcribe it. 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 small newspaper that he turned into an award winner, Cochran said.

It was a steep drop from days as a war correspondent, but Kennedy seemed to embrace it nonetheless, writing his own editorials, covering city councils meetings and editing copy. The AP's deputy editor, who was a young reporter at the paper, said Kennedy "walked into Kennedy's office and seeing the framed front page of the president, he said..."That's not 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 city where he had no other senior reporters did. And the beat Kenneth Kennedy had bockered across the newsroom at him after he had 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. A father. She recalls a devoted, enthusiastic dad who, at times, inexplicably would spend her teenage summers in Monterey with her chain-smoking, book-loving, exacting reporter of a father. 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 again 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 Edward Kennedy (forehead), 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. He would have written his undated surrender in 1945.

Edward Kennedy, Curley wrote, was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of American journalism. -- The Washington Post

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Edward Kennedy, Curley wrote, was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of American journalism. -- The Washington Post
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 a sex scandal engulfing the corporation. BBC Trust chairman Chris Patten said 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 the biggest suspects in pedophilia. Entwistle was "a decent man who was overwhelmed by a situation that would not join in the "general trashing" of the character of a man who spent most of his career at the BBC."

"However much they are", Patten said 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.

Patten admitted that 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 programme 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. "However much they are", 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 joined governments into naming 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

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 millimetres (0.08 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, a US firm Tempo Analytics told AFP.

"I would say that a metre of sea rise by 2100, is probably the century is probably close to what you would see 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."

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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 Norgaard, 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 35 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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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
Beijing – China’s cabinet has approved plans for a new official credit card aimed at increasing consumption, in what analysts say is a major source of popular unrest, a move announced on November 30.

The government could increase payments to 10-fold yet still be insufficient to defuse public anger, Beijing-based Life Time Times said.

China’s State Council passed the draft amendment on November 29, saying in a statement that “too much rural land has been expropriated too quickly”, a trend that “affects stability in the countryside.”
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 seas”, 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 administrators 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. – APP

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 warning about smoking’s dangers.

Even the last remnants of the cigarette brands’ logos remain on the packets, with just the words “tobacco product” visible.

Health Minister Tanya Plibersek said the packets, which have survived constitutional challenge from major tobacco firms, were about making smoking less attractive.

“By prohibiting 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 their packets.

Plibersek said tobacco companies had reported no change in 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.

A study of 1,700 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. – APP

Crisis looms over impeachment bid

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka’s parliament and Supreme Court were headed for a showdown over government plans to reduce the president’s power — 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 Rajapakshe who is also President Mahinda Rajapakshe’s eldest brother.

Rights groups have seen the latest impeachment move as an attempt by President Rajapakshe to tighten his grip on power after cracking down on 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 Rajapakshe 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, annulled 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 no “totoa” of truth in allegations against her of financial and professional misconduct. – APP
5th Anniversary of NOW! Weekly Magazine
YFS holds student film screening

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 said.

After the screening the filmmakers were invited on stage to share their experiences making their films, and also take questions from the audience.

Ms. Merrison said the event also advertised the work of YFS as a hub of capacity building in the development and arts sectors.

“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.

“Some work in particular that was under consideration had the atmosphere, the feeling and the sentiment of toil spent burning wood to make charcoal. When we evaluated it from an environmental point of view, we ended up rejecting it,” he said.

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.

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 use 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 Nyin Min.

Mr. Nyin Min 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 Nyin 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 Nyin 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 Nyin 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 Luwwun Maung winning national literary awards and enjoying a circulation of 15,000 copies in 1879.

“But drama dies a death now, and readers hardly show any interest in the genre,” he said.

U Nyin Min said there were many fine works that didn’t win National Literary Awards because they didn’t 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 Sawsawee, Shwe Amutae, Tun Foundation and Pakokku U Ohn Nyein Award.

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 been granted the award.”

The other National Literary Awards winners were Ye Myat Tin in the Collected Short Stories category; Pyinnmana Maung Ni Thin for Collected Poems; Kaychian U Hla Myint (Belles-lettres); Natmauk Tun Shein (Myanmar Culture and Arts), Maung Seinn Naung (Children’s Literature); U Kyi Myint (Translation – General Knowledge); U Kyi Myint (Translation – Aesthetic); U Win Min (General Knowledge – Art); Dr Tin Maung Swe (General Knowledge – Science); Thaug Nyunt Thu (General Knowledge – Applied Science); Ko Ko Maung Gyi (Politics); and U Thein (Aesthetic English Language – General Knowledge).

The awards ceremony will be held at the Yangon International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on December 14.
**Human rights films screened in Yangon**

*By Nuam Bawi*

A SCREENING of documentary films about human rights was held at Aung Saik San Culture Centre in Yangon on November 23 and 24, organised by the MyanMar Times.

Five films were screened: “Best-Lah Punk” and “Hak Dinaikalin” (Myanmar), “Phim Bond” (Vietnam), “To 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 make 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 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. They are beyond the MyanMar Times Film Festival this past January, I noticed that many people in the audience wanted to get the message of some of the documentary films intended to be screened.”

“We need to raise public awareness about documentaries to make someone gets the message to the filmmakers are trying hard,” he said.

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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**Timetable**

December 3 - 9, 2012

**Human rights films screened in Yangon**

**By Anand Chandra**

YANGON – As Myanmar’s censors loosen their grip, one of the acclamed authors has plans to republish her novel about two gay lovers, restoring sex-laced passages once deemed too explicit.

Chunks of paragraphs from Nu Nu Yi’s 1994 novel ‘Smile As They Bow’ — one of her most successful works — have been banned as “immoral” and “indecent” for decades.

But this month was something of a personal triumph for the 68-year-old author, whose subject matter reflected the shadows of outright military rule.

No one is cheering that much has changed, however. Even as Nu Nu Yi’s novel, which has been reissued in a heavily censored original version, is likely to be the first of many reprints, it is still an uphill battle for any Myanmar author to have their work published.

Nu Nu Yi’s novel has faced multiple cuts and been banned for decades. But the quasi-civilian government that took office last year has effectively abolished direct censorship, as it emerges from the month-long documentary film festival that celebrates human rights.

A SCREENING of documentary films on November 23 and 24, organised by the all-powerful censorship office — seen as a key arbiter of all that is fit for public consumption — was certainly a milestone. The festival that celebrates human rights freedoms was a welcome change, the threat of censorship was a blessing and a curse: Bond is both a hero for a large portion of the former military rulers — all unthinkable under military rule.

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 the world’s tightest press freedom.

Despite this, the strength of the book lies in its rich narrative style. The story unfolds in the meandering manner in which the story unfolds, offering readers a clear reflection of the unchanging, flowing atmosphere at Taungbyone, where festivals 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 struck in his head for a large portion of the narration, which is both realistic and poetic, as it is simultaneously one the most fascinating, and downright irritating, persons ever to appear in the pages of a work of fiction.

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**Myanmar author explores new literary freedoms**

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 Jang 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 few works of fiction by a Myanmar writer to have been meticulously translated, professionally edited and distributed by a major publishing company on 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 read and writes Myanmar very well.” Nu Nu Yi told The MyanMar Times shortly before the translation was published. “His wife is Myanmar and he helped me translate as close to the original as possible. She even demonstrated a hat (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, ‘Jiang Rong’s ‘Wolf Totem’ which had won the state-sponsored National Literary Award in 1993.

“They chose it because they felt Smile As They Bow reflects Myanmar culture better,” 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 ravens.

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 the world’s tightest press freedom, allowing readers to experience the noise and chaos for themselves.

While some critics complained of a weak or rauccous, bacchanalian festival, allowing readers to experience the noise and chaos for themselves.

For decades they complained of a weak or rauccous, bacchanalian festival, allowing readers to experience the noise and chaos for themselves.

But Nu Nu Yi cautions that self-censorship is a fact of life in Myanmar.

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.

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Chef Pang who brings you the finest in
Chinese cuisine.

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The only neighborhood pub in town with
daily Happy Hours from five to nine p.m.
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open for lunch. Great Pub, Great Grub.

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confectioners present a special festive
menu featuring endless holiday favorites:
Stollen, ginger bread houses, yule logs...

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Traders Café
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the heart of Yangon, with live stations,
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**TIMEOUT**

December 3 - 9, 2012

With label changes, wine battle shifts to US

By Suzanne Mustacich

BORDEAUX — With names like Pinot Ch de La Mission and Villa Chamber d’Amour, French wine producers are catering to US wine-drinkers. While appellations in pursuit of a new generation of label-conscious consumers.

Behind the trends lies a ferocious fight for market share with New World wines in which the US is about to become the next battleground.

So far, only a few of the wines that use Vin de France (wine supply) 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 authoritie...
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**Red Wine**

Tropiche Astica Merlot-Malbec 2009

Smells like fresh berries (with a hint of mint), tastes like fresh berries (with a medium of mocha), and finishes in a flash with fresh berries.

**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.

**FOOD REVIEW**

**Biryani for the brave**

The staff at Kyet Shar Biryanis 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, 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, mortuaries 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.

**Chapter 2: Phyo’s Cooking Adventure**

**Chicken noodle soup, Vietnam style**

**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**

2 chicken breasts with skin

1 tablespoon of soy sauce

A bit of black pepper

220-250g of chicken

**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.

**FOOD REVIEW**

**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 (% of chicken)
  - 5 big cloves unpeeled garlic
  - 100g of unpeeled ginger
  - 3 unpeeled onions
  - 1 cup of fish sauce
  - 1 teaspoon brown sugar
  - 1 tablespoon of salt
  - 4 liters of water
- Spice pouch
  - 4 cloves
  - 1 teaspoon black peppercorn
  - 1 cinnamon stick
- Flat rice noodles
  - 750g of fresh flat rice noodles (nyat kaukswe) or vermicelli
- Serve with:
  - 1 onion (sliced, washed in water and patted dry)

**PREPARATION**

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**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 onions, garlic and ginger. This will give more fragrance.

**QUAFFING QUOTE**

“Food and wine and friendship matter more than almost anything I can think of. Together they involve the heart and soul 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.
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 Nives 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.
### Tourists in Mandalay

The former royal capital, and today’s top tourist destination, offers plenty of cultural attractions and natural beauty to explore. The city is home to some of Myanmar’s most famous temples, including the world-renowned Mahamuni Buddha Temple, as well as picturesque gardens like the Shwenandaw Monastery.

### Domestic Airlines

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**Discover Mandalay**

The Myanmar Marketing Committee is producing a new publication titled "Discover Mandalay", with the aim of providing focused information on the former royal capital, and to encourage visitors to stay longer in the city. For more information and details on advertising in "Discover Mandalay", contact the MMC Office by email (pounder.mmymarketing@mm.org.mm).

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People, pooches 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 Pak, and his most recent experiment, JCB #5, is a spicy $152 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 Moulis Rouge atmosphere that seems over-the-top for laid-back California. Still, visitors ooh and ah.

"I love wine," says Boisset, handling me a glass of a $150 crystal decanters, part of Boisset's partnership with the luxury glass company.

Light pings off glass cabinets filled with Bascault 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 negotiant 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. Last late 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

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International Airlines

**Air Asia (FD)**
33, Aunc Ifa Pagoda Rd, Ground Fl, Parkview Hotel, Yangon. Tel: 309332, 310932, 310190, 310139, 310426, Fax: 310102

**Air Bagan Ltd (WB)**
6, Shwe Shwe Dair Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 310332, 310324, 310322, Fax: 310107

**Air China (CA)**
Building 10, corner of Pyay Rd and Haka Aye Pagoda Rd. Hotel, Yangon, 7 min, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 309215, 309392

**Air India**
7, Shwe Bon Tower, Thar St, Pabedan Tsp. Tel: 250297-98, 250728, Fax: 268178

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Bangkok Airways (PG)
#G252, 3rd Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, Yangon. Tel: 262564-26, Fax: 250519

**Malaysia Airlines (MH)**
335931, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel.: 387348, 261007 ext: 100, 101, 121, 122 Fax: 261122

**Myanmar Airways International (BM)**
38-42, Sakura Tower 339, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, Yangon. Tel: 262563, Fax: 250726

Silk Air (MI)
339, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, 2nd Floor, Sakura Tower, Yangon. Tel: 250287-99, Fax: 250295

Thai Airways (TG)
Room No. 101, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, Yangon. Tel: 250286-88, Fax: 250285

Vietnam Airlines (VN)
319-321, Bogayaye Aung San Rd, Tall Building, Yangon. Tel: 250286, Fax: 250286

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INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

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<th>Arrival (Local)</th>
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All-Myanmar art exhibition to kick off the New Year

By Nyee Ei El Ei Htwe

The Myanmar Traditional Art and Handicrafts Artists 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 Wirasa 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 The exhibition will also feature 10 traditional arts in Myanmar: pan chii painting, pan tom (stone sculpture), pan dein (totem decorative work in relation with stucco), pan din (making items in bronze, copper or brass), pan dein (wood), pan dun (weaving), pan bu (wood sculpting), pan bu (blanc de chine), pan put (turnery), pan yoon (lacquerware) and pi yon (marble and jade).

“We have our traditional arts, and it is important 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 in the country. “To forge links between established artists and new faces, we plan to include works by 500 artists in this exhibition,” he said.

“I have served as a judge in 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 Go, said most of art work 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 on December 25 deadline,” he said. “Most of the other arts and crafts forms destined for painting and sculpture, so these will be the focus of the exhibition.”

He added that he did not anticipate any problem with the last exhibition for the whole of Myanmar’s artists was held in 2006.”

Ceremony celebrates revised Bible translation

By Zon Pann Pwint

A CEREMONY was held last month at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Yangon to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Reverend Charles Edward Garrad, who in the early 20th century worked in Myanmar as a Christian missionary in Myanmar. At the ceremony, which occurred on November 25, clergy were presented with copies of Rev Garrad’s 2012 edition, translated into the Burmese Bible. Then they made a commitment to implement the 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 1927, and it was published in 1927. Known as the Garrad Bible, it is used by churches, Christian colleges and many Christians for personal study.

“The Burma Bible Society established artists and new friends are to be acclaimed and encouraged 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. You will need the bravery for foolishness. Use meditation to cultivate thoughts of freedom, and remember that making too many commitments can lead to confusion. 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. Beware of the sin 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 in wrong directions. Take the time to understand yourself, and try to discover a new paradigm of life that will swing your will, your soul, your destiny. The different relationships is required to understand the value of others.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 9 Fhoo, 113, Thaman Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: willambawse@gmail.com
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Job opportunities for the following positions:

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   - Position: M/F 1 post
   - Location: Yangon
   - Experience: Minimum 4 years experience in office management
   - A strong sense of organizational skills, excellent communication and writing skills
   - Application closing date: 20th December 2012

2. **Financial Assistant**
   - Position: M/F 1 post
   - Location: Yangon
   - Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in finance
   - A strong sense of organizational skills, excellent communication and writing skills
   - Application closing date: 20th December 2012

3. **Office Executive**
   - Position: M/F 1 post
   - Location: Yangon
   - Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in office management
   - A strong sense of organizational skills, excellent communication and writing skills
   - Application closing date: 20th December 2012

4. **Office Driver**
   - Position: M/F 1 post
   - Location: Yangon
   - Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in office management
   - A strong sense of organizational skills, excellent communication and writing skills
   - Application closing date: 20th December 2012

TO APPLY

Interested persons are encouraged to send their CVs (format: MS Word, PDF, Excel), a recent photograph and copies of academic transcripts to the following address by 10th December 2012.

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CARE Int’l in Myanmar,
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- Application closing date: 20th December 2012

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- Application closing date: 20th December 2012

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**Office Driver**
- Position: M/F 1 post
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- Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in office management
- A strong sense of organizational skills, excellent communication and writing skills
- Application closing date: 20th December 2012

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- Application closing date: 20th December 2012
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 28th April 2013.”

Officially, that means that is 19 nations and territories from throughout Asia/Oceania will come to compete in the prestigious Davis Cup, including United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Turkmenistan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia.

Vieira calls for tougher action against racists

LONDON – Former Arsenal and France midfielder Patrick Vieira has called for 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 young stars, says he has 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.

But against a backdrop of high-profile incidents involving players, such as the disqualification of 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 racism, 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 anymore, 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 if you do it again, the punishments should be really hard.”

Asian football body says its ‘ready to bury Hammam era’

SINGAPORE – Asia’s football body is finally looking ready to turn the page on the 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 early 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 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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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) revealed proposals to amend the rules of golf to 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. Playing the game has been to grip the club with the hands and anchor the club to your body, and clearly this is anchoring.

South Africa born Player, one of just five golfers to have won all four majors – The Masters, US Open, British Open and US PGA Championship, told Sky Sports News: “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 98th minute, Guirado caught Myanmar off-side and fed to David Htan, who fired a left-footed shot straight at Sacapaño.

The following day the Azkals were eliminated from the competition after a 2-0 loss to the Philippines at Bangkok’s Supachalasai Stadium on November 30.