China vows to respect findings of mine probe

But cancelling Letpadaung will deter potential foreign investors, warns Chinese ambassador

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

CHINA’S ambassador to Myanmar has said his country will accept the decision of the Letpadaung Investigation Commission provided its report is balanced and accurate but warned that halting the controversial mine project will harm Myanmar’s image with foreign investors.

The commission, which was formed on December 1 and is chaired by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has been tasked with probing whether the copper mine project is in the long-term interests of the state and the people and to submit a report with recommendations by the end of January 2013.

“We will accept [its recommendations] if they have good advice to create stronger mutual cooperation between Myanmar and China,” Mr Li Junhua told reporters at the Chinese embassy in Yangon on December 7.

He said he welcomed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s explanation at a press conference on December 6 about how the commission planned to approach its tasks and her emphasis on bilateral negotiations that meet Myanmar’s laws and regulations. However, these problems happened because people lack access to this information. So, they misunderstand,” he said.

“If people aren’t content with [the project] they can claim their wants in right ways. If both sides get angry and make confrontation, we cannot get any agreement. Moreover, if they stop the project without knowing detailed information, there is no benefit for both sides in the future.”

Mr Li said the Chinese investor in the Monywa copper mine project, Wanbao mining, began partnering with army-run Myanma Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) in 2010. Wanbao is a subsidiary of state-owned arms manufacturer China North Industries Corporation, better known

However, Mr Li refused to say how China would respond if the commission decided the project should be stopped.

He said that unhappiness over Chinese investments in Myanmar focused on only two projects – the Myitsone dam and Letpadaung mine expansion – and the main criticisms were over relocation and compensation, environmental impacts and profit sharing.

“We made a contract with Myanmar after jointly discussing all issues, such as relocation, compensation, environmental protection and profit sharing, through bilateral negotiations that meet Myanmar’s laws and regulations. However, these problems happened because people lack access to this information. So, they misunderstand,” he said.

“If people aren’t content with [the project] they can claim their wants in right ways. If both sides get angry and make confrontation, we cannot get any agreement. Moreover, if they stop the project without knowing detailed information, there is no benefit for both sides in the future.”

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MYANMAR is undergoing phenomenal sociopolitical changes. We all hope these will lead progressively towards greater democratization. There are likely to be changes in the governance and political system based on democratic principles and practices. In this scenario, all the elements of society, both inside and outside the government, will also with time take on a more democratic shape. In this context, it is accepted that substantial and significant differences exist between Western and oriental Eastern cultures in terms of social values, attitudes and behaviour.

The original basis of our culture is essentially that of a traditional agricultural society. More significantly, we can be best described as a "collectivist" society, whereas Western nations and cultures are more "individualistic" societies. In other words, in our culture the group, be it family, community or something else, is more important than the individual.

The term "culture shock" is used to express what people in one culture experience when exposed to another, radically different one. Perhaps those in collectivistic cultures experience culture shock when encountering individualistic societies than vice versa.

Our traditional social values and mores, such as politeness and courtesy in interpersonal relations, are often beneficial for relationships. We also have great respect and a tendency to care for our parents, elders and relatives. The nature of our basic social unit is an extended family, not a nuclear family. In other words, in our culture the group, be it family, community or something else, is more important than the individual.

Almost all of these social and cultural values are integral parts of our culture. Many cultures like this tend to be much more personal than "personalistic"; meaning, we tend to care for our parents, elders and relatives. We also have great respect and a tendency to care for our parents, elders and relatives. The nature of our basic social unit is an extended family, not a nuclear family. In other words, in our culture the group, be it family, community or something else, is more important than the individual.

The Myanmar cultural norm of ah nar hm is quitestringently practiced. Many cultures like this exist; the nearest example is Thai culture. Because of social values like those mentioned above, we tend to submit to authoritarian measures when these are imposed on us by culturally sanctioned figures, such as those who are of a higher socioeconomic status. This more or less total submission may be the result partly of such psychological suppression.

Now we come to issues more to do with modern democratic government and civil society, which are described here in no particular order. Of course, the existence of the "rule of law" is one of the most fundamental and basic tenets for a democratic society. Another is "transparency" in relation to both the state and private sectors in all decisions and activities. Transparency often allows citizens of a democracy to exert control over their government, reducing government corruption, bribery and other malfeasance. These are often very difficult principles and values to put into practice and as a result we need to educate ourselves and learn to practice these values. Related to these issues is "openness" and "trust", with the latter following from the former.

In conclusion, it is the responsibility of all sectors of society, be it the government, social institutions or citizens, to adopt and propagate these values and practices for the long-term welfare of the country and its people.

(De Kyi Win Hman is a former associate professor of psychology at Yangon University and British-trained clinical psychologist who has worked in Malaysia and Australia and taught in Singapore.)

December 10 - 16, 2012
THE MYANMAR TIMES

Comment

Change yourself, change the nation

By Dr Pyi Win Hman

Our traditional social values and mores, such as politeness and courtesy in interpersonal relations, are often beneficial for relationships. We also have great respect and a tendency to care for our parents, elders and relatives. The nature of our basic social unit is an extended family, not a nuclear family. In other words, in our culture the group, be it family, community or something else, is more important than the individual.

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In conclusion, it is the responsibility of all sectors of society, be it the government, social institutions or citizens, to adopt and propagate these values and practices for the long-term welfare of the country and its people.
DAW Aung San Suu Kyi has pledged that an investigation into the Letpadaung copper mine project will find a solution that is in the long-term interests of the country and its people.

The National League for Democracy leader has been chosen to head a 16-member team tasked with examining the project and recent conflict in the Monywa area, after a proposal expansion of the mine by an army-run firm and Chinese investors.

Speaking at a press conference in the Yangon Region Hluttaw on December 6, she warned that not everyone could be satisfied with the Investigation Commission’s findings.

“It’s certain that we can’t come up with an answer that will satisfy everyone. There will be some people who are satisfied and some who are not. It is not the commission’s duty to make everyone happy. However, we will try to give the best answer in the interest of the state and people in the long term,” Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told journalists.

The press conference was held to answer questions on the team’s activities and the attitude of its members towards their tasks.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the conflict over the mine was the result of a lack of transparency and accountability between the government and the public.

She said she valued public participation in the investigation process but warned against unlawful acts.

“If people want to enjoy the rights of citizenship they also should accept the responsibilities that come from that,” she said.

“Many residents said they want to stop the project completely when our team members discussed it with them. We will take into account their opinion. But we understand that this project is being done in accordance with a contract. Therefore, we must negotiate with each other and solve the problems through peaceful means. That’s the democratic way, so if we want to build democracy state, there must be a negotiation process. It’s not democracy if we just stand for what we want without negotiation.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi declined to comment on the team's findings in regards to the police crackdown on protesters on November 29. She said the commission had found 67 monks and seven laypeople had been treated for injuries at hospitals in Monywa and Mandalay.

“We are investigating this case and we have already got some evidence. We met monks and people who were wounded — we won’t make any comments without having concrete evidence.

“At the moment, we say nobody is guilty. Everybody shall be given the benefit of the doubt.”

She said commission plans to invite external experts who are independent of the government to provide technical assistance. The Investigation Commission was formed on December 1 with 30 members as a result of a proposal passed by the Pyithu Hluttaw last month. However, on December 3, the President’s Office re-formed the team, cutting it to 16 members and removing three tasks — to investigate “the causes of protests that demanded the shutdown of the copper mine project”; to “review on control of protests and injuries of members of Sangha”; and to ascertain “whether the copper mine project should continue or the foreign investment should be suspended” – from its terms of reference.

Meanwhile, a directive to investigate “whether the copper mine project will be profitable for the state” was changed to “whether the copper mine project will be profitable for the state, people and future generation(s)”.

The commission was originally supposed to submit its report to the president by December 31, but this was extended to January 31.

“We amended the commission in accordance with the hluttaw’s decision. We will try our best according to the rule of law,” Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, adding that the media should be balanced in its coverage of the Letpadaung issue.

She also said she had ordered commission members not to meet journalists individually.

“We plan to hold a press conference and publish statements as necessary.”

The statement said the government had handled violence “between Bengalis and the ethnic Rakhine people … with full transparency”.

Government security forces and local authorities were “never involved in the communal violence or racial and religious discrimination in Rakhine State as accused by some media and organisations”.

“The government has taken actions to ceasing violence and maintaining rule of law in accordance with the law,” it said.

– Nan Tin Htwe

Govt slams broadcast on Rakhine violence

THE government has accused Qatar-based news organisation Al Jazeera of “exaggerating and fabricating the incidents in Rakhine State” ahead of the broadcast of a documentary on the Rohingya this week.

The statement, issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 6, said the documentary “relating to so-called ‘Rohingya’” would air from December 8 to 12 in Arabic and from December 9 to 13 in English.

“It is also mentioned that the documentary will include accusation of genocide against the so-called ‘Rohingya’.”

The statement said: “The government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar strongly opposes and rejects the attempt made by Al Jazeera to broadcast the documentary. The statement said the government had handled violence “between Bengalis and the ethnic Rakhine people … with full transparency”.

Government security forces and local authorities were “never involved in the communal violence or racial and religious discrimination in Rakhine State as accused by some media and organisations”.

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Commission will find fair solution, says NLD leader

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Monywa residents upset over investigation team changes

Monywa residents last week criticized government officials tasked with investigating the Letpadaung mining expansion, saying that the commission members were ‘not friendly towards the monks,’ they said.

U Aung Myint, joint secretary of the Letpadaung relief committee, told The Myanmar Times that some of the members were known supporters of previous military regimes.

“Three members of the Letpadaung area have been included in the commission, but nobody knew why,” Mr. Aung Myint said.

The revised announcement was made following in state newspapers on December 4.

Among the 14 members of the commission, office on December 3 that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s presence on the commission meant the three protest leaders were not needed. “We will gather information on the opinions of locals and activists. We will negotiate with the commission [because] locals and activists prefer to discuss the problem directly with us,” he said.

“We will take this opportunity to show the government and the commission to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,” he added.

Min Ko Naing said 88 Win and Ma Aye Net … this protest leaders, Ma Thwet Thwet and Thet Aye, are not friendly with the entire neighbourhood,” he said.

Mr. Aung Myint said the protest leaders are also unhappy at the commission’s revised terms of reference, which removed a directive to review the way protests were broken up and how the situation came to be.

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MYANMAR LEG: 11-15 December 2012
NLD to open HIV prevention and care centre

By Yaman Phu Thit

THE HIV/AIDS section of the National League for Democracy is planning to open a centre for people living with HIV during 2013, the NLD’s spokesperson told The Myanmar Times in an interview on December 7.

The centre will be in a three-storey building in East Dagon township on land donated by Sayadaw Ashin Zawana (known as Myittarshin sayadaw), said Daw Phyu Phyu Thin, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Mingalar Taung Nyunt, who runs the NLD’s HIV/AIDS prevention and care section.

She said the centre would aim to solve the problem of space constraints for more than 300 HIV patients who are receiving treatment and care at the NLD’s existing centre, and to make room for more patients.

“We receive more patients every day and we have inadequate space for them,” she said.

The centre received more than 80 patients in 2010, more than 200 in 2011, and 300 people are receiving treatment and care at the centre. Space constraints have forced the centre to use two locations, one each in North Dagon and South Dagon.

“We can provide more treatment and care at one place rather than separating them in two places,” she said.

The new centre will be able to accept more patients, and additional services for HIV and AIDS patients such as education and counselling and development programs for people living with HIV, she added.

“Our greatest challenge is space. If we have enough room, we can do much more,” she said.

The estimated cost for the centre is K3 billion. The HIV/AIDS section founded an organising committee on December 1 to raise funds and manage the centre. The committee will be run under the auspices of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Sayadaw Ashin Zawana, and Daw Phyu Phyu Thin and other well-known celebrities such as director Kyi Phyu Shin, singers Lynn Lynn and Chit Thu Wai, and actor Nay Toe. Those who want to make donations can contact committee members and Daw Phyu Phyu Thin at 09-504955 or 09-73137790.

The HIV/AIDS prevention and care centre of NLD’s HIV/AIDS section was founded in 2002 and is based in South Dagon township. It has been providing HIV prevention and care services for people living with HIV for 10 years.

Monks protest over police attack

Monks in several cities stage sit-in protests after government fails to respond to demands

By Phyo Wai Kyaw and Than Naing Soe

MONKS in Mandalay, Taunggyi and Magok staged peaceful protests at monasteries on December 6 after the government failed to respond to a set of five demands issued following the crackdown at Letpadanmaung on November 29.

The monks have pledged to protest again on December 8 and 12 if the government fails to meet their demands, which include a formal apology to the injured monks, action against those involved in the raid, the release of those arrested for protesting and a solution to the Letpadanmaung conflict that benefits people from the area around the mine.

In Mandalay, monks at Eindawyar Pagoda also accused state media of misleading the public over the police crackdown, which left scores of monks injured, many with severe burns. The protest follows an earlier demonstration on November 30.

“We don’t want any more tricks, we will ask again and again for an apology from the president’s government,” said Sayadaw U Thawbita from Mahagandayone Monastery.

Monks at the protest also disparaged the state media’s coverage of the attack on the monks on November 29, saying daily newspapers had been “dishonest”.

“About 100 monks were injured and some nearly lost their lives in the raid but the government did not show the number in the state media. However, a monk named U Partaka, who wanted to leave the hospital, was displayed in the newspaper as though he had recovered from his injuries and was discharged. The police ceremony to apologise to the monks in Monywa was also a fake issue that was expressed officially in the newspaper. In my opinion that was totally dishonest and designed to trick the public,” Sayadaw U Thawbita said at the protest.

Sayadaw U Visarra from Moekaung Monastery said the information released by state newspapers was not in touch with reality.

“The government’s media is just used to spread out their doctrine, not to give the truth and not for the profit for the country. I read the newspaper for several years as I want to know how they have been cheating us,” Sayadaw U Visarra said, adding that most private news journals had tried to cover the event accurately.

“I don’t read local [state] newspapers,” said Sayadaw U Oaktama from Maha Gandayone Monastery. — Additional reporting by Soe Than Lynn
Travel association vote postponed until March

A spokesperson from the association said the election would instead be held in March after the ITB Berlin travel exhibition and the ministry will issue guidelines to ensure the election is legal and fair.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has instructed the Union of Myanmar Travel Association to postpone an election scheduled for December 2 until March 2013, a ministry spokesperson said last week.

The December 2 election was called because an earlier vote at the association’s annual general meeting on October 7 ended in controversial circumstances: the meeting ran five hours overtime, as many participants took the opportunity to express frustration over what they perceived was a lack of action from the UMTA leadership on soaring hotel room rates.

While 29 executive committee members were sworn in, with Dr Aung Myat Kyaw taking over as chairman from U Mg Mg Swe, the results were later annulled because fewer than 50 percent of members voted. It was the first time that the UMTA has called a re-election since it was established in April 2002.

The association then announced on October 22 that 29 executive members would be selected at a vote on December 2.

The ministry spokesperson said the election would instead be held in March after the ITB Berlin travel exhibition and the ministry will issue guidelines to ensure the election is legal and fair,” the spokesperson said.

As we all know, the October 7 meeting was not a good result. Two groups at the association are fighting for the vote. And the ministry will issue guidelines to ensure the election is legal and fair,” the spokesperson said.

A new rainfall record has been set in Pyapon township, Ayeyawady Region, after a low pressure area in the Andaman Sea prompted unseasonably heavy rain in the delta.

A spokesperson from the association said Pyapon received 115 millimetres (4.54 inches) of rain in the 24 hours to noon on November 30, the highest single-day total recorded for November in the town. The previous record was set in 2002.

A department official said Ayeyawady and Yangon regions had four to six days of rain in November, while Tanintharyi Region had 10 days in the month as filters for power steering, filters for braking systems, suspension hydraulic filters, cooling water filters, washer system filters; centrifuges; oil mist separators; air dryer box and/or air dryer box for drying gases by means of liquid absorbents; filters for erosion machines; filter media of the aforesaid filters.

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New rain record after heavy falls in delta

A NEW rainfall record has been set in Pyapon township, Ayeyawady Region, after a low pressure area in the Andaman Sea prompted unseasonably heavy rain in the delta.

The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology said Pyapon received 115 millimetres (4.45 inches) of rain in the 24 hours to noon on November 30, the highest single-day total recorded for November in the town. The previous record was set in 2002.

A department official said Ayeyawady and Yangon regions had four to six days of rain in November, while Tanintharyi Region had 10 days in the month.

Isolated heavy falls were recorded in some parts of the delta between November 28 and December 3 because of a low pressure area in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

“Pyapon got about 16.51mm (0.65 inches) from November 28 to 30, while Pathein in Ayeyawady Region and Kayan and Yangon (Kabar Aye) in Yangon Region received from 38.1mm (1.5 inches) to 76.0mm (3 inches) of rain in the last week of November,” he said.

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In June, Australia's foreign minister, Senator Bob Carr, toured Myanmar to meet government officials, members of the opposition and other community leaders. "(The trip) provided me with greater first-hand appreciation of the challenges the country faces in implementing its reform agenda," Senator Carr told parliament after returning to Australia.

While in Myanmar, Senator Carr announced the lifting of all sanctions except an arms embargo and the doubling of aid to AU$100 million (US$105 million) by 2015. He also invited U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to Australia, an offer that was re-iterated by Prime Minister Julia Gillard later in the year.

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key flew to Myanmar in November and committed to establishing a diplomatic post next year.

As many as 10 monks injured in clashes between police and protesters near the Letpadaung copper mine project could be sent abroad for treatment, a senior monk in Mandalay said.

More than 60 monks were last week transferred to hospitals in Mandalay from Monywa following the November 29 raid on protest camps.

"There are 10 monks who are now in a serious condition and we are unsure whether they can be treated properly here. The rest, more than 50 monks, should be able to receive treatment at the hospital," Sayadaw U Oottama from Mandalay’s Maungweein Monastery told The Myanmar Times by phone on December 5.

"They need to take medical treatment abroad and they want to go," he said.

U Thu, also known as U Wi Ma La, the head of a team taking care of protesters injured on November 29, said the most seriously injured monk is U Teika Nyana, who suffered burns to much of his body.

"I said donors were arranging for U Teika Nyana to be sent to Thailand for treatment. They are also trying to get a replacement identification card, as U Teika Nyana’s was burned in the crackdown."

"U Teikka Nyana, who is 64 years old, is not good condition. We plan to send him to Thailand for treatment together with his family," he said.

"(Last week) I met the minister for health, he said that they will help to arrange treatment and we will try to get a passport as soon as possible. But first we are trying to get the monk identification card."

"The other protesters are still being treated [in Mandalay]... we are watching their condition. Another two monks have been transferred to Mandalay because Monywa hospital couldn’t care enough for them and is not clean."

"The tour has been postponed to a mutually convenient date which would be coordinated by the two sides", state media reported on December 6. The previous day, state media had said the visit would take place in the "near future".

Australia's Fairfax Media quoted a spokesperson for Prime Minister Julia Gillard as saying that the Australian government was adviser that U Thein Sein "would be postponing his visit to Australia's appliance then commitments."

U Thein Sein was due to arrive in Australia on December 10 for engagements in Canberra and Sydney. New Zealand was expecting to receive him on December 13 to reciprocate Prime Minister John Key’s visit to Myanmar last month.

Fairfax Media reported that human rights activists had been planning a protest in Sydney to mark the former general’s visit. While no specific domestic commitments were cited, the president faces a number of concerning issues, including fallout from a heavy-handed crackdown on protesters near the Letpadaung copper mine project, an investigation into the controversial mine expansion, criticism of the treatment of Muslims in Rakhine State and conflict with the Kachin Independence Army in northern Myanmar.

"For the moment we can only guess at exactly what motivated him to keep the focus on the home-front," Professor Nicholas Farrelly of the Australian National University in Canberra wrote on the New Mandala website last week following the announcement.

"My quiet hope is that the president is pushing hard for a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the new year."

"In 2012 he may well end up claiming the PEF’s ‘Person of the Year’ title. But if he really wants to earn the world’s applause then I wonder whether some well-targeted and well-timed domestic travel shouldn’t be on the immediate agenda."

The cancelled visit comes amid warming ties between Myanmar and both Australia and New Zealand. Both countries have lifted economic sanctions and increased aid to recognise progress made since the president came to office in March 2011.
Monks not satisfied with police apology

By Si Thu Lwin

MONKS receiving treatment at a Mandalay hospital for wounds sustained in a government assault on a protest camp near Monywa said they were not satisfied with last week’s apology from the police force.

A Mandalay regional police official said he would try to obtain records of those wounded in a crackdown on a protest camp near Monywa on December 1 but the government had not apologised for the injuries inflicted on monks during a police raid near the Letpadawung mine two days earlier.

“We have no reason to be pleased with the apology. The monks who went to the event are monks who rarely go out [of their monastery]. The monks who were really tortured are receiving compound treatment in hospital. Even if they come and apologise in Mandalay, we won’t be satisfied,” said Ko Win Nyein.

All monasteries in Monywa were invited to the apologising event but only a few [monks] went there,” U Kawthaung, a monk from Minkin Taungyo Monastery told The Myanmar Times in Mandalay.

The monks receiving medical treatment at the Mandalay Central Hospital said they were only “politically satisfied” if the Letpadawung mine expansion project is abolished. They added that if the project continues, they will continue to demonstrate at the mine site, which is about a 20-minute drive from Mandalay.

Meanwhile, monks from Monywa staged a sit-in protest at Eindawyar Pagoda on November 30 followed by a street march to demand to know who ordered the raid on the protest camps and what kind of weapons were used in the crackdown.

“It is not good that other countries hear about such a cruel raid on monks. Hurting Buddhist monks is equal to hurting Buddha’s disciples. The names of the mastermind [of the raid] and chemicals must be revealed. The mastermind must be brought to justice,” Glenni Sayaw, said in the Eindawyar Pagoda compound.

Those injured in the attack on the protest camp were treated at Eindawyar Pagoda in Monywa Township Hospital and 48 monks and 15 laypeople were later transferred to Mandalay Hospital, with most of the injuries from the camp.

Some have since been discharged, while others have been transferred to Kandawgyi hospital in Chauk, and to Mandalay cornerstone hospital.

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Preparations begin for ward, village administrator vote

By Win Ko Ko Latt

WARD and village tract administrators will be selected through “democratic means” this month, an official from the General Administrative Department in Nay Pyi Taw said last week.

The administrators will be selected through rounds of secret voting, as mandated under the Ward and Village-tract Administration Law, which was enacted earlier this year.

“We are going to select them according to the law and rules and regulations specified,” U Aung Khin, secretary of Nay Pyi Taw Council, said on December 3.

Township level administrators, which will be a supervisory body of five responsible residents, oversee the voting process in each ward and village tract. The body has to combine households into groups of 10, with each group holding a secret ballot to select a nominee. From the leaders of each group of 10 households, an administrator for each ward and village tract will be selected through secret ballot.

The President’s Office had recommended removing the provision that leaders of each 10-household group be selected through secret ballot and instead chosen through negotiation. However, legislators narrowly voted down the proposal 278 to 236 at a Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session on February 22, arguing the change would make the selection process undemocratic.

Negotiated selection was included in the original draft submitted to the hluttaw by the Ministry of Home Affairs in August 2011 but later amended by lawmakers.

During the debate on February 22, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint floated the idea of allowing communities to choose which method they preferred to use but this was also rejected.

Some Nay Pyi Taw residents said last week they expect the ward and village tract selection process to be more free, fair and transparent than under the former military government.

“The elections will be more free and fair than in the past,” said U Aung Khin. – Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Half marathon to be held in January

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

MANDALAY City Development Committee will hold a half marathon on January 7, an official said last week.

The committee began selling entry forms for the 20.9 kilometre (13 mile) Mandalay Mayor’s Marathon on December 3. Priced at K300, they will be available until December 23 at Bahtoo Stadium and the MCDC head office.

“We haven’t set the amount of prize money for the winners yet. However, we will make sure they are suitably compensated,” said U Latt Myint Thein, head of the committee’s information department.

The half marathon will start in front of the MCDC office and end at Bahtoo Stadium. The event has not been held since 2006.

A runner crosses the finish line to win the 2006 Mandalay Mayor’s Marathon. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw
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By Phyo Wai Kyaw

MANDALAY comedian Par Par Lay has ignored a 16-year-old ban on performing in public, turning out for two shows in late November.

The 64-year-old member of the popular Moustache Brothers troupe has been banned since 1996, when he was arrested after an Independence Day performance at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s house in Yangon.

He said he couldn’t wait any longer for the government to rescind the ban and decided to perform together with fellow comedians Thabyay Jou Aye and Myo Chit.

“I changed myself from blacklist to whitelist and am now on the stage again. I am performing in the traditional comedian costumes, the long garment (taung shay) and turban (gaung paung). I could not wait any longer for [official] permission. I felt so happy when I performed again for the first time to the audience. I could not have been that happy even if I won the lottery,” Par Par Lay told The Myanmar Times on December 4.

His first performance was at a Kahtain event in Pyigyitagan township’s Zagwe ward, followed by a kyarpjyt pwe (lotus throwing festival) at Mahamuni Pagoda in the last week of November. He performed with the rest of the troupe at a pagoda festival in Tamarlone ward in Maha Aung Myay township on December 5.

“I am performing and on the other hand I am preparing to be ready [if they arrest me]. I gathered some stuff like soup and a face towel so if [they] come to take me at midnight, I will be ready to go along with them straight away,” he said.

He said he had not tried to hide the news of his performance.

“I never perform silently. I made advertisements for my shows on the streets and at tea shops before I performed.”

While Par Par Lay said there had been no problems as a result of the performances, his brother and fellow comedian Lu Maw said he was “worried” about the potential consequences.

“I am worried about him as I think the lower [administration] level has not changed, although the upper level [of the government] has changed. Par Par Lay was waiting so long for official permission to perform. It is his passion and he is not afraid to sacrifice himself for that,” Lu Maw said.
**Education review ‘well underway’**

Deputy Minister for Education Dr Myo Myint on the education sector review and reform measures already underway

By Sandar Lwin

The parliament urged the Ministry of Education to conduct a review of the sector last year. When is it likely to be completed?

Minister for Education Dr Myo Myint says that a major review of the Education Sector Review. The launch ceremony was held [on October 23] in Nay Pyi Taw in cooperation with the Nature and Tropical Science Organisation. Our research shows that only local experts but also experts from international organisations such as the United Nations and European Union are working on it collaboratively. The first four months have been allocated for a rapid assessment that will cover not only the Ministry of Education but all the related sectors, such as the Ministry of Science and Technology, vocational education, non-formal education and so on. Based on the findings of the rapid assessment we will come up with a plan of action for the next year. In that phase, we will look at [foreign] countries and take their experiences into consideration after which we will have a complete program ready to be implemented.

The review of research for the rapid assessment began in August and we are planning to finish the rapid assessment in January 2013.

**With which organisations are you working?**

We have working with the UN, EU, World Bank, AusAID and JICA. AusAID is actively taking the initiative and leading the process. The ones I mentioned now are just those I have reported to you, and there are many others too... after the launching ceremony [on October 23] we held a question and answer panel discussion... I still have a lot of international organisations, the ones I have been informed about are... we are encouraged and pleased at our measures and the effectiveness of the collaboration effort.

What is the ministry doing to address the complaint that students are not qualified enough when they finish their education?

We have identified 12 areas of the higher education system that need to be reformed. Improving the qualification is one of them. We are not the main criteria for basic education, but we will try to improve the quality of three components: the teachers, students and universities. We will need to be patient to see the result.

But, there are some immediate position, district officer, into the administrative line to focus more on basic education as well as salary increases for the officers. These measures are to improve both teaching and administration. And, the ministry is attempting to increase learning opportunities as well as we are focusing on three components.

At the university level, the ministry said it is focusing on the same area, and it has increased funding for all universities and colleges. You can see the university facilities are improving in line with the budget increase.

On the other hand, we have appointed 1573 new teachers across all universities and colleges. Before, newly appointed teachers had to start work immediately but now we are giving all of them two month pre-service training. In this training, we are polishing their skills and providing them with teaching methodologies with the aid of the University of Education. After the course, we will further English training batch by batch.

President U Thein has said that universities plan to link up with foreign institutions.

We already have [entered] negotiations with Johns Hopkins University from America to join with Yangon University and for Montpellier University from France to join with Mandalay University. The other deputy minister, U Aye Kyu, and the rector of Mandalay University also signed the agreement (on October 23) for the final negotiations on this collaboration.

To join with Johns Hopkins University, both sides have accepted the concept proposal. We are responsible for improving the building and ICT facilities to form a Centre of Excellence and are doing this now.

For their part, they are also funding to send the experts to us. They are working on that funding. When these tasks have been accomplished, we will form the Centre of Excellence.

The president has emphasised the need for greater English-language proficiency. How does your ministry propose improving English skills?

Of the 1573 new teachers, 140 are English teachers. We can give them an intensive English language course at the Centre of English at Marlar Hall... another important measure is that we will introduce an international-standard [English] textbook in December.

Does the ministry plan to appoint more English-speaking teachers?

The British Council has helped us with the training for teachers by providing a trainer to improve teaching methodology. And [Australia] has agreed to send two English language trainers to Myanmar for two years.

What about increasing the emphasis on research at universities?

A major criticism of universities is research. So, as I mentioned earlier, we must improve students’ knowledge, language skills and teaching methodology, then we expect the quality of their research will also be improved to an extent.

Finally, we held the launching ceremony to form Centres of Excellence at the main universities and also be helpful to upgrade education standards. A responsibility of these centres would be to have English and expertise in a specific field.

A major criticism of the education system is that students are trained to pass exams rather than think for themselves. Will this emphasis on exam continue in the future?

In my opinion, [this problem] depends on the type of question you are asking [in the exam]. If the questions simply ask for facts, there will be the teaching methodology. But questions are not just about facts. If we prepare the students to test the students’ intelligence and understanding, they will have a chance to show their ability, including things they have learned outside the textbook. We will use is known as the child-centred methodology. Furthermore, we do not only rely on exams; the system also requires students to complete ten per cent of their coursework.

What about the problem of students buying term papers rather than doing them themselves?

While I have not inspected a number of universities and colleges, from what I have seen the students are discussing term paper research with their supervisors. So, on the whole, the term papers are written by the students themselves. Of course we do not look at the students. Students need to have the attitude that they will only learn if they actually put effort in the effort themselves. We do not ask students to do research without any previous research. We provide them with the research methodology at every [tertiary] level, from undergraduate to doctorate levels.

**Company refuses to leave privatised factory**

By Noe Nae Aung

Two companies are locked in a dispute over 23 acres of land auctioned off last year as part of the former government’s privatisation campaign.

The successful buyer, Mega Marine director Daw May Aye Mon, said she paid a 360 million Kyat premium (about US$4 million) for the land in November in the Thaketa Township. But the current tenant, who participated unsuccessfully in the auction and runs a food canning operation at the site, says he has the contract to operate his factory there is still in force.

Though I won the auction, the company that is running a factory on the land wouldn’t move out, and didn’t give the land back to [the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries],” Daw May Aye Mon said.

U Soe Moe Kyaw, a director of the Myanmar Maco Industry, confirmed the plot, said that the company will not move out because it has a contract with the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) to run the factory and to occupy the land until 2017.

We rented this land till 2017 with a contract with MIC. We’ve invested millions in the business. We can’t move out before the contract expires,” U Soe Moe Kyaw told The Myanmar Times on December 7.

I don’t want to criticise the government plan to auction the land while a company was occupying it. But we have contracts to carry out our work and we can’t just move out,” Daw May Aye Mon added.

Daw May Aye Mon said she bought the plot in an auction organised by the Privatisation Commission (MIC) to run a factory in the land area from January last year.

“My winning bid was 360 million, which I paid off in full by January 31 this year. In February, the commission said I had to pay another 236 million more because I’d failed to meet the deadline. So I paid nearly K2.4 billion in total. But I still haven’t got the land,” said Daw May Aye Mon.

“I’ve reported this to all the departments involved, but nothing,” she added. Daw May Aye Mon said she’ve bought the plot in an auction organised by the Privatisation Commission (MIC) to run a factory in the land area from January last year.

“By the end of the second month, the factory had not started operation. The factory has been running in the same position ever since,” Daw May Aye Mon said.

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Pyu seminar restarts Mon debate

RESEARCHERS have called for more studies to be conducted on the history of early kingdoms in Myanmar at a controversial seminar on the Pyu civilisation.

The Pyu civilisation appeared around the second century BC and was likely subsumed into the Bagan Empire by the 11th century. The Pyu culture spread and influenced other parts of the country, including present-day Chin State and Tanintharyi Region, where historians have found Pyu-style items, such as terracotta with fingerprints and coloured beads.

U Naing Ye Zaw, a Mon presenter at the conference, said the past should not be used to create division between people from different ethnic groups.

“All Mon people were unhappy about the Pyu seminar. We feared that officials and historians would decide Mon state is a subordinate of the Pyu, which would mean we have no unique Mon civilisation, culture and custom. The thought of this makes people angry,” he said.

He said that while the Pyu civilisation may have spread to lower Myanmar, it would be too persistent in saying that all parts of the country are Pyu territories.

We appreciate the existence of other ethnic kingdoms, such as Mon and Rakhine, and should not insist that they are Pyu territories,” he said.

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He said that while the Pyu civilisation may have spread to lower Myanmar, it would be too persistent in saying that all parts of the country are Pyu territories.

“We are sure there were some other ethnic groups during the Pyu period and before and we should not be too persistent in saying that all parts of the country are Pyu,” he said.

We are caring only for Pyu cities because the ministry is preparing the nomination of three ancient Pyu cities for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

We appreciate the existence of other ethnic kingdoms, such as Mon and Rakhine, and should not insist that they are Pyu territories.”

Sri Ksetra in Bago Region’s Pyay township, Hanlin in Sagaing Region’s Shwebo township and Beikthano in Magwe Region’s Taungdwingyi township have been selected for nomination on the World Heritage List.

U San Win, a retired director general of the department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library, agreed there was not enough evidence to conclude Mon State was ruled by a Pyu kingdom.

“We are sure there were some other ethnic groups during the Pyu period and before and we should not be too persistent in saying that all parts of the country are Pyu,” he said.

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Another presenter, U Zaw Thura from Dawei University, called for more research, excavations and preservation work to be carried out at the ancient site of Thargaya in Dawei township.

“Historical records said Thargaya is under the influence of the Pyu but there has been no excavations so far,” he said.

The equipment uses an ultrafiltration system that can purify 20,000 to 50,000 litres a day.

A MYANMAR company is providing mobile water purifiers for urban poor people as a corporate social responsibility activity.

Aekar, which distributes water purification equipment and technical services, donated K17 million worth of mobile water purifiers to the local non-government organisation Emerald Green for distribution to poor residents in North Okkalapa township on December 3.

U Kyi Win, president of Emerald Green, said the purifiers would be useful not only for the residents of North Okkalapa, where clean water is difficult to access, but also for relief activities in disaster-hit parts of the country.

“It will save money and be more effective than transporting drinking water from one place to another,” said U Kyi Win.

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Myanmar again near foot of global transparency rankings

By Tony Yoo

MYANMAR was last week ranked 172 out of 176 countries in an annual Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by international NGO Transparency International.

The report indicated the perceived level of public sector corruption in the countries surveyed, the group says.

Singapore’s reputation for clean public service was confirmed with its fifth-placed position. However, some of Myanmar’s direct neighbours did not fare so well, with Laos (equal 160th) and Bangladesh (equal 144th) lagging in the bottom quarter of the index.

Thailand claimed equal 88th position, while economic giants China (equal 80th) and India (equal 94th) were ranked in the equal 144th lagging in the bottom quarter of the index.

The annual survey has been conducted for the past 17 years but the methodology was revised this year, making a direct comparison between the 2011 and 2012 rankings difficult. Myanmar was ranked 180th out of 182 countries last year.

Mr Derek Tonkin, a former British ambassador to Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, said the low ranking for Myanmar is based on Transparency International’s perceptions, “which are unlikely to be the same as the perceptions of experts who are at the forefront of political and economic analysis”.

“Transparency International have traditionally, and with justification, given considerable weight to the level of human rights violations in a country as a broad indicator of the level of corruption ... in the virtual absence of reliable data, (Transparency International) have been led to conclude that in their perception Myanmar must inevitably be close to the bottom of the list. The reality on the ground though is rather different,” Mr Tonkin wrote on the website of non-profit group Network Myanmar, of which he is chairman.

But a major challenge for countries that have ratified the convention is the requirement that national laws be brought into conformity with the treaty.

“It’s not easy. It’s a legally binding document,” he said. “Some countries make sure that their laws are in compliance with [the convention] before ratification, while many countries continue to reform their laws to ensure compliance after ratification. This is a policy choice by governments.”

Mr Fedotov said that if the government follows through with its promise to accelerate the ratification process it would be possible to turn Myanmar into a state party to the convention by the end of the year. He said UNODC is prepared to provide technical assistance to speed up the process.

“It will take time but at the end of the day I think it will happen,” he said.

[Ratifying the convention] is very important for a country to fight corruption, [which] undermines the development and social progress,” he said. “It’s not easy. It’s a legally binding document, it’s very important for a country to fight corruption, which undermines the development and social progress.”

He said that while Myanmar faces “a lot of challenges” it could benefit from international attention in terms of financial support and investment.

“But you cannot ensure sustainable development without addressing issues like the judicial system, good governance, anti-corruption, transitional organised crime and so on. Some of those issues must be linked together,” he said.

N welcomes govt plan to ratify treaty against corruption

By Nan Tin Htwe

MYANMAR should help to implement The United Nations Convention against Corruption to encourage foreign investment and transparency, a UN official said last week.

Mr Yury Fedotov, executive director of UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), told The Myanmar Times on December 4, the final day of his four-day visit to Myanmar, that he was “encouraged” by government reforms and President U Thein Sein’s stated aim to accelerate the process of ratifying the convention.

Ratifying the convention is “important not only for Myanmar but also the outside world. It will be help to get more foreign investment and more openness,” he said.

So far 164 of the 193 UN member states have ratified the convention since it was introduced in 2003.

On December 1, Mr Fedotov met Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham in Nay Pyi Taw and the UNODC boss said he urged the government to adopt the convention.

He said he was told that the government had a “political commitment” to ratify the document, which Myanmar signed in December 2000.

The ratification process normally entails two steps: the first is the domestic process, whereby the formalities of ratifying or acceding to an international treaty or convention are completed, followed by the international process, where the government communicates its ratification to the UN secretary general.

Mr Fedotov said his meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi helped him understand “not only the current issues but also what can we expect in the future.”

“Her vision was very useful. We will take into account planning activities in Myanmar and arranging what we are doing in terms of drug issues, methods of rule of laws and reforming the judiciary.”

He emphasised the importance of her position as the chair of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law, Peace and Stability Committee.

“I’m pleased to see her as an important ally of our programs related to Myanmar and close partnership with UN agencies and programs.”

Mr Fedotov also visited Shan State and met the chief minister, head of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and officials from the Pa-O National Organisation and Restoration Council of Shan State to discuss drug eradication programme.

“Thousands of hectares have been eradicated. It’s a great achievement but that must be commended and supported,” he said.

However, he stressed that there was a serious need to provide more support to farmers to encourage them to switch to alternative crops.

He said that while Myanmar faces “a lot of challenges” it could benefit from international attention in terms of financial support and investment.

“[But] you cannot ensure sustainable development without addressing issues like the judicial system, good governance, anti-corruption, transitional organised crime and so on. Some of those issues must be linked together,” he said.
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Eleven Media website hacked

By Htoo Aung

ELEVEN Media Group’s English-language website was hacked by a group calling itself the Kachin Cyber Army on December 7, a company announcement said last week.

Visitors to the site were greeted by a little text box saying “KCA hacked”, before a screen showing the Kachin Independence Army’s green and red flag and further text appeared.

“Do you Surprise? This’s first warning for you f**king media, it’s 1st lesson. Don’t make nonsense and stupid media attacks to fool our nations. Today we announce to all Burmese media lamers and stupid journalists, we’ll attack all any nonsense stupid Burmese medias from now on. We’ll definitely come back soon if you don’t keep our warning,” the text said.

The Eleven Media Group announcement said that the company regretted that viewers were temporarily unable to view the www.news-eleven.com site. The announcement further stated that the Kachin Cyber Army hackers were using IP addresses based in China. The company said its IT technicians are working to repair the website and investigating whether a Kachin group made the attack.

YANGON – The UN’s humanitarian chief has called on the government to stop blocking aid to thousands of people displaced by conflict with the Kachin Independence Army, raising concerns over welfare as winter nears.

The United Nations has been prevented from reaching more than half of the 75,000 people force from their homes by fighting between the army and KIA insurgents, Ms Valerie Amos said in a statement sent overnight after a visit to the area on December 6.

“The UN has not been allowed access to provide badly needed assistance to some 30,000 people in areas outside the government’s control since July 2012,” said the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

She said local partners were supplying food and other relief, “but their stocks are depleted and with the winter months approaching, getting more supplies in is critical”.

Fierce fighting has raged in Kachin State since a 17-year ceasefire between the military and the KIA broke down in June 2011.

Continued fighting in the region, along with the eruption of communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims in western Rakhine state, is seen as a key stumbling block on Myanmar’s reform path.

Ms Amos, who visited both regions during her four-day trip to Myanmar, has described the conditions in camps for Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State as “dire” and expressed concern for the 125,000 displaced in that state. – AFP

UN calls for better access to Kachin State relief camps

Myanmar has signed tentative ceasefire deals with a number of major armed groups. But a deal with the KIA remains elusive, with deep distrust on both sides.

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New HIV infections fell by 74pc over past decade: UN

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

MYANMAR is one of 25 countries where new infections dropped by more than half during the past decade, UNAIDS said at a ceremony to mark World AIDS Day last week.

Infection rates declined 74pc between 2001 and 2011, the agency said in its World AIDS Day Report for 2012.

"Myanmar should be congratulated as it is one of a few countries named in this year's World AIDS Report as reducing infections by more than 50 percent over the last decade. This is a success in increasing prevention and treatment services but Myanmar still has a long way to go to sufficiently scale up services to increase success and meet its global and national MDG commitments," UNAIDS country director Eamonn Murphy said at the December 2 event, which was held at People's Square in Yangon.

The UNAIDS report revealed significant progress in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS in the past two years. Globally, the number of people accessing life-saving treatment increased by 60 percent, and new infections fell by half in 25 countries, 13 of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

AIDS-related deaths have dropped by one-quarter since 2005. Half the global reduction in new HIV infections in the last two years has been among newborn babies.

Many HIV/AIDS community support groups said their goal was to reduce the new infection rate to zero, while at the same time reduce stigma and discrimination.

"Myanmar still has a long way to go to sufficiently scale up services to increase success and meet its MDG commitments," said Daw Naw Darel, vice president of Myanmar Positive Group, said at the World AIDS Day event.

Last year 18,000 people – about 40 a day – died of HIV-related diseases in Myanmar.

It was estimated in 2011 that 74pc of the population – those aged 15 and over – was 0.53pc, with 216,000 people living with HIV. There were about 8300 new infections among adults in 2011.

"If we want to reduce this rate to zero, the government has to make its health policy more effective," Daw Naw Darel said.

Unable to access medical care and services because of the stigma towards HIV/AIDS sufferers.

"We are human. This is the way we live. I would like to see a reduction in the stigma and discrimination attached to MSM," said a representative of the King and Queen Group, which was formed by MSM volunteers.
IP law draft to be sent to hluttaw soon
By Pyae Thet Phyo

AFTER widespread consultations that involved a number of concerned organisations, the country is edging closer to having an intellectual property law.

The bill, which has so far been redrafted 10 times, will be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw soon, said an official of the International Brand Association at a consultation on brands held at Oasis Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw on November 30.

The proposed bill, which includes laws for protecting brands, copyright, design and invention, was drawn up mainly by the Ministry of Science and Technology, in consultation with representatives of national and regional governments, the Attorney General’s Office, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, associations for creative industries and other groups, said U Thein Aung, country chairman of the Asian Regional Invention Rights Agency.

“The intellectual property rights law is expected to be enacted before July 1, 2013. It has now gone through 10 drafts,” he said.

“The bill will be great because experienced professionals from the private sector have been involved in its drafting.”

He said the new law would benefit both potential foreign investors and local people, who would be able to use copyrighted material at reasonable prices.

“We will submit the bill to the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee once drafting is complete. We’re also arranging to send a draft to the World Intellectual Property Organisation,” an official from Ministry of Science and Technology told The Myanmar Times.

The bill has also been discussed three times by relevant ministries and non-government organisations this year.

“I expect the law to be tailored to the needs of our country,” said U Khine Maung Yi, the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee representative for Ablone.

Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Ballooning group returns to Myanmar
By Yu Yu Maw

THEY'RE back — those magnificent men (and women) in their flying machines. Led by Swiss businessman Mr Peter Blaser, the group will be touring the country in their own balloons, which will arrive with them on December 20.

Their 19-day tour will take them to Inle Lake, Loikaw, Heho, Mandalay, Bagan and Magwe before they depart on January 8.

“The 29 tourists will arrive in Yangon on December 20 and leave the next day for Inle Lake for two days’ flying. Then they move on to Loikaw, Bagan and Mandalay, spending two days at each location,” said U Tint Naung, managing director of Golden Express Travels and Tour company, which is organising the trip.

“The plan is same as last year. We’ve already got the permit from Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. The group usually flies once a year in Myanmar. They will be sight-seeing Myanmar from their balloons,” he added.

The tour company will arrange ground transport, including moving the seven balloons from region to region.

“It was not easy to arrange the ground transport. We need more than 20 people with six cars to pick up the balloon. We can’t be sure where the balloon will land because of the wind,” said U Tint Naung.

This is the fifteenth time the group has flown over Myanmar. They usually time their visit for December or January to catch the best weather.

The wind usually blows in one direction at a speed of 10 to 15 miles an hour (16 to 24 kilometres an hour), optimum ballooning conditions.

The group first toured Myanmar by balloon in March 1999 and has returned every year since, visiting Bagan, Inle, Mandalay, Monywa, Bago, Myitkyina, Taunggyi, Pindaya, Bagan and Mrauk Oo.
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Danish trade minister and delegation visit

By Tim McLaughlin

DANISH Minister for Trade and Investment Pia Dyhr led a delegation of business leaders to Yangon last week with the hopes of pairing companies from the Scandinavian country with Myanmar partners.

Ms Dyhr met the deputy minister for commerce, the chairman of the Foreign Committee of Parliament, members of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and local businesspeople during her visit. She also toured Yangon’s port district on December 4.

“It is interesting being in a country where you can actually support the democratic process by establishing good business connections,” she said of her visit to Myanmar. “If companies are willing to invest you can create jobs in Myanmar and create more stability in the country.”

While Danish investment remains minimal, the delegation is the latest attempt to increase engagement with Myanmar. Denmark established a diplomatic office with Norway in Yangon on November 4 and has doubled its aid to Myanmar, raising funding to nearly US$18 million a year, with expectations of further increases in 2013.

Mr Mikael Winther, the Danish ambassador to Thailand and Myanmar, said that while some Danish small and medium enterprises have a tendency not to stray too far from home when it comes to their investments, the country’s larger firms are looking at Myanmar with interest.

“Some of them [Danish companies] are not very adventurous,” said Mr Winther. “They go to Germany and Sweden and England and the US but we also have some that are remarkably adventurous and skilled.

“There are those who find it an adventure to go to Sweden and those who really go a long way,” he said.

Eighteen of these adventurous companies joined the minister on the trip to Myanmar, including representatives from Danish Water Services, pharmaceutical supplier Novo Nordisk and dairy product manufacturer Arla Foods all made it to Myanmar.

Though Ms Dyhr was generally upbeat about prospects for Danish companies, she voiced disappointment that Danish Water Services had not been able to sign a contract to upgrade Yangon’s outdated water supply system.

“I wish that Danish Water Services would have delivered on an agreement with Yangon city,” she said.

During a visit to a local pumping station she learned that Yangon loses between 50-60 percent of water due to its antiquated water pipe system. Strict regulations in Denmark ensure that only 3-7pc of water is lost, she said.

Despite the setback Ms Dyhr said she remains hopeful that the company will sign an agreement soon.

Missing from the delegation was a representative from brewing giant Carlsberg. For months there has been speculation that the company, the world’s fourth largest brewery, would reenter Myanmar. Carlsberg left the country 1997 under pressure from activists.

Carlsberg began posting job openings for Myanmar nationals in mid-summer on its website. Carlsberg officials have met a number of potential Myanmar partners, including Dr San Su Htan, head of beverage manufacturer Loi Hein Group, in September. However, he told The Myanmar Times on December 3 that his company had not entered into an agreement with Carlsberg.

“They are very eager to do it,” Ms Dyhr said of Carlsberg’s ambitions to open a brewery in Myanmar. “It is not just something they are talking about, they will act on it.”

She added that she had spoken to the company’s chief executive officer, Jorgen Buhl Rasmussen, prior to traveling to Myanmar and said he “would have loved to open while I was here”. According to Mr Winther, the company is exercising caution as it takes the necessary steps to begin operations.

“They are very specific about obtaining the necessary licences,” he said.

“It is an interesting market and we are considering various options,” a spokesperson for Carlsberg said of their Myanmar intentions.
Speculators could stall investment, says minister

LAND prices inflated by speculation may be deterring foreign companies from investing, the planning minister has warned.

Dr Kan Zaw, union minister for National Planning and Economic Development, blamed speculators for artificially forcing up the price of land in an attempt to profit onto the land and asking for more, so they are holding prices but mostly the result of foreign investors.

“Though people say land prices are very high, these are not actual trading prices but mostly the result of speculation. People thought land prices would rise when foreign investors came, so they are holding onto the land and asking high prices,” he said.

The minister was speaking at the ASEAN 100 Leadership Forum, held in Yangon on December 5-6.

Leadership Forum, held in Yangon on December 5-6. According to a draft law released in November, the Central Bank is likely to allow private banks to open representative offices overseas. But Co-operative Bank managing director U Pe Myint said private banks have yet to develop plans to do so.

At the same time, despite the recent passage of the foreign investment law, foreign banks are not going to be opening functioning branches in Myanmar any time soon, as legal and technical restrictions remain.

Central Bank deputy director general U Win Thaw said the bank would develop specific rules and regulations for the entry of foreign banks after setting general targets this month.

“Some foreign banks want to open branches here straight away, but our regulations say they must first pass through three steps (representative office, subsidiary and joint-venture). There are also said to be software problems,” he said.

U Win Thaw added that Myanmar’s 19 private banks are enough for the country’s banking sector, but they’re still have a long way to go.

Dr Sein Maung, chairman of First Private Bank, said a Chinese bank had recently approached him about possible cooperation.

The Chinese bank had about US$240 billion in capital, and his bank has about K30 billion (about $36 million). He said the Central Bank had to decide what the equity share ratio would be for each side.

“The foreign investment law does liberalise the contribution ratio for joint-venture projects, but we’re still awaiting the decision from the Central Bank on that,” he said.

He added that $20 billion is tiny compared to foreign banks’ capitalisation, and domestic banks would need more in order to work foreign banks.

There are 23 representative banks in Myanmar from 11 countries, including Japan, South Korea, India, China and Thailand.

DOMESTIC banks lack the capital to take part in international banking despite receiving permission to do so last July from the Central Bank, sources say.

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According to a draft law released in November, the Central Bank is likely to allow private banks to open representative offices overseas. But Co-operative Bank managing director U Pe Myint said private banks have yet to develop plans to do so.

At the same time, despite the recent passage of the foreign investment law, foreign banks are not going to be opening functioning branches in Myanmar any time soon, as legal and technical restrictions remain.

Central Bank deputy director general U Win Thaw said the bank would develop specific rules and regulations for the entry of foreign banks after setting general targets this month.

“Some foreign banks want to open branches here straight away, but our regulations say they must first pass through three steps (representative office, subsidiary and joint-venture). There are also said to be software problems,” he said.

U Win Thaw added that Myanmar’s 19 private banks are enough for the country’s banking sector, but they’re still have a long way to go.

Dr Sein Maung, chairman of First Private Bank, said a Chinese bank had recently approached him about possible cooperation.

The Chinese bank had about US$240 billion in capital, and his bank has about K30 billion (about $36 million). He said the Central Bank had to decide what the equity share ratio would be for each side.

“The foreign investment law does liberalise the contribution ratio for joint-venture projects, but we’re still awaiting the decision from the Central Bank on that,” he said.

He added that $20 billion is tiny compared to foreign banks’ capitalisation, and domestic banks would need more in order to work foreign banks.

There are 23 representative banks in Myanmar from 11 countries, including Japan, South Korea, India, China and Thailand.
Sesame, the ideal crop for upper Myanmar

By U Kyaw Myint

SESAME fills a number of roles in Myanmar’s culinary world and is used as a garnish, a snack on its own, a flavouring in some foods and as an oil for cooking, some of which is sold for export. The byproduct from oil production, oil cake, is also used as feed for livestock and fish farms.

Sesame’s main growing season is the monsoon months, although smaller crops are grown during the cool season and hot season. The country’s sesame sown area in 2011-12 was estimated at 3.94 million acres by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. Of the sown area, 90 percent was within the central dry zone, which comprises parts of the Ayeyarwady Delta and Magwe regions and makes up the major growing area for nileseed crops.

The central dry zone has an ideal climate for sesame cultivation, which requires water but not as much as is available in lower Myanmar, which sees much heavier rains.

The monsoon crop is planted in May and harvested in August, quickly unleashing new supplies into markets. Sesame sown in September or October and harvested in December is the cool season harvest. For this crop, farmers rely on residual moisture in the soil. Sesame sown in March and April, the hot season, relies on irrigated water and is harvested in June.

Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation statistics for the 2011-12 year show that yields per acre are highest in the hot season (14.90 baskets or 362 kilograms per acre), followed by cool season (12.48 baskets, 306kg per acre) and monsoon season (8.13 baskets, 199kg an acre). However, the increased yields per acre are offset by a heavily reduced sown area.

From a trading point of view, sesame is grouped into three colours: black (thikpanhnan), white, and mixed colour sesame, including red, brown, yellow and more.

Black sesame sells for about 16 percent more per tonne than white, which is more expensive than mixed sesame. The average spot price of black sesame, white sesame and other colour sesame in the second week of November was K2044-2471 a visa (1 visa is 1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds), K1774-2107 and K1890-1955 respectively.

Before 2011, Myanmar’s trade policy prohibited the export of mixed sesame but allowed white and black sesame to be sold abroad by private companies. The result of that policy was that mixed colour sesame was mostly sold to mills and made into cooking oil. However, traders illegally exported large amounts of red and brown sesame to China, sometimes creating shortages of sesame for mills.

The price of white sesame is rising owing to demand from Chinese traders at Shwebo, for their property and effect – farmers are sowing more sesame to cater to the increased demand.

In 2011, the national trade policy was reversed by the Ministry of Commerce and all colours of sesame were made available for export.

White sesame is purchased by local traders to make roasted sesame powder, which is then exported to South Korea, with technological assistance provided by Korea in exchange.

According to Commerce Journal, 23pc was exported by ship to South Korea (8000 tonnes), 23pc was exported by air to South Korea (4000 tonnes), 20pc was exported to China via the border trading zone of Muse in Shan State at the border. The remaining 22pc was exported by ship to South Korea (8000 tonnes). Singapore (3800 tonnes) and Japan (2800 tonnes).

Source: Directorate of trade, Ministry of Commerce

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CBM invites private money changers

By Aye Thida Kyaw

BLACK market money changers might soon be a thing of the past following an announcement last week in the state-run press inviting companies and individuals to set up private money changing counters.

The notice, printed in the Myanmar version of the New Light of Myanmar on December 5, said the Central Bank of Myanmar had invited interested parties to apply for licences, although it set strict requirements.

Private money changers interested in applying for an official licence must arrange for each branch of their accounts, provide background information on their history of dealing with foreign exchange, proof of well-managed accounting practices, as well as links with banking associations.

U Win Myint, a money changer in Kyauktada town, said he had read the Central Bank notice but worried that there were too many rules and regulations to follow.

He said interested parties also needed to set up a company, a process that can cost up to K1 million, deposit K30 million in a bank, and show proof of a further K10 million for each branch, he said, adding that branches were required to undergo weekly audits.

"I'm interested in applying for a licence but I need to talk to the Central Bank because there are a lot of requirements to meet," he said.

Central Bank deputy director general U Win Thaw said the foreign currency exchange market is growing daily and the decision to allow new private changers to take part would result in better rates for consumers.

"We've heard that the previous arrangement was like a monopoly and that the Central Bank’s daily exchange rate was basically being managed by the private banks (that take part in daily exchange auctions). But if it’s opened to new competitors up then people will not be able to make that criticism," he said.

He added that the Central Bank hoped that inviting black marketeers to apply for official licences it would be able to finally destroy the black market.

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The International Textile and Garment Industries Fair 2012 will be held at Tatmadaw Hall from December 14 to 17, and is a collaboration between Myanmar Industrial Enterprises (MIEs), the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (UMFCCI) and Yorkers Trade and Marketing Service Company. The event will feature many Western companies in discussions with local partners to set up in Myanmar, while Japanese and Thai firms were also lining up.

"In the near future, thousands of garment factories will appear in Myanmar," he said, adding that many Western companies were in discussions with local partners to set up in Myanmar, while Japanese and Thai firms were also lining up.

"The December textile and garment fair is intended to showcase the different tools and machinery in use internationally," he added.

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Zawtika gas pipeline to flow by 2014: officials

By Myat May Zin

MYANMARES third natural gas pipeline, which will carry gas from the offshore Zawtika gas project across a 68.9-kilometre stretch of Tanintharyi Region to Thailand, should begin flowing by the end of 2013, a spokesperson for the company behind the project said last week.

U Khun Naw Kham, a project engineer for Thailand’s PTTEP company, said the pipeline would cross through Maw Gyi village in Dawei township (Tanintharyi Region) before crossing the border with Thailand and continuing through Kanachanaburi Province.

“More than 52 percent of the Zawtika gas pipeline construction is finished, which is a little bit less than our target of 56.7%,” he said.

He added that the Yadana and Yetagun pipelines already export natural gas to Thailand.

The Zawtika natural gas pipeline project is a joint venture between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) and PTTEP, with the former holding a 20 percent share and the latter an 80pc stake.

When completed, it will be capable of exporting 300 million cubic feet of natural gas (MMCFD) a day but 60MMCFD will be provided to MOGE for domestic electricity generation.

“A couple of weeks ago, we signed an agreement to provide US$150,000 annually for social economic development and environmental programs,” said Mr Siriphong Fuenglikhit, PTTEP’s external relations manager.

“These three gas pipelines will provide $450,000 in compensation,” he added.

U Khun Naw Kham said: “We have already settled the land compensation agreements for this pipeline.”

He added that 394 landowners in the area covered by the pipeline have been paid a total $6.8 million in compensation.

The pipeline to the Yadana gas field started flowing by the end of 2010 and the one to the Yetagun began operations last year.

Sunkist makes a splash with MDG agreement

By Myint Nyein Aye

MYANMAR Distribution Group (MDG) has begun selling and distributing Sunkist softdrinks in Myanmar, the company’s managing director said during a launch ceremony last week.

U Aung Maw Thein, MDG’s managing director, said the company had signed an agreement on September 21 with the Sunkist’s owners – Sunkist Growers Inc – to produce and sell the product in Myanmar.

“I really feel wonderful to have the MDG and PTTEP companies. We would be able to distribute this well-known brand in Myanmar to a reasonable price to consumers,” he said during the December 5 launch at Parkroyal Hotel.

U Aung Maw Thein said Sunkist has been available in the market for many years but at an inflated price before.

The company imports cans from Malaysia. He added that it plans to produce the product in Myanmar and to sell it for about K300-400 a can.

MDG was established in 1996 and its major products include Gold Roast Coffee Mix and Royal Myanmar Tea Mix. It moved into the softdrink market in 2005 by importing and selling Sunkist and 7up from Malaysia.

The company started building its softdrink factory in 2010 and was finished in April this year, he said.

“Although Sunkist is firstly produced locally, the production and technology sections use international systems,” said U Aung Maw Thein.

“We also have a foreign team working in the production system, meaning we can provide our product cheaply to customers,” he said.

He added that the company added more orange flavour to each can than is used in Malaysia.

The company imports cans from Malaysia because it wants to produce them in Myanmar yet, although it plans to in future.

ANZ to open Yangon representative office in early 2014

By Soe Sandar Oo

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand Banking Group will open a representative office in Yangon early next year, after the Central Bank of Myanmar approved its request for a licence, a company press release said last week.

The company insisted that it would comply with all existing sanctions, and the approval came after talks between ANZ and the Myanmar, Australian and the United States governments.

“Myanmar has significant economic growth potential over the medium term,” said ANZ chief executive officer of International and Institutional Banking Alex Nunn in a statement released December 7.

“The nation is rich in natural resources such as arable land, minerals, energy and fresh water,” he added.

When asked if there were any operating restrictions or if there was any reaction from human rights groups, ANZ replied that it is “still early days” and could not comment further.

The bank, the fourth largest by assets in Australia and the largest in New Zealand, will initially have a representative presence only, to provide services for business and investment clients.

ANZ became the first bank from an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country other than Japan to be granted a licence for operations in Myanmar.

Seventeen other foreign banks have licences from the Central Bank, its website says.

ANZ announced a yearly profit of A$6 billion (about US$4.4 billion) in September. It has a publicly stated strategy of expanding its presence in the Asia Pacific.

EXIM Bank plots representative office

By Soe Sandar Oo

EXPORT-IMPORT Bank of India plans to open a representative office in Myanmar in coming months, the bank’s chairman told the Economic Times of India newspaper last week.

(The) opening of trade links with Myanmar and transit facilities with Bangladesh will open new opportunities for the organic-agriculture produce of Northeast India, “said the bank’s chairman and managing director C A Ranganathan. “EXIM Bank has extended lines of credit to Bangladesh and Myanmar.”
Livestock, fisheries fair catches foreign eye

By Soe Sandar Oo and Myat Nyein Aye

AN exhibition held in Yangon last week that attracted more than 100 potential investors put the spotlight on the crucial livestock and fisheries industry. 

Minister for Commerce U Win Myint opened the event, which was held on December 7 at the Myanmar Fisheries Federation, asking international businesspeople to cooperate with Myanmar to develop the sector.

“I believe that the holding of such exhibitions will present us with the chance to open new markets and uncover new products,” the minister said. “We will get good results when we cooperate with other countries in future. I hope that businessmen can share their experience and opinions in this exhibition,” he added.

U Win Myint said the ministry has significantly reduced red tape to expedite imports and exports, such as by introducing automatic licensing for some products.

He added that growing demand in Asia, especially in the giants of China and India, for meat and diary products, would benefit producers in Myanmar.

The exhibition featured 41 booths from 35 companies, including some from ASEAN members and the European Union, and showcased machinery, feed, veterinary medicine and plenty more.

U Win Aung, president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said: “I believe that this event would be an opportunity to attract responsible foreign investment in these sectors as international companies meet and interact with local partners.”

A woman sorts fish at a factory in Yangon in 2007.

He added that the exposure and access to technology, medicine and other related products would contribute to the development of the livestock and fisheries sector, which in turn would generate increased income for companies and create jobs. Fisheries exports earned about $653.35 million in the 2011-12 financial year, making the sector the fourth-highest export earner, he said. By December 2012, exports of fisheries products had earned $432.75 million – a year-on-year increase of about $72 million.

“This is a good chance for us to meet with our customers face-to-face. Myanmar’s population is large enough to invest many things but especially the food-production business,” said Dr Wiwat Thothanucamin, senior product development director of Thai firm Octa Memorial Co.

“That will be good in the future even though the consumption is relatively low now,” he added.

He said Myanmar has few commercial farms but predicted that would change quickly. “Starting with exhibitions like this I think Thailand, Vietnam, China and other countries will think hard about investing in Myanmar’s livestock and fisheries sector to guarantee food supplies,” he said.

“Our company would like to work with private companies and contribute efforts to increase livestock production here,” he added.

National development plan for 2013 release

By Sandar Lwin

A PLAN setting out national development goals over the next 20 years will be unveiled early next year, Dr Kan Zaw, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, has told The Myanmar Times.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ninth ASEAN 100 Leadership Forum, held on December 5-6 in Yangon, he told The Myanmar Times: “The main theme of the new plan is people-centred development.”

“We are drawing up the Comprehensive National Development Plan for Myanmar 2011-2031 and we estimate it will be delivered in early 2013,” he said.

According to the minister, the 20-year plan will comprise four five-year programs setting targets for each program.

International organisations such as the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia have provided consultancy help to government planning staff in the formation of the plan.

The minister said the plan would be linked to the eight-fact road map for poverty reduction set in 2011.

“We [the government] are already implementing the poverty reduction roadmap and the new plan will also be mainly linked to it,” he said.

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Empty towers show VN dream gone wrong

HANOI, Vietnam – From afar, the gleaming metal and glass edifices of Hanois EVN Tower illustrate Vietnams rapid economic development. Up close, the rubble-strewn entrance and missing windows tell another story: one of loose lending and property speculation that now hangs over the countrys banks.

State-run monopoly Vietnam Electricity began construction of the 33- and 29-storey dual-tower development in 2007, a year when 54 percent credit growth helped fuel the fastest economic expansion in almost 10 years. Now, the economy has slowed, banks are struggling with an increase in bad debts, and unfinished property projects, empty offices and unfinished property developments are on hold, according to the countrys central bank.

For real estate broker Knight Frank Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City, the situation is all but gone. "The biggest risk is that we will see developers walk away from projects and banks bad assets will increase very rapidly," said Marc Townsend, the Ho Chi Minh City-based managing director of CBRE Group Incs Vietnam unit. "They all felt they would have easy money by being a property developer."

State firms so-called non-core investments, such as property and stocks, account for as much as 12pc of their registered capital, Deputy State Auditor Le Minh Khai said in July. The Communist Partys Central Committee on October 15 called on state-owned enterprises to reduce such investments.

"We have never seen rents decline this fast in the market," said Son Nam Nguyen, managing partner at Vietnam Capital Partners, an investment bank in Ho Chi Minh City. "If real estate sales growth curbs demand for commercial real estate, the Hanoi market added more office and retail space since the start of 2011 than in the previous four years combined, said property broker CBRE.

The average asking rent for top-grade central business district office space in Hanoi was about US$47 a square metre a month in 2009, more than double the levels for the same grade space in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur at that time, data from the Vietnam unit of Los Angeles-based CBRE shows. The rate was 1pc lower at $42.01 a square metre in the third quarter.

Average asking rents for Grade B office space in the capitals western district, where some of the nations largest state-owned enterprises have their headquarters, have fallen 10pc since the first quarter of 2009, and slid 22pc in the citys central business district, the data show.

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SCG to boost cement exports

By Htar Htar Khin

THAILAND’S Siam Cement Group last week announced plans to boost exports of its Elephant brand cement to Myanmar, company officials said recently.

Mr Soontornpol Veerapatra, managing director of SCG Trading (the company’s Myanmar subsidiary), said the firm would export 2 million tonnes of cement to Myanmar in 2013. However, the expected increase is only an increase of about 10 percent over the 1.9 million tonnes likely to be exported in 2012, he said during an event at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon.

He added that the company would work to expand its distribution network to include more of Myanmar’s towns and cities. He said there are 10 SCG wholesalers in Myanmar.

Mr Soontornpol said SCG had been active in Myanmar for almost 20 years and was the market leader.

“Our Elephant brand cement has long been the market leader in Myanmar because of its quality—and consumers across ASEAN trust it,” he said.

Dubai returns to its old habits

By Ali Khalil

DUBAI – Dubai is back in the business of unveiling mega projects, three years after a severe financial crisis crippled its booming property sector, but doubts still linger over finance and feasibility.

Just as the economy in the glitzy city-state begins to look promising, despite a large debt burden dating back to the years when growth appeared endless, Dubai has once again set its sights on building superlatives.

We do not anticipate the future. We build it,” Dubai’s ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, architect of its meteoric rise into a regional tourism and services hub, boasted in late November as he unveiled plans to build a “city” carrying his name.

Among the attractions of the new mega plan is a mall touted to be the largest in the world, not far from what is already the world’s largest shopping and entertainment destination, the Dubai Mall.

Mohammed bin Rashid City will sprawl over a large swath of the emirate’s desert and have gardens 30 percent larger than London’s Hyde Park, in addition to 180 hotels, and a Universal Studios theme park.

The price tag was attached to the project which is to be developed by set its sights on building conglomorate and Emaar, which built Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest tower. Last week, Dubai also announced a 10-billion-dirham (US$2.7 billion) leisure centre and theme park.

Dubai appears keen to capitalise on its growing tourism sector which it said is expanding 11pc a year, with hotel occupancy rate hitting 82pc last year.

Sheikh Mohammed said the emirate must stay ahead of expanding demand and match its ambitions.

“The current facilities available in Dubai need to be scaled up in line with the future ambitions for the city,” he said, highlighting a constant rise in tourism and the business of hosting forums and exhibitions.

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“The current facilities available in Dubai need to be scaled up in line with the future ambitions for the city,” he said, highlighting a constant rise in tourism and the business of hosting forums and exhibitions.

Beayond general assurances, Dubai continues to deal with the burden of maturing debt, after it racked $113 billion in borrowings during years of extensive investments, with $9.4 billion reportedly coming due next year and $3 billion in 2014.

“Banks remain wary about lending to real estate developments at a time when they still have to make major provisions against non-performing real estate loans from the last development boom,” said real estate consultancy firm Jones Lang LaSalle in a statement on December 6.

However, “the fact that these projects have long-term time lines is positive as they can be developed alongside demand, both domestically and internationally, so as not to build overcapacity”, Malik said.

“The funding of these plans is important and should be matched with revenue growth potential,” she added.

Dubai’s economy contracted 2.4pc in 2009 when it rattled global markets over its debt crisis before receiving a $10-billion bailout from Abu Dhabi, its oil-rich partner in the Emirates, and reaching restructuring deals with lenders.

The economy has since made a comeback, growing 2.8pc in 2010, 3.4pc in 2011, and 4.1pc on an annual basis in the first half of this year, as tourism, trade and transport keep expanding.

But real estate – a main engine of rapid growth before the crisis – lags behind other sectors, with growth of just 1.5pc in the year, as tourism, trade and transport keep expanding.

The sector crashed in 2009 and a financial crisis dried up finance and investors walked away from planned projects, many of which were eventually put on hold or cancelled.

“Encouragingly, there are indications that some of the lensof the last real estate crisis have been learned,” said Jones Lang LaSalle.

“The most important of these is the need to adopt a long-term and coordinated approach rather than developing too much real estate too quickly.” – AFP
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‘Open your eyes’ to climate warming, Doha talks told

The devastated remains of New Bataan town on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao on December 5. A day after it was hit by Typhoon Bopha, the deadliest to hit the country this year. Pic: AFP

Egyp's Morsi defies protesters

The army on December 6 ordered the square in front of the presidential palace cleared of protesters from both sides, deploying tanks and setting up barbed wire. In his speech, Morsi said more than 80 people had been arrested. He railed against the “aggression”, implying the opposition protesters were to blame.

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We respect peaceful freedom of speech but I will never allow anyone to resort to killing and sabotage,” he said.

Morsi offered to hold talks with the opposition and to meet its representatives on December 8 in his offices, but there was no immediate indication of compromise.

Obama expressed “deep concern” on December 6 over the events in Egypt, in a call to his counterpart Morsi, the White House said. Obama also told Morsi that it was “essential for Egyptian leaders across the political spectrum to put aside their differences and come together to agree on a path that will move Egypt forward,” the White House said in a statement.

The anti-Morsi camp is furious with Morsi for trying sweeping powers on November 22 and by what it feels was the railroading through by an Islamist-dominated panel of the draft constitution.

The violence in Cairo recalls scenes seen in the roughshod over civil, political and human rights and the rights of women.

“…the comprehensive package of reform that Syria is proposing…”

They’re trying to turn it into Iran, but we won’t let this happen.”

Yet the penultimate day of the Doha talks was marked by deep divisions between negotiators from nearly 200 countries on financial assistance to the developing world.

The issue is key to the adoption of a package of plans for limiting greenhouse gas emissions in a bid to halt the march of climate change. Which United Nations countries’ efforts to adapt to that warming world in the next few years.

“An important backdrop for my delegation is the profound reality that we face,” he said.

As we sit here, every single hour, even as we vacillate and procrastinate here, the death toll is rising. Officials say nearly 500 people were killed and a quarter of a million made homeless by the Philippines’ worst typhoon this year – the kind of extreme weather event scientists believe will become more frequent as global temperatures rise.

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**Peacce process warning as settlement plan advances**

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories – The Palestinians on December 5 reacted furiously after a controversial Israeli settlement plan passed a first hurdle, warning that the project would end all hopes for peace.

Israel’s plan for construction in a strip of West Bank land outside Jerusalem called E1 has sparked a diplomatic backlash, with experts saying it could wipe out hopes for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Prague ahead of a trip to Berlin the diplomatic pressure intensified with the European Union summoning Israel’s ambassador over the plan.

Since December 3, Britain, France, Spain, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Ireland and Finland have all taken similar steps in an unprecedented expression of concern over the E1 project, which experts say would isolate Arab east Jerusalem and block the security of the state.

Observers say Israeli plans to build in E1 and connect the Maaleh Adumim settlement with east Jerusalem would effectively prevent the future establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state, dooming the two-state solution.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said the plan was “a red line that cannot be crossed” and warned he would take all the legal means available to prevent such a “dangerous” decision.

“I went to all international parties to prevent this settlement decision, and if it goes ahead we will resort to all legitimate and legal methods,” he said.

News of Israel’s intention to push ahead with the E1 plan emerged on November 30, a day after the Palestinians won UN non-member state observer status, in what was a major diplomatic blow to the Jewish state as it tried to block the move.

With their newly-acquired UN status, the Palestinians now have access to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, sparking fears they could accuse Israel of crimes under the Geneva Convention over its settlement building.

But Netanyahu, who is in the middle of an election campaign, has held firm on the E1 project, saying it was a matter of national security.

“The root of the conflict is not who builds; it is the very existence of the state of Israel and the desire to wipe it off the face of the earth,” he said on December 4.

The settlement plan has been on hold since 2005 following heavy US pressure.

An Israeli official said the approvals process could take a few years to complete.

**NATO backs Turkish request for missiles**

BRUSSELS – NATO on December 4 approved member state Turkey’s request for Patriot missiles to defend its border against Syrian rebels, following a series of blunthad warnings to Damascus not to use chemical weapons.

As the conflict approached the fifth year, with more than 41,000 people killed, according to the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, NATO head Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the alliance’s decision reflected a “steadfast commitment” to preserving the security of its 28 member states.

“We say to anyone who would want to attack Turkey – don’t even think about it,” he said, announcing the decision after the first day of a two-day meeting in Brussels.

NATO said in a statement that it had “agreed to augment Turkey’s air defence capabilities in order to defend the population and territory of Turkey and to contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the alliance’s border”, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States have agreed to provide the Patriot missile batteries, which would come under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, the statement said.

The NATO discussions came amid reports that Syria is moving chemical weapons. As President Bashar al-Assad fights rebels seeking to oust him.

“NATO members expressed grave concerns about reports that the Syrian regime is considering the use of chemical weapons. Any such action would be completely unacceptable and a clear breach of international law,” Rasmussen said.

Turkey welcomed NATO’s decision and reiterated that the missiles would be used solely for defensive purposes.

Turkey’s request for the missiles has angered Russia, a longtime ally of Syria that is deeply suspicious of NATO’s motives.

After NATO talks with Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier on December 4, Rasmussen had said deploying Patriots would be “an effective deterrent, and in that way de-escalate the situation” along the border.

Lavrov dismissed that point, saying the chemical weapons issue was “overblown when it was first announced”.

It was not the first time there have been “rumours and leaks” about chemical weapons use, which would “not be overstated”, he said, while reaffirming Moscow’s position that any use of chemical arms would be a violation of international treaties.

The Syrian government, fighting to prevent the capital Damascus from falling to rebel forces, has said it will never resort to chemical weapons.

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Tree deaths ‘disturbing’: researchers

SYDNEY – Scientists warned last week of an alarming increase in the death rates of the largest living organisms on the planet, the giant, old trees that harbour and sustain countless birds and wildlife.

Research by universities in Australia and the United States, published in Science on December 7, said ecosystems worldwide were in danger of losing forever their largest and oldest trees unless there were policy changes to better protect them.

“It is a very, very disturbing trend,” said Bill Laurance of James Cook University, one of three institutions involved in a study of the problem, along with the Australian National University and Washington University in the US.

The study showed that trees were not only dying en masse in forest fires, but were also perishing at 10 times the normal rate in non-fire years, due to a combination of rapid climate change causing drought and high temperatures, as well as logging and land clearing for farms.

“It is a worldwide problem,” said David Lindenmayer from the ANU and the lead author of the study. – AFP

UK papers back plan for press regulator

LONDON – Britain’s newspapers on Tuesday agreed on December 5 to create an independent press regulator as recommended by the Leveson report, but refused to commit to its controversial proposal for statutory backing.

Tablet and broadsheet editors met in London and agreed to 40 of judge Brian Leveson’s 47 proposals, clearing the path for the creation of a regulator able to issue fines of up to £1 million (US$1.6 million).

But the editors refused to sign up to seven of the report’s proposals, which called for a statutory body to audit the regulator, said those present at the meeting.

Prime Minister David Cameron had the previous day met editors and executives at his 10 Downing Street office to push them to adopt recommendations in Leveson’s report, released on November 29.

The prime minister had previously said that he opposes Leveson’s call for the regulator to be backed by legislation but he told the newspaper bosses to act soon to ensure the consequences.

“I’ve told them that they have to produce a tough, independent regulatory system rapidly and they’ve got to do it in a way that it absolutely meets the requirement of Lord Justice Leveson’s report,” Cameron said after the meeting.

Cameron commissioned the Leveson inquiry in July 2011, after the phone-hacking scandal that led to the closure of Rupert Murdoch’s News of the World tabloid and has since prompted dozens of arrests. – AFP

Dogs can detect lung cancer: study

VIENNA – Dogs are surprisingly adept at sniffing out lung cancer, results from a pilot project in Austria published on December 5 suggested, potentially offering hope for earlier, life-saving diagnosis.

“Dogs have no problem identifying cancer patients,” said Peter Erhartl, head of the palomology department at Krems hospital in northern Austria, an author of the study. The test saw dogs achieve a 76-percent success rate identifying cancer from 120 breath samples, a result so "encouraging" that a two-year study 10 times larger is planned, Erhartl said.

“I’ve never seen anything like it in my time as a journalist,” he told BBC Radio 4’s The Media Show. “We are all used to the sort of annual flatcups at press awards, and all the shouting matches, and we all hate each other.”

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The Nefertiti bust pictured during a press preview of an exhibition at the Neues Museum (New Museum) in Berlin on December 2. The exhibition opened on December 6 – the 100th anniversary of the discovery by German archeologists of the 3400-year-old bust of Egypt’s Queen Nefertiti – and will end on April 13 next year. The Nefertiti bust, the museum’s most famous treasure, is regarded as one of the most priceless depictions of the female face after the Mona Lisa. The bust is the subject of a lingering dispute between Germany and Egypt over its ownership. Pic: AFP
**Network urged Petraeus to challenge Obama: paper**

WASHINGTON – Fox News chief Roger Ailes sent an e-mail to Afghanistan war veteran General David Petraeus to run against Barack Obama for the US presidency, the Washington Post reported on December 4.

A Post investigation found that Petraeus was urged by Ailes to refuse Obama’s offer to head the CIA and suggested that unless the president asked him to become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then he should quit. “He says that if you’re offered (CIA) chairmanship, you refuse if offered anything else, don’t take it; resign in six months and run for president,” a Post reporter said.

Ailes then told the top US general in Afghanistan not to take the CIA offer, in a digital recording of the conversation between Petraeus and Kathleen McFarland, a Fox News pundit and former Pentagon spokeswoman.

The message from Ailes, a longtime Republican media guru who advised former presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, was delivered in a 96-minute interview by McFarland in Petraeus’s office in Kabul, the report said.

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An enigmatic leader’s life of paradoxes

Profile by Deborah Cole

BERLIN – The political life of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Europe’s most influential leader and the oft-proclaimed world’s most powerful woman, is a tale of paradoxes, driven by her own enigmatic nature.

While angry protesters marching the streets of Athens, Lisbon and Madrid brandish caricatures of Merkel in Nazi garb, the 58-year-old enjoys a level of domestic popularity unseen by any post-war leader before her.

The eurozone’s crisis-ravaged nations blame her for imposing budgetary discipline they say is choking off desperately needed growth, yet few deny that any long-term solution is possible without it.

And in Germany, Europe’s biggest economy, Merkel, a twice-married childless Protestant raised in communist East Germany, has become the unchallenged conservative leader of her party. The loveless “grand coalition” of nuclear power until Japan’s Fukushima disaster last year, prompting a dizzying about-face that has seen her cabinet twist in the wind. Rivals also find her chameleon-like qualities uncomfortable.

Merkel was a staunch defender of nuclear power until Japan’s Fukushima disaster last year, prompting a dizzying about-face that has seen her cabinet twist in the wind. Rivals also find her chameleon-like qualities uncomfortable.

Merkel’s inauguration in 2005.

Political scientist and Merkel biographer Gerd Langguth said her outsized work ethic and no-frills style are a comfort to Germans uneasy about the euro-drama.

“She has said she’s sailing the ship through fog,” Langguth said, referring to the debt turmoil. “She’s no ideologue, she’s a pragmatic problem-solver and that is what people want.”

The girl born Angela Kasner left Hamburg, West Germany a few weeks after her birth in 1954 when her Protestant preacher father decided to tend to the flock in the East.

Locals remember her fierce intellect and discretion as a Christian in a totalitarian state. She earned a physics doctorate, married and divorced fellow student Ulrich Merkel and stayed out of politics until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.

In 1990 she joined the CDU and won her first parliamentary seat.

She became minister women’s issues and later environmental affairs but in 2000, rose to the head of the CDU when she alone had the courage to tell Chancellor Helmut Kohl to quit as party chairman over a slash fund scandal.

In 2005 she unseated Social Democratic (SPD) chancellor Gerhard Schroeder after seven years in power, becoming Germany’s first female chancellor.

During her first term, Merkel by her own admission reaped the rewards of Schroeder’s economic reforms that were so contested in his party. The loveless “grand coalition” consolidated her own standing.

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BEIJING – Two years ago, on June 4 – the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre – Ji Pomin received a text message from a high-placed friend: It said that former president Jiang Zemin had been taken to a military hospital in a critical condition.

Ji sent a coded message to hundreds of people in his address book to seek confirmation, asking: “The Supreme Old Master ascended to heaven?” Many of Ji’s political contacts forwarded the text to their friends, who misinterpreted the cryptic question as a statement. By June 6, overseas Chinese websites were reporting that former president Jiang Zemin was dead.

In established democracies, a false rumour about the health of an ageing Ronald Reagan or a Margaret Thatcher would be promptly debunked and have little bearing on the workings of government.

In China’s powerful but brittle dictatorship, built on almost invisible lines of patronage, the false reports of Jiang’s death immediately became a major matter of national security. Chinese officials are extremely paranoid about anyone releasing unauthorised information about the leaders.

Ji, 67, a princeling – a term that refers to children of top leaders – had long known Jiang for clinging to power after his retirement, which he felt hurt China’s ability to institute a system of laws. And as an agent, he knew agents kidnapped him three days later, his fears were vindicated. But he had been lucky: in the kidnapping unscathed, and even critical relations with near impunity shows how the party state still protects its own.

At that point in 2010, high-profile extra-judicial abductions, such as the very publicised disappearance of artist Ai Weiwei in mid-2011, had not yet become common. (Ai has survived as a critic for so long in part because his father, Ai Qing, was a leading poet for the party.)

Ji Pomin did not get the same advantages as other princelings; he was not moved to the leadership Politburo known indirectly on the former president’s succession and had paralysed China’s efforts to institutionalise its leadership selections and had paralysed China’s political process, while they dutifully took notes.

“It’s as if George W. Bush had to work for a decade with a Cabinet left over from Clinton,” said Ji, recalling what he told his interrogators. “If Obama’s State of the Union address was written by Bush, Jiang Zemin promoted dozens of generals while he was in power and those people are either morons or his benchmarks. What a sad situation and how ridiculous.”

The daylight abduction of a princeling like Ji, in downtown Beijing, shows just how delicate the subject of elite politics has become. That Ji wasn’t tortured, that he felt emboldened to speak his mind and that his captors politely drove him back to where they found him two days later, shows the privileges afforded by his status. The secret police had originally lured him out to the street, says Ji, so they would not disturb his mother, then 86, who had joined the revolutionary struggle with his father at the age of 14 in 1938. By contrast, says Ji, they ransacked the homes of several people who received his message. And a historian whose work had influenced Ji’s negative views on Jiang was reportedly arrested and convicted of subversion in May 2011.

In July 2011, media again falsely reported Jiang’s death; it is unclear whether security services investigated Ji or his associates.

On November 8, Jiang, who had appeared in public several times since the last visit, about to know immediate political influence by walking on stage for the opening of the Party Congress right behind his successor Hu, which does not make Ji feel better about the extra dander. In a conversation in March he recalled: “Even if you kill me, my last words will be ‘the central government should investigate Jiang Zemin.’”

(John Garnaut is China correspondent for the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, in which a version of this article has appeared. He is the author of the just published e-book The Rise and Fall of the House of Bo.)
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Hoax call DJs took off air after nurse found dead

SYDNEY – Two Australian radio presenters who duped a nurse at a London hospital’s switchboard and pretended to be Queen Elizabeth II and William’s father Prince Charles, before passing it onto a colleague who divulged details of Kate’s condition, have been summarily deported to their native Hong Kong.

Radio station 2Day FM, which said the hoax call from two radio presenters from 2Day FM pretended to be Queen Elizabeth II and William’s father Prince Charles, before passing it onto a colleague who divulged details of Kate’s condition, said in a statement on its Facebook page, “Southern Cross Austereo and 2Day FM are deeply saddened by the tragic news of the death of nurse Jacintha Saldanha from King Edward VII’s Hospital and we extend our deepest sympathies to her family and all that have been affected by this situation around the world,” it said.

Soon after news of the nurse’s death broke, the radio station’s Facebook page was bombarded with thousands of comments, many attacking the presenters and calling for them to be sacked.

More than 8300 comments had hit the 2Day FM page by early on December 8, some saying Greg and Christian had blood on their hands and calling angrily for them to be dismissed. – AFP

BRIEF

Judge insulted at hearing: lawyers

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka’s top judge, Sirananda Bandaranayake, stormed out of the courtroom after listening to lawyers representing lawmakers calling her a “mad woman” and demanding open hostilities, her lawyers said on December 7.

The move to impeach Bandaranayake came after she dismissed several bills, including one that gave more powers to President Mahinda Rajapakse’s youngest brother Basil, the economic development minister.

In a statement a day after the hearing, her lawyers also said repeated requests for documents supporting allegations against Ban- danarayake were not provided by her accusers.

Surveys forecast big win for LDP

TOKYO – Japan’s main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) said on December 6 it could comfortably win the general election this month, opinion polls showed, with the first time surveys have indicated the DPJ is more popular than a fragile coalition.

A telephone poll by Kyodo news agency showed that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its allies had 56-48 seats in lower house of parliament on December 6.

In the upper house, by the mass-circulation Asahi and Yomi- uri dailies also showed the LDP – which has 115 seats in the lower house – was on course to win a single-party majority.

Police, rioters clash in China

BEIJING – Police in a southern China city bordering Vietnam clashed on December 7 with thousands of rioters who were protesting against alleged abusive behavior by Vietnamese smugglers, the government said.

The incident occurred in Daxin, a county in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, local police said in microblog postings.

The Hong Kong-based International Federation for Hu- man Rights and Democracy said up to 50,000 people joined in the rioting and over 20 police and customs vehicles were smashed or burned.

MPs to be trained to avoid corruption

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia’s government will offer training to lawmakers to teach them how to avoid corruption, a key issue among electoral elections that must be held by the middle of next year.

The 222 lawmakers will learn to identify and deal with “gray areas” in a one-off training session next year, said D. Ravindran, an official with the government-constituent government unit tasked with addressing voter concerns such as graft and crime, said on December 6. – AFP

China challenges VN over oil exploration

BEIJING – China demanded on December 6 that Vietnam end its oil exploration and stop its navy harassing Chinese boats in disputed waters near the Gulf of Tonkin, in the latest tit-for-tat between the neighbours.

“Vietnam’s allegations are inconsistent with facts,” said Beijing’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei, adding that the incident occurred outside the Gulf of Tonkin and near China’s Hainan island.

“China’s boats were carrying out fishing production activities in that part of the sea, which is completely justified, and they were unreasonably dispelled by the Vietnamese naval ships,” he said.

“Vietnam should immediately stop unilateral acts and respect international law,” he said in a statement.

Hanoi and Beijing have a long-standing territorial dispute over the Spratly and Paracel Islands, which both countries claim, and often trade diplomatic barbs over oil exploration and fishing rights in the South China Sea.

Hong said lengthy negotiations were continuing over the demarcation and joint development of the disputed waters where the latest incident took place, in the northwestern part of the sea.

State-run Vietnam News said PetroVietnam’s geological survey vessel, the Birth Mhon 2, was operating in Vietnamese territorial waters on November 30 when it was approached by a number of Chinese fishing vessels which cut its exploration cables.

Beijing must “immediately end this wrongful act and not allow similar acts to re-occur,” Hanoi’s foreign minister of foreign affairs spokesman Luong Thanh Nhãi said in a statement on December 7.

Adding that the incident “violated Vietnam’s sovereignty,” he said. – AFP

Singapore arrests high-rise protesters

SINGAPORE – Two mainland Chinese workers who staged a high-rise protest atop construction cranes in Singapore over unpaid wages have been arrested and could face imprisonment, police said on December 7.

In the second industrial incident in Singapore involving mainland Chinese workers in less than two weeks, the pair clambered up two 10-storey high cranes to highlight their demand for payment of back wages before their return home.

Rescuers coaxed the two men down after more than four hours of negotiations and they were arrested soon after, police said.

“The two men were arrested for unlawfully remaining at the place and intentionally causing alarm. They can expect to face imprisonment, fine or both upon conviction,” a police statement said.

The crane protest came 10 days after Chinese bus drivers staged a wildcat strike at state-linked transport firm SMRT – tightly-controlled by state firms since 1986.

Twenty-nine of the drivers have been summarily deported to China and two others are on trial for staging an illegal strike, an offence punishable by up to a year in prison and fines.

A fifth driver has been jailed for six weeks after pleading guilty. – AFP

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un acknowledges the audience after an orchestral performance marking the 60th anniversary of Kim Il-Sung Military University in Pyongyang on October 29 this year. North Korea spent US$41.5 million this year promoting the 60th anniversary of Kim Il-Sung Military University after an orchestral performance marking the 60th anniversary of Kim Il-Sung Military University, was operating in Vietnamese territorial waters on November 30 when it was approached by a number of Chinese fishing vessels which cut its exploration cables.

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By the time of manufacture, Donnican explained, the balance arm and counterweight had become completely disengaged and he had decided to leave the mixer as it was.
BANGKOK – Former Thai prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is to be charged with murder over the death of a civilian during the 2010 “Red Shirt” rallies, officials said on December 6.

Abhisit, who was prime minister during the mass anti-government rallies and oversaw a military crackdown on the protests, will be questioned next week and charged over the fatal shooting of a taxi driver by soldiers during the unrest.

The Department of Special Investigation, police and Thai prosecutors jointly decided to charge the former leader and his deputy Suthep Thaugsuban under article 288, the section of the Thai criminal code that deals with murder, said DSI chief Tarit Pengthít.

“They acted – repeatedly sending the armed forces against civilians – show an intention to endanger life,” he said.

He said the group based its decision on further witness testimony as well as a court’s testimony as well as a court’s decision in September that the former leader was responsible for their actions, sending the armed forces to court.

“Facts and laws.”

Rights campaigners have said both the protesters and the authorities of the time should be held accountable.

Thailand has been riven by bitter political divisions since Thaksin was toppled by royalist generals in a 2006 coup that unleashed years of violence in decades.

Elections in 2011 brought Red Shirt demonstrators to power, sweeping the current government led by Thaksin Shinawatra and the rival royalist Yellow Shirts.

The monarch has no official political role but is seen as a unifying figure in a country that is frequently riven by political unrest, and his birthday is marked by country-wide celebrations, a public holiday and Thai Father’s Day.

Thailand is in the grip of a long-running political crisis pitting royalists against supporters of ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra and the current government led by his sister Yingluck.

Doctors treating the queen, who was diagnosed with a respiratory illness in 2009, said a statement from the palace. – AFP

Abhisit faces murder charge over Bangkok protest death

Former Thai prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. Pic: AFP

Thai king urges unity in birthday address

BANGKOK – Thailand’s revered king called for unity and stability in the divided nation on December 5 as huge crowds of adoring, flag-waving citizens packed Bangkok for a rare speech to mark his 85th birthday.

At least 200,000 people flooded the capital’s historic district, with aerial television images showing a sea of yellow as supporters of King Bhumibol Adulyadej dressed up in the colour associated with his reign.

The king, who is regarded as a demi-god by many in the politically-turbulent nation, told the crowd that the “goodwill” Thais had shown by attending the ceremony together “gives me the confidence that your kindess is key to bringing unity to the people and the nation”.

“Thais are virtuous, there is hope that no matter what situation the country finds itself in, it will be safe and retain its stability,” said the monarch in his short public address from the balcony at the Grand Palace.

Chants of “long live the king!” followed the royal message as it made its way to and from the hospital where the king has lived for three years since suffering a respiratory illness in 2009. Bhumibol, whose 60 years of service makes him the world’s longest reigning monarch, suffered a minor brain bleed in July, but has since made an official state visit to London.

Doctors treating the queen, who was diagnosed with a slight loss of blood flow to the brain after being taken ill in July, said she was still to speak before the ceremony and made a statement from the palace. – AFP
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Australian novelist plants educational seed

By Myo Lwin

AUSTRALIAN author Di Morrissey was in Yangon last month, promoting her new novel which is set partly in Myanmar, and discussing her support for a school near Sagaing that opened on August 31.

During her stay Ms Morrissey participated in several events around the city to mark the launch of her book titled The Golden Land, and the establishment of The Golden Land Education Foundation, which is aimed at raising funds to support the school.

At one such event, held at Padonmar Restaurant on November 22, the author told The Myanmar Times that the seeds for establishing the school were sown when she was introduced to a Buddhist monk, Venerable Sayadaw Vijji Nanda, while he was visiting Australia.

"I was introduced to Venerable Sayadaw Vijji Nanda when he came to Sydney on a conference, and a friend who is a member of Australian parliament heard about the monk's dream to help poor village children, so she put us in contact," Ms Morrissey said.

"Venerable Vijji Nanda is an energetic and enterprising monk. He wanted to build a school in his village, so I offered to help him. Australian people were very interested and, as they are very generous and practical people, many offered to make donations.

"The author said she needed a "proper way" to funnel donations into the school, so she registered her foundation as a legal charity.

"From that small seed a tree is now starting to grow," Ms Morrissey said.

She said that she and the Venerable Vijji Nanda spent six months emailing plans, photographs and ideas back and forth, and got the land cleared and a small building erected with help from the parents of the children who are now attending the school.

"Venerable Vijji Nanda has worked very hard, doing a lot with little, and also teaching and training young nuns to become teachers," she said.

"The most wonderful thing was to travel to the village outside Sagaing to see "our" school.

"There is much work to be done, we are taking small steps, but have big dreams," Ms Morrissey added. "I planted a tree where we hope to build a bigger school building, and I hope to come back each year to watch my tree and this school become part of a bigger project."

Venerable Vijji Nanda told The Myanmar Times on November 22 event that he wanted to reform the education systems in Myanmar, starting with the children around his village.

"Previously, the children had to walk two or three miles to reach a school in the area. With the building of this school, they will have access to an educational opportunity that is different from the formal education in this country," he said.

He explained that by "formal education" he meant the dominant system in Myanmar at the moment, in which children learn by heart without being exposed to critical thinking or analysis.

"It's like parrots," he said.

"We have parrot teachers, parrot students, parrot government officials and parrot monks. I would like to transform this system. Students need to learn to think more like people than like parrots," he said.

More page 46

Artist puts colour balance on display

By Nyein Ei El Htwe

ARTIST Tin Maung Win (Pyay) will hold his solo exhibition in Yangon from December 18 to 22, displaying 60 paintings that mix modern techniques and traditional Myanmar realism.

Tin Maung Win said the paintings in the show, none of which have been previously exhibited, will be "different from those in other art shows in Myanmar."

"I tried to mix portraits and traditional Myanmar themes with modern methods, because to show our Myanmar artwork to the world, I don't want to cling to the simple and old ways," the artist told The Myanmar Times.

"I want everyone to know that we can make new creations from our traditions.

He said that for him, "colour balance" was the most important aspect of each painting.

"There is weight, volume, reflection and mutual understanding in colours, so I try to highlight this colour balance," he said, adding that he originally intended to call the show "Colour Balance" but thought it might be too confusing for viewers, so instead went with the non-nonsense title "Second Solo Show".

Tin Maung Win said his ideas were influenced by a German artist he studied under in Myanmar from 1981 to 1984, who introduced him to European theories for the use of colour.

"The teacher showed us some techniques, but also told us not to copy him but to create new styles that would be different from others, and these would become unique Myanmar artworks," he said.

He said the paintings in the show will be those he has worked on since his first solo show last year.

"I used thick paints, which I applied to the canvas using a knife. These are the only works I've made in the past year, but it took me many years to develop this technique," he said.

Tin Maung Win's "Second Solo Show" will be held at the Myanmar Traditional Artists and Artisans Organisation (Central), at 187 & 192, East Wing, Bogyoke Market. The paintings will be sold at prices ranging from US$100 to US$1000.

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Street art ban will only increase graffiti: artists

By Pinky

A BAN on graffiti and street art in Yangon, announced in state television last month, will do little to curb the practice and Yangon, we are told, has been so far untapped in terms of street art. When asked whether the ban was likely to stop street artists from doing their art, one Yangon-based graffiti artist, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "We're doing our duty, and we're thinking they can stop graffiti artists because we'll always seek any place to express our feelings and surprise the public."

"But as long as there is no announcement about the punishment for being caught, we will continue drawing. We just need to be more careful. If they catch us on the spot, who knows what they'll do to us," he said.

"Actually, every country has this regulation, so we can't complain about the ban. This is their responsibility. They are doing their duty, and we're trying to create our artwork. I don't think they can stop graffiti artists because we'll always seek any place to express our feelings and surprise the public."

GRAFFITI artist Arker Kyaw, 19, said the ban could give "good benefits for the cleanliness of the city" but added that authorities had gone about imposing the prohibition in the wrong way.

"They shouldn't just impose a ban and do nothing for the graffiti artists. They should have provided some places for graffiti and street artists to work, and put a registration system in place so those who want to draw graffiti can do it legally," he said.

He added that he had heard the punishment for being caught would be three months in jail, but he said this would not deter anyone.

"If authorities just impose a ban without giving or doing anything in return for us, I think the graffiti artists will only increase in the city," he said.

"Student, graffiti artists, street artists will never stop creating. Young people always enjoy doing things that are not allowed."
Asian literary award reveals longest

HONG KONG — Three debut novelists and a Nobel laureate were among the 15 writers longlisted for Asia’s most prestigious literary prize last week, with entries spread across the region from Turkey to Japan.

The longest for the US$50,000 Man Asian Literary Prize (MALT) was from 108 authors shortlisted from nine different Asian countries, and was announced by the literary critic and journalist Maya Jinnah.

The far-ranging stories on our longlist draw the reader into some beautiful and some quizzical landscapes,” said Jinnah.

From “the glaciers of northern Pakistan to the unforgiving Saudi desert; from an affluent Istanbul seaside resort to a Bombay opium den — and further afield to Montreal and Mexico.”

Silent House, an early work from Turkish writer and 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Orhan Pamuk, made the list after appearing in English for the first time.

A total of seven books appear in translation, including Northern Girls, a popular part of Europe. Think in colourful terms of their original language.
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Main Tips
Don’t grill the chicken for too long, or the meat will dry out.
Use the sauce to brush onto whatever you feel like grilling.
You can refrigerate the unused sauce for 3-4 days (as long as it has not come in contact with meat or vegetables).

Money Quote
“The way you make an ozone roosh your character.” — Anthony Bourdain (American chef, author and television personality)

NOT WEEK
Greek salad, meatballs and tzatziki

Japanese BBQ for the holiday season

Phyo’s Cooking Adventure
Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life’s true taste

Japanese-style coleslaw

INGREDIENTS
- (6-8 servings)
- 1 cup of sake or rice wine
- 1 ½ cup of mirin
- 1 cup of sugar (or 3 tablespoons of corn starch)
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce

PREPARATION
1. For yakitori chicken:
   a. Break the chicken breasts (skinside) into a couple dozens of asparagus
2. For coleslaw:
   a. Three handfuls of white wine
   b. One handful of red wine
   c. Two handfuls of mayonnaise
   d. One handful of mayonnaise

INGREDIENTS
- (6 servings)
- 500g chicken wings
- 1 cup of sake or rice wine
- 1 cup of sugar
- 2 cups of soy sauce

PREPARATION
1. For chicken:
   a. Break the chicken wings at the joints and straight them down for another 30 minutes.
   b. Serve immediately.
2. For coleslaw:
   a. Grate the carrots, daikon and sesame seeds into a large bowl.
   b. Add the carrots, daikon and sesame seeds into a large bowl.
   c. Grit the apple into the bowl and pour the dressing on top. Toss well and chill for at least one hour.

Japanese-style coleslaw

INGREDIENTS
- (6 servings)
- 100g of green cabbage
- 100g of red cabbage
- 100g of carrot
- 100g of daikon
- 250g of Japanese mustard
- 250g of black sesame seeds (add)

PREPARATION
1. For coleslaw:
   a. Cut the daikon and carrots into two pieces and grate them coarsely.
   b. Sprinkle ¼ teaspoon of salt on the grated daikon and leave for 15 minutes.
   c. Finely shred the cabbage and place in a big bowl.
   d. Prepare the dressing in a jar, combining all the ingredients. Then add the carrots, daikon and sesame seeds into a large bowl.
   e. Grit the apple into the bowl and pour the dressing on top. Toss well and chill for at least one hour.

Cue the barbecue

Food & Drink
December 10 - 16, 2012

Kaung Kaung Restaurant
102B Dhammazedi Road, Bahan township, Yangon
Tel 09-500-9888, 09-4310-3416, 01-375-7717
Food: 7
Drink: 7
Atmosphere: 5
Service: 8
X Factor: 8
Value for Money: 8

Kaung Kaung’s central location on Dhammazedi Road makes it a convenient destination for the BBQ-lovers, who are usually inclined, although this setting can also be seen as a liability, with hordes of Yangon’s most obnoxious bus drivers passing just a few feet away, madly blaring their horns at every shadow that flits across the moon.

Another huge bonus for me was the block of ice in the urinal, particularly my feelings of accomplishment as I contributed to its slow, steady dissolution with every beer-fuelled visit to the toilet.

Yep, that Conan fellow sure is an inspiration. — DL
Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Ma Moh Moh Lwin @ Premier Coffee Lucky Draw Program

Mr Seren, Ma Kanari Myint and Ma Khin Khin Pine @ United Living Mall 3rd Anniversary

Ma Khine Su Htoo Aung and Ma Khine Thin Thin Myint @ United Living Mall 3rd Anniversary

Guests @ SCG Build with Pride 2012 Event

SCB staff members @ SCG Build with Pride 2012 Event

Mg Mg Aye @ Tea Pot Tea Mix Lucky Draw

Ko Thet Peing Aung Sai Ya and Thaain @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Sae Pyai Tranda @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Pit Seng Lu and Aun Seng @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Distinguished guests @ KPMG Myanmar Office Grand Opening

Daw Khin Me Me Kyi @ Premier Coffee Lucky Draw Program

Pyi Dae Aung @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Tina Pine @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

El Chaw Po @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Thandar Bo @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

M Seng Lu and Awn Seng @ Ko Kyaw Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Ko Joshua Doi Aung and Ms Charlotte Tan @ SCG Build with Pride 2012 Event

SCB staff from Thailand @ SCG Build with Pride 2012 Event

Ya Wai Aung @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Ko Thet Naing Aung Zay Ya and Thazin @ Ko Kyaw Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Soe Myat Nanda @ Ko Kyaw Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Ya Wai Aung @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Pyi Soe Aung @ Ko Kyaw Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Nine Nine @ Ko Kyaw Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Ei Chaw Po @ Ho Fywe Lin and Actress Chaw Yadana’s Wedding

Mg chips Leah @ Premier Coffee Lucky Draw Program

Pyi Seren, Ma Kanari Myint and Ma Khin Khin Pine @ United Living Mall 3rd Anniversary

Mg Mg Aye @ Tea Pot Tea Mix Lucky Draw

Models @ Tea Pot Tea Mix Lucky Draw
It was another exciting week full of lucky draw events, but as usual Socialite found herself clapping for other winners instead of taking any of the prizes herself. She started on November 26 by attending the awards ceremony for The Myanmar Times lucky draw winners at Chatrium Hotel, followed by the Si Daw Gyi laphet lucky draw at Sedona Hotel and the grand opening of KPMG Office Myanmar at Park Royal Hotel. The next day the excitement continued at the Tea Pot lucky draw at Junction Square. On November 30 Socialite found herself at yet another lucky draw event, this one at Royal Garden restaurant for Premier Coffee. On December 1, she attended the wedding reception for Ko Kyaw Lin and actress Chaw Yadana at Sedona Hotel, and then went to the Myanmar Convention Centre for the SCG Build with Pride 2012 event. She ended the week the following day at the Kanebo product launch at Sein Gay Har on Pyay Road.
## Domestic Flight Schedules

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## World’s best airport food found in US, Spain, survey says

By Richard Vines

The best airport food in the world to be found in Barcelona, followed by eight venues across the United States and one in the Netherlands, according to a ranking by The Daily Meal website.

The winner is Porta Gaig, owned by the Catalan chef Carles Gaig, whose Gaig restaurant in Barcelona holds a Michelin star. Second is Salt Lick BBQ, serving Central Texas barbecue at Austin Bergstrom International.

The US dominance may reflect the fact the website is the creation of the American food writer Colman Andrews, author of a biography of El Bulli chef Ferran Adria, who is based in Barcelona, the first European city in the Top 10. "Faced with concourses filled with ubiquitous shrink-wrapped sandwiches, greasy burger and processed pastries, the thought of eating at an airport is rarely appealing," Daily Meal says.

But that may soon change, as airports around the world are revamping ageing terminals and the world’s best chefs, several of them Michelin-starred, are recognising the value of serving exemplary meals before liftoff.

The survey was compiled over six months by Daily Meal’s editors in consultation with food and travel experts. Restaurants were judged on a variety of factors, from food and style/service to British chefs Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver both make the list. Wolfgang Puck doesn’t.

The percentage scores from the category were averaged to arrive at the final ranking, the Daily Meal says.

The survey was earlier reported in the Herald Sun in Melbourne, Australia. — Bloomberg News
Island row takes bite out of Japan tourism

By Kyoko Hasegawa

TOKYO – The sound of Mandarin-speaking tourists and the cash tills they set ringing have become rare in Tokyo’s skyrocket Ginza district, retailers say, since a flare-up in an island row between China and Japan.

“Until September, we had many Chinese customers and you could hear Chinese spoken in our shop,” said Mika Nakatagawa, who trains clerks at cosmetic firm Shiseido’s flagship outlet in Ginza, the Japanese capital’s equivalent of Fifth Avenue in New York.

“Then they suddenly stopped coming. This month, some customers are coming back, but it’s very slow and nothing like before.”

The number of Chinese tourists – one of Japan’s biggest visitor groups behind South Koreans and Taiwanese – plunged 33 percent in October from a year ago to 71,000 visitors, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

And the figure from last year was already weak with tourism still reeling from the March quake-tsunami disaster and subsequent atomic crisis, which sparked a dive in overall visitor numbers.

As airlines cancelled thousands of flights between Japan and China when the long-standing diplomatic row flared in September, Ginza’s upscale retailers soon found that once-jammed Chinese tour buses were nowhere to be seen.

To make matters worse, Chinese tourists, on average, spend more than US$2100 on average, spend more than US$2100 on average, spend more than US$2100 during their visits to Japan, on top of their airfare, among the highest of any nationality, according to Japan Tourism Agency data.

The spat in the decades-long row over an East China Sea island chain sparked a consumer boycott of Japanese products in China and huge demonstrations, prompting Japanese firms operating there to temporarily close stores and factories fearing mob violence.

Tokyo’s nationalisation in September of the disputed islands – located in rich fishing waters and believed to sit atop vast mineral reserves – came at a particularly bad time.

Ginza retailers were hoping for hordes of shoppers during a week-long Chinese holiday in October but the spat kept them away.

“Shops in Ginza have been hugely damaged by the diplomatic fight, as everyone had been preparing for shopping sprees,” said Nakatagawa at Shiseido. “I want the politicians to know the economic impact of this has been big.”

The damage has rippled across Japan’s economy and damaged a more than ¥340 billion annual trade relationship with Beijing.

Japan’s automakers and electronics firms have seen their China sales take a huge hit, with the country’s two biggest airlines – Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways – reporting a steep dive in ticket sales.

And Japan’s goal to boost tourist numbers to a record nine million this year has suddenly become a “very hard” target, said Norifumi Ide, head of the Japan Tourism Organisation.

Not far from the Shiseido outlet, luggage store manager Koichi Miya echoed the grim statistics, saying a big part of his customer base just “disappeared.”

The number of Chinese customers literally turned to zero at one point,” Miya said.

Chinese shoppers often splurge on a large number of products to dole out to family, friends and colleagues, retailers said.

Yamada Denki, one of Japan’s biggest consumer electronics chains, said some of its outlets in Tokyo’s Akihabara district saw a decline in such deep-pocketed customers.

“But our rivals, who pay a commission to tourism agencies to bring in Chinese tourists, may have had a bigger negative impact than us,” a company spokesman said. – AFP

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**International Airlines**

- **Air Asia (FD)**
  - 15, Awan Yra Pagoda Rd, Ground Fl, Parkin Hotel, Yangon, Tel: 255 491/6
- **Air Bagan Ltd (WB)**
  - 46, Shwe Yang Oo Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon, T: 255 320, 255 347
  - SWB Fax: 255 107

- **Air China (CA)**
  - 43, Aung San Rd, corner of Pyay Rd and Haba Aye Pagoda Rd, Hotel Yangon, Yango, Yangon, Myanmar
  - Tel: 255 628/90
  - Air India
  - 75, Shwe Bon Thar St, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Tel: 255 297-98, 255 728. Fax: 255 175

- **Bangkok Airways (PG)**
  - 5025, 3rd Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yango, Yangon, Myanmar
  - Tel: 255 436/4, 255 427/8, 255 426, Fax: 255 419

- **Malaysia Airlines (MH)**
  - 515360, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Tel: 255 748, 255 107 ext: 100, 121, 122 Fax: 255 152

- **Myanmar Airways International (BM)**
  - 58-92, Sakura Tower, 339, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yango, Fax: 255 900

- **Silk Air (MI)**
  - 339, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, 2nd Floor, Sakura Tower, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar
  - Tel: 255 317, Fax: 255 310

- **Thai Airways (TG)**
  - Room No 1100, Sakura Tower, 339, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yango, Yango, Myanmar
  - Tel: 255 332, Fax: 255 232

- **Vietnam Airlines (VN)**
  - 419, Shwe Bon Thar St, 339, Boggyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar
  - Tel: 255 462, 255 380, 255 381, 255 382, Fax: 255 383

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**INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES**

**YANGON TO DON MUENG**

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**YANGON TO CHIANG MAI**

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Subjects to change without notice
Dave Brubeck's passion for rhythm

A doctor once advised Brubeck not to retire from performance in his 80s. "I have more energy at the end than I do at the beginning. You can get so beat up that you can scarcely walk on stage but when you get to the piano the excitement kicks in, you forget about being tired," Brubeck says. "Energy, intellectual and physical, is one of the identifying marks of the Brubeck music. He's always in a rhythmic drive of jazz and blues, yet also was at one point, in the 1940s, a pupil of the French composer Darius Milhaud (who, to further complicate this intriguing case of cultural cross-fertilisation)...." "I learned by osmosis, just from being around him," Brubeck says. "He'd say, 'Dave, you're going to be a composer!' We were good friends." Another of Brubeck's associations – with the alto saxophonist Paul Desmond (1924-1977) – was one of the most memorable musical partnerships in jazz. "In the beginning we were playing a lot, provided the practice of concentration according to your own rules and discipline," Brubeck says. "It's a good idea to spend a little less time pursuing your goals, and research the practice of concentration according to your right effort and management skills. Waste no time on emotion. People who participate in sports will find that the benefits of physical activity spill over into their social life. The urge to be more energetic at the end of the day than at the beginning is a requirement of leadership. Your optimistic outlook is beautiful enough to encourage and purify the souls of others. Never remain indifferent to your close friends who live from you. Don't forget the value of time lost in the pursuit of enthusiasm, even in matters of love." "I didn't played for three months with my group. It was the greatest feeling to be back."

US pianist and composer Dave Brubeck has died at 91. Martin Gayford interviewed Brubeck exactly two years ago in a report reproduced here:

Nonagenarians just aren't what they used to be.

The start of one’s 10th decade used to be a moment for seriously slowing down. The great pianist, composer and bandleader Dave Brubeck, who celebrated his 90th birthday on December 6, has marked the occasion by playing a short season at the Blue Note club in New York and winning the poll in Downbeat magazine for “Jazz Group of the Year.”

"Is that something?" he exclaimed when I talked to him. This must be a record: it’s 60 years since Brubeck and his band first won a Downbeat Poll. What’s his key to this obvious success? He’s playing music. That’s clear from the BBC Arena documentary, in His Own Sweet Way, coproduced by Clint Eastwood.

"The wonderful thing about the life of a jazz musician on the road is getting to the gig," Brubeck says in the film interview. "Once you’re there and playing, it’s marvellous. I played two consecutive weekends, and they both went wonderfully. I hadn’t played for three months with my group. It was the greatest feeling to be back."

French film

The French animated movie A Monster in Paris will be shown at the French Institute (340 Psyay Road) on December 21 at 6.30pm. Admission is free, and refreshments and snacks will be served.

lokatan anniversary art exhibition

lokatan Art Gallery (62 Parsandon Street, First Floor Kyauktada town) will hold its 42nd Anniversary Art Exhibition from December 5 to 31. The show will feature the work of more than 25 prominent member artists of the gallery. The paintings are in oil, watercolour and acrylic on canvas, and are mostly realistic in style.

Golden Valley anniversary show

The Golden Valley Art Centre (540 Golden Valley Road, Bahan township) will celebrate its 25th anniversary with an exhibition from December 6 to 16. The centre is open daily from 9am to 6pm.

Beyond Music

Beyond the Beyond Art Festival – featuring performance, installation, graffiti and video art – will be held at Karawerik Garden and Sen Lan Soe Pay Garden in Yangon from December 6 to 10.

Photography workshops

Two free photography workshops will be held at the French Institute (340 Payay Road in December) in Day 3-8 will be taught in the French Institute (Tel 01-536-900).

Ongoing

Calle de la Salsa

Tuesday is salsa night at 50th Street Bar, featuring free dance-clases (tango, bachata, mambo, merengue and more), plus dance shows and drinks specials. With music by DJ Mani and special guests.

Wednesday wine

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at the CP Inya Shop (30 Inya Road). Taste four or five wines for K10,000 a person. Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 09-7201-8711.

Live music

Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes at 50th Street Restaurant every Wednesday and Friday night.

Lea

(Tuesday 23-27 Aug)

Taking responsibility is a requirement of leadership. Your optimistic outlook is beautiful enough to encourage and purify the souls of others. Never remain indifferent to your close friends who live from you. Don't forget the value of time lost in the pursuit of enthusiasm, even in matters of love.

Win Zaw exhibition

Artist Win Zaw is holding his fourth solo exhibition at the headquarters of the Myanmar Traditional Arts and Artists Organisation (187 & 192 East Wing, Bishopgate Market, Yangon) from December 18 to 22. Open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Scorpio

(Tuesday 23-27 Nov)

Depend upon yourself and accept leadership. Short, quick and active plans for professional risk are recommended; authorised people are sure to help push you in the right direction. Foreigners might influence your decisions. Change your outlook about your love life.

Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

Eliminate negative thought processes from your mind as soon as possible and avoid using harsh language with your partners. Opportunity requires courage and an optimistic outlook. Social conflict will cause problems with communication. Humility is the way of the wise.

Cancer

(June 22 - July 22)

Intelligence must be under the management of wisdom. Determine to perform your role with confidence and in a straightforward manner. Look down at nobody, but instead look up to everyone. A great opportunity will soon be at hand. Love requires courage and responsibility.

Libra

(Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Success. Use social communication to become part of a broader community. You might influence the large world. Humans have the breath to love each other without limitation.

Sagittarius

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Keep in mind that the desires of imbalances, improve create and find a better way are all the characteristics of a leader. Being at the top has its own set of problems and challenges. You should look forward to achieve the overall authority you have.

Capricorn

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Work to ensure high morale and team spirit around these around you. Cultivate endurance as a quality of your mind, and increase your mental powers and stability by keeping your knowledge flexible and staying courageous. Changeable emotions are not suitable to be near you.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113 Thamain Bayan Road, Sanchaung Township, Yangon. Tel: 09713136382, Email: williamaste@gmail.com

YOUR STARS

By Astrologer

Aung Myin Kyaw

Taro Kyaw


Miniature exhibition group art show

A group art exhibition entitled “Lilliput (2)” is being shown at Culture Bridge Gallery (31 Upper Pazungdaw Street, Second Floor) through December 11. Among the 41 artists represented are late realist painters such as Wathone and Bagyi Aung Soe, as well as young contemporary artists including CMK (Chan Nyein Kyaw).

Tin Maung Win show

Painter Tin Maung Win will hold his second solo art exhibition at the headquarters of the Myanmar Traditional Arts and Artists Organisation (187 & 192 East Wing, Bishopgate Market, Yangon) from December 18 to 22. Open daily from 9am to 5pm.

Landscapes of the Heart paintings

Paintings by Hla Toe are on show at the headquarters of the Myanmar Traditional Arts and Artists Organisation (187 & 192 East Wing, Bishopgate Market, Yangon) from December 14 to 16. Gallery hours are 9am to 9pm.

Events Flash

December 10 - 16, 2012

THE MYANMAR TIMES

56

.timeout.
The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is seeking (1) Program Assistant/Travel Manager (PM) to work in Myanmar to drive the work of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Myanmar. The successful candidate will manage the Alliance Myanmar staff and take the lead on programme and operational development, as an integral part of the Alliance’s work in the country. Qualified people living with HIV are particularly encouraged to apply.

Face to face interviews: w/c 21st January 2013, in Yangon

Please visit our website www.aidsalliance.org and click on ‘jobs’. If you experience difficulty accessing the information online, please email recruitment@aidsalliance.org with “Jobs” in the subject line.

For more details on this post, including Job Description and Person Specification please apply CV with 3 recent photos including passport size and CV & attestation letter to recruitment@aidsalliance.org. Only email applications will be accepted. Pls send CV to Rocket Internet, 44-A, Tharyarwaddy Road, Bahan, Yangon or per email to recruitment@aidsalliance.org.

**Positions Available:**

**Pre-School English Teacher**

- **Salary**: Competitive
- **Requirements**: Native English speaker, 1 year experience in teaching English
- **Responsibilities**: Instructs children in English language, develops basic skills, promotes communication & teamwork

**Program Assistant**

- **Salary**: Competitive
- **Requirements**: Graduated, 2 years experience, command in English
- **Responsibilities**: Provides administrative support, performs data entry, assists with planning and implementation of projects

**Application**: Interested candidates are requested to submit their CV and a cover letter to recruitment@aidsalliance.org. Only email applications will be accepted. Pls send CV and relevant documents (certificates, an official recommendation Letter and Attestation Letter) by email to recruitment@aidsalliance.org.

Closing date: 27th January 2013

WE AMARA

**Local Position**

**Elevator Manager**

- **Salary**: Competitive
- **Requirements**: Bachelor Degree in Mining and Natural Resources
- **Responsibilities**: Ensures effective operations of all equipment, manages maintenance of equipment, supervises the work of staff

**Application**: Interested candidates are requested to submit their CV and a cover letter to recruitment@aidsalliance.org. Only email applications will be accepted. Pls send CV and relevant documents (certificates, an official recommendation Letter and Attestation Letter) by email to recruitment@aidsalliance.org.

Closing date: 27th January 2013

**Employment**
JAKARTA – Indonesia’s sports minister stepped down December 7 after being named a suspect in a multi-million-dollar corruption scandal, in a move that could signal to the president the ruling party ahead of 2014 elections.

Andi Mallarangeng is the first minister to resign on graft allegations since the country’s powerful Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) began operating in 2003 with a mandate to crack down on rampant graft.

The case is an embarrassment for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who won a landslide victory for a second term earlier this year on a corruption-fighting platform.

While the country has shown an improvement in tackling corruption over the past decade, that battle has dwindled in recent years.

This week was rated 118th of 176 countries ranked by Transparency International’s annual index, which rates the least to the most corrupt states.

The Corruption Eradication Commission announced late Thursday that Mallarangeng was a suspect in connection with the construction of a sports centre worth 2.5 trillion rupiah ($2250 for a light jacket signed by internationally ranked young people.

$5450 auction benefits young tennis players

A CHARITY auction at a Tennis Federation of Myanmar event in Yangon last week raised US$4500 to help promote the sport among young people.

After some spirited bidding starting at US$3, the top price was paid for apparently autographed by internationally ranked players and coaches by the ATP World Tour player, Asiam Qureshi.

Qureshi, one of the world’s top doubles players, bids at the given keynote address at the Pro-Am fund raising dinner held at the federation’s Theinshyu Road centre on December 7.

The other auctioned clothing was T-shirts, with one autographed by Andy Murray fetching the highest price of $1400.

Announcing the total amount raised, chairman of the Tennis Federation, treasurer Muhammad Nazaruddin said: “This will benefit a lot of young tennis players.

Apart from Qureshi, other speakers at the event included the president of the TFM, U Aung Ma Nu, and the federation’s technical director, Mr Robert Davis.

“I am picking just those already won or to be played,” he said.

“I'm trying to prioritize the events in which I participate, therefore I am not able to play 25 tournaments in a year,” he told the Folha newspaper.

Tommy Haas and Spain’s Tommy Robredo, Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Germany’s Tommy Haas and Spain’s Tommy Robredo, Victoria Azarenka, Maria Sharapova and Serena Williams are also part of the tour.

Roger Federer hits a return against Thomaz Bellucci during an exhibition match at the Ibirapuera Gymnasium in Sao Paulo on December 6. Pic: AFP

Federer targets Rio Olympics

SAO PAULO – Roger Federer wants to play at the 2016 Rio Olympics and will cut back his schedule in an effort to extend his shelf life.

The 17-time Grand Slam title winner will be 35 by the time the Rio Games come around, but the Swiss world number two remains without a gold medal in singles having been denied by Andy Murray in the London (NHL) gold medal match in July 2012.

Also cancelled are two marquee events: the annual outdoor Winter Classic and the NHL All-Star Game.

“Regrettably, we have been unable to close the divide on some critical issues that we feel are essential to the immediate and long-term health of our game,” Winnipeg Jets chairman Mark Chipman said in a statement.

“I don’t want to become a burden for the president and the cabinet. The wheels of the government must keep turning, and my personal legal matters are my responsibility,” he said.

The KPK asked authorities to ban Mallarangeng from travelling pending an investigation.

The Hamahlang sports centre was built on the outskirts of the capital, Jakarta, in a tender process that has been publicly questioned.

“Suspicions about me and the things levelled at me in the media are not true. Since becoming minister, in my whole professional career, I’ve always tried to do things as well and straight as possible,” Mallarangeng said.

The KPK has named several members of Yudhoyono’s Democratic Party as suspects in various cases in the recent years, threatening the ruling party’s position ahead of mid-year elections in 2014.

The KPK this year prosecuted a suspect in the corruption case.

“Regrettably, we have been unable to close the divide on some critical issues that we feel are essential to the immediate and long-term health of our game,” Winnipeg Jets chairman Mark Chipman said in a statement.

“The one sense there are some members of the players association that understand our perspective on these issues, clearly there are many that don’t. I am deeply disappointed that we were unable to bring this extremely unfortunate situation to a successful conclusion and I wish to apologize to our fans and sponsors for letting them down.”

Both sides have been deadlock on how to divide US$3.1 billion in revenue since their collective bargaining agreement expired on September 15.

The work stoppage has already forced the cancellation of regular-season games through December 14. That left 27 regular-season games, 34.3 percent of a season that was shortened to start on October 6.

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NHL Players Association executive director Don Fehr told reporters the sides could be close to an agreement.

But union special counsel Steve Fehr, his brother, then received a voicemail from NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, rejecting the union’s proposal, causing Don Fehr to backtrack and tell reporters: “It looks like this is going to be resolved in the immediate future.”

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Myanmar cricket struggles for survival

By Tony Yoo

Myanmar cricket is fighting for its future.

“In November the boys trained for four to five hours each day, with no sleep and not enough food”, Myanmar national team duty supervisor U Hla Oo said. “But I worry it’s not enough.”

This week in Thailand, Myanmar is playing in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Trophy Challenge. With the sport in a delicate state in this country the team realises their performances will have consequences back at home.

“The result of this tournament is very important,” said U Hla Oo in Yangon before the side departed. The squad has been preparing since March this year, with training intensifying the past month.

The Myanmar Cricket Federation (MCF) desperately wants to give the sport a promotional push next year by having the team play in front of a home crowd at the South East Asian Games. However that vision will be in jeopardy without good performances in northern Thailand.

Future funding from the ACC is directly tied to the placing in this competition.

The tournament runs through Thursday December 13 across three venues in Chiang Mai. Seven teams from the third tier of Asian cricket nations are competing. Myanmar has been placed in Group B along with Bahrain, Qatar and China. Group A sees Thailand, Singapore, and Iran justly.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the semi-finals, with the final to be played at Thaloidk Oval. But the trip is off to a rough start, Myanmar lost to Qatar by eight wickets after mustering only 54 in its innings on December 7.

This is Myanmar’s third ACC Trophy Challenge tournament. The 2009 and 2010 events saw the team beaten soundly by more experienced nations. The national team is currently ranked 18th in Asia. The coach is a former professional cricketer from Bangladesh, Ashiq-ul-Islam.

Cricket is an internationally popular game but the World Cup is the third largest global television audience after the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, according to the Wisden cricket almanac.

Players from all over the world are recruited by the Indian Premier League on contracts worth millions of US dollars to play in packed stadiums.

Such is the globalisation of the sport that China has recently embarked on an aggressive programme to develop its domestic scene. The authorities there view cricket as a way of competing for “soft” power with its Asian rival India.

Starting from almost a zero player base in 2004, the Chinese Cricket Association aims to qualify for the World Cup by 2019, according to ESPN Cricinfo.

The result of this tournament is the most realistic chance of Myanmar securing its first ever international win at senior level. He international victory came against India.

“Myanmar is playing in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Trophy Challenge, the tournament in eight years’ time “A Euro for Europe”. The response has been extremely positive from all the nations associations, he added, apart from Turkey.

But there was widespread disbelief among many fans on Twitter, in particular over the potential Qatar’s World Cup
to watch games in a number of countries.

“Meanwhile, the chief exces (low cost airlines) Ryanair and Easyjet are jumping for joy,” noted one user.

Others said that the idea of not having a single host nation would ruin the atmosphere of the tournament, which is football’s second-biggest after the World Cup.

Infantino said he was not in a position to say how many Leagues would be involved but if the project was ready in January, it would be rubber-stamped then or at the executive committee meeting on March 23.

A decision to award Qatar the 2022 World Cup has already caused discontent among fans, especially with the tournament being held in the scorching heat of a Gulf summer.

Infantino said he was not in a position to say how many leagues would be involved but if the project was ready in January, it would be rubber-stamped then or at the executive committee meeting on March 23.

Cities were likely to be chosen in early 2014 – six years before the start of the tournament, he added.

Turkey, which has put itself forward as a candidate European teams and even the historic Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) toured the country in the early 20th century.

“[It] was a pre-test tour to India for the most part.” MCF spokesperson Neil Robinson told The Myanmar Times by e-mail of the two matches played in Yangon in 1972. “There don’t seem to have been any actual Burmese playing for Burma or Rangoon Gymkhana.

The three non-English players on the national team appear to be Indian Musulim.

UEFA president France’s Michel Platini during the year’s last meeting football’s European governing body on December 6 in Lausanne.

UEFA’s executive committee has given the green light to holding the European championships in 2020 across the continent.

LAUSANNE – UEFA’s executive committee has given the green light to holding the European championships in 2020 across the continent, the governing body’s secretary-general Gianni Infantino said on December 6.

Former French captain Michel Platini, who is president of UEFA, first mooted the idea of holding the tournament in a number of cities earlier this year, as a way of avoiding high costs at a time of dire financial constraints in many countries.

“UEFA Euro 2020 will be staged across the continent, in various major cities, following a decision taken today,” said Infantino, first time the tournament in eight years’ time “A Euro for Europe”.

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