Ministry to seek more talks with Thailand on workers

Migrant rights activists criticise Thai decision to close registration centres

By Bill O'Toole

THE Ministry of Labour plans to push Thailand to reopen centres that allow illegal migrant workers to register and work legally in the country, a senior Ministry of Labour official said last week.

The centres closed on December 14, the deadline the Thai government set for undocumented migrant workers to apply for passports under the National Verification program and avoid possible deportation. The decision has been criticised by activists, who argue it puts illegal migrant workers at greater risk of exploitation.

After negotiating a six-month extension in June, the Department of Labour had again asked Thailand to push back the deadline but this time Yingluck Shinawatra’s government stood firm.

Department director general U Myo Aung said he remained optimistic Thailand would reopen the five registration centres and allow more workers to register for the national verification scheme.

“I think we will travel soon to Thailand and discuss a detailed process of how to make our workers safe,” he told The Myanmar Times by phone from Nay Pyi Taw on December 13.

“Thailand wants to close the five immigration centres, we would like those centres to stay open,” he said. “All countries have their own, national interests. We will cooperate [with the Thai government] … I hope we will be able to work for good conditions for our workers.”

He said both President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi agreed on the need to take steps to improve conditions for Myanmar workers abroad, adding that the pair “often speak about protection of our workers in any country – it’s an important issue.”

As of October 31, 1.16 million migrants had registered under the National Verification program, but experts say an estimated one million migrants from Myanmar are still unregistered.

The Thai Department of Employment was unavailable for comment last week but many civil society groups working on the Thai-Myanmar border criticised the closure of the centres, which effectively make our workers safe,” he told The Myanmar Times by phone from Nay Pyi Taw on December 13.

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YANGON – Officials said last week they had made a fresh round of arrests over a spate of protests demanding apologies for a police crackdown on a rally at a Chinese-backed copper mine last month.

Demonstrations have been held across the country in a display of public anger for injuries, including severe burns, sustained by dozens of monks in a pre-dawn raid on protest camps at the mine on November 29.

“Some activists were arrested for questioning,” a police official said on December 14, asking not to be named. He said they were picked up in Mandalay for protesting without permission.

Activist group All Burma Federation of Student Unions, which took part in street action this week, said eight people were arrested late on December 13.

“Four activists from Mandalay have not been released yet. We do not know where they are,” a representative of the group said on condition of anonymity.

Hundreds of monks, supported by activists, staged demonstrations across Myanmar on December 12 over the mine crackdown, the toughest clampdown on demonstrators since a reformist government came to power last year.

The wife of U Thein Aung Myint, one of the arrested protesters, said her husband was taken from their home in the evening and had not returned.

“I think he was taken because of his involvement in the monk-led protest on December 12,” said Daw Khet Khet Tin.

On December 7 Minister for Religious Affairs Thura U Myint Maung apologised to some of the country’s most senior clerics for injuries to
Corruption index: an exercise in futility

By Derek Tonkin

CORRUPTION is a serious issue in Myanmar, as in Southeast Asia, not least in Myanmar. This has been recognised by President U Thein Sein’s reformist government, which has highlighted in his major speeches. In late November the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a statement on the matter, which was drafting new anti-corruption legislation to replace the current one, which dates back from 1948. Although this is still very much work in hand, I was nonetheless at first surprised to find that Myanmar is again relegated to a very low position in the latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released on December 5 by Transparency International (TI). Myanmar occupies the 172nd place out of 176 countries reviewed compared with 180th out of 182 in 2011. But then I read that Samantha Grant, TI’s Regional Coordinator for Asia Pacific, had acknowledged to Chiang Mai-based The Irrawaddy that Myanmar’s reform process has not yet had a positive impact on its latest corruption ranking and that some of the information for the survey is two years out of date.

TI has so far given no explanation of why it decided not to seek out the latest information and provide an up-to-date assessment. I would argue that Myanmar would merit special attention because of the unprecedented international interest in what is happening in the country. Myanmar is under intense scrutiny by both government and non-governmental, legal, business, investment and sociological organisations who are working hard to provide the kind of information that the latest information. We might well ask: Why did TI not do likewise? What is the point of including Myanmar in its ranking that less is prepared to do the job properly? Indeed, when did TI last visit Myanmar? What in-country inquiries has it made?

It is important to read TI’s Frequently Asked Questions in order to understand exactly what its index represents. FAQ No 6 states that: “The CPI is an indicator of public sector corruption i.e. administrative and political sector corruption.” The CPI is accordingly not an indicator of how corrupt a country is perceived to be, talking both the public and private sectors into account. This is however how the TI index for Myanmar is likely to be interpreted by many who do not read the explanatory notes.

The latest detailed study of Myanmar by TI which I can find is dated March 25, 2009: “Overview of Corruption in Myanmar”. In this study, liberal sprinkled with US State Department references and which may still be the basis for its latest ranking, it says it has little information about the nature and levels of corruption in the country, but it adds on page two that “all sources and observers agree that rampant corruption pervades all levels of the industry. MOGE is a state-owned company formed in 1983 from the nationalised Burmah Oil Company. It is a major supplier to the state. Its contracts with Asian and Western companies on the Yadana and Yetagun gas fields are based on standard international models for exploration, production and operation.

There has never been any secret about how much revenues earned by state oil and gas companies are seen as a milch-cow for official extravagance. The control of such revenues, which are not “siphoned” off because they belong legally to the state, lies in state hands. It is not MOGE which decides how profit allocated to its “shareholders” shall be spent: how much should be allocated to Myanmar’s foreign exchange reserves, to defence purchases, or the construction of Nay Pyi Taw or indeed to any other undertaking by the state.

In this context, I would hope that TI has studied the details of the 2012-13 Union Budget. These details appeared only in the Burmese-language press and have not to my knowledge yet been translated into English. For the first time the budget forecasts the income of the Ministry of Energy, which is responsible for MOGE, at US$3.299 billion, and expenditure at $2.054 billion. The use of revenues regarding co-investment needed with China on the oil and gas pipelines, to be completed in 2013, as well as investment earmarked for the construction of power stations and other purposes for the population at large. This means that a surplus of some $1.245 billion has for the first time been openly declared in the budget for general use. At least a start has been made in resolving the lack of transparency under the former regime.

As a member of the advisory council of the Business and Corruption Network, I would do well to seek his advice about the reality of Myanmar today.

Derek Tonkin is a former British ambassador to Vietnam, Thailand and chairman of non-profit Network Myanmar.)
By Soe Than Lynn

Thousands of monks protest, issue demands

Protesters seek apology from president over Nov 29 Letpadaung crackdown

By Win Ko Ko Latt

USDP has no plans to change voting system, says U Htay Oo

A SENIOR Union Solidarity and Development Party official said the party has no immediate plan to put forward a proposal to the voting system from first-past-the-post to a form of proportional representation.

However, USDP vice chairman U Htay Oo did not rule out introducing the changes at some point, or supporting a motion from other parties to change the voting system.

“At present we are still studying (proportional representation). It is not true that a proposal to change to it will be submitted to the hluttaw and voting system will change,” U Htay Oo told The Myanmar Times at the party’s headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw on December 13.

Myanmar uses first-past-the-post, a winner takes all voting system whereby the candidate with the highest number of votes in a given constituency is the winner. However, minority parties, including an alliance of 10 ethnic and Myanmar parties, believe pushing for change in the middle of this year after the National League for Democracy swept 43 of the 44 seats it contested in the April 1 by-elections.

Members of the party alliance met and discussed the issue with Union Election Commission chairman U Tin Aye in July. The former general agreed to look at the proposal and possibly submit it to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for a vote but the two major parties, NLD and USDP, have refused to publicly support any change.

U Htay Oo said there were many different types of proportional representation and if parties wanted to change the voting system then representatives would discuss the issue in the hluttaw, particularly whether the change would benefit the majority of people.

“Every system has its advantages but what is important is that it is fairly and transparently applied,” he said.

However, he warned that voters may face difficulties if a ballot paper is changed to proportional representation, pointing out that many still struggled with the much simpler first-past-the-post system.

“Proportional representation will not be as simple as the present system.”

“If proportional representation is used, we will have to use different ballot papers and it will definitely not be as simple as the present system. Under the present system, voting just entails ticking the box (next to the party) you like,” he said.

“I have no idea which system is best, but in some proportional representation systems you have to choose your favourite, second favourite, third favourite and so on.”

In an interview in July, The Wave magazine editor Kyaw Win said that while proportional representation may be appropriate for Myanmar in the long term, it might make it hard to find common ground in the hluttaw because there will be many parties. In particular, it will make it hard to gain the 75 per cent necessary to change the constitution.

The NLD

Translated by Thit Lwin
UN, govt urge housing for nation's low-income earners

By Tim McLaughlin

UN representatives and other senior government officials convened in Nay Pyi Taw last week to discuss housing sector policy options in an effort to move towards Myanmar’s low income population.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Options for Housing Sector was organised by The Urban Research and Development Institute (URDI).

The URDI was created in September 2011 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by The Department of Housing Development (DHSHD) of the Ministry of Construction and UN-Habitat to address possible areas of cooperation.

“The EGM was meant to provide options for the Housing Sector as the first step for achieving a basic framework for means of housing provision in Myanmar,” said U Win Tin, the Myanmar Minister of Construction in his opening remarks to delegates on December 12.

Myanmar finds itself facing a host of housing sector and land rights issues in need of urgent action. An October report published by Displacement Solutions entitled “Housing at the Crossroads: Proposals for Building Improved Housing, Land and Property Rights Framework that Protects the People’s Human and Social Development, Economic, found that the country had “grossly inadequate housing conditions facing significant sections of both the urban and rural population” The sector of Department of Human Settlements and Housing Development, U Win Tun urged that the commission work towards a long term solution of self-sustainability for lower income families. This approach, he said, would help to abolish a cycle of dependency on government constructed housing.

“The intention of this EGM is to gain a broad understanding on low-income housing issues, and realise that low-income people spend almost all their income on purchasing food and have no savings to buy a house. We need ideas on how to generate more income opportunities for them instead of building houses for them,” he said.

He said that many migrants had been desperate to get a passport before the deadline and recruitment agencies and even Thai authorities had taken advantage of this by charging additional fees. In an open letter to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered to the National League for Democracy leader on December 10 in Yangon, the network wrote: “Even now … the cost of applying for a temporary NY (National Verification) passport is already very expensive and extortionate in practice.”

Mr Andy Hall, an expert at Mahidol University’s Institute for Population and Social Research in Chiang Mai and adviser to the Department of Labour in Nay Pyi Taw, argued the uncost effective of acquiring documents had gone up as the deadline approached. “What we’ve seen in the last week [on the border] is a clear trend towards brokers taking out a loan from Thai organised crime syndicates, sending them into crippling debt and increasing the risk of them being a victim of trafficking,” he said on December 11.

He said recruitment agencies and even immigration authorities have started to demand as much as US$700 or $800 for one passport. To cover the cost, undocumented migrants are often forced to take out a loan from Thai organised crime syndicates, sending them into crippling debt and increasing the risk of them being a victim of trafficking.

Until the program restarts, the many undocumented workers still in Thailand will find themselves with no recourse other than keeping their heads down and avoiding immigration authorities. “Many immigrants we know are liable for deportation,” said Ms Jackie Pollack, director of the MAF foundation, which advocates for migrants rights along the Thai-Myanmar border. “They’re lying low and they’re living with that fear and uncertainty … the threat hangs over their heads. It makes them insecure and makes them not want to demand their rights.”

In Thailand and across the globe, undocumented migrant workers often find themselves the victims ofinhuman treatment. According to October 2011 report by the International Organisation for Migration, “Irregular migrants are one of the groups most vulnerable to rights violations in a host state since their invisibility in society often means that they are unable to report abuse.”

The report estimated that there were about 1.4 million undocumented migrant workers in Thailand, with the majority coming from Myanmar.
Lack of development sparked riots: govt

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

FOR the second time, the government has hit out at foreign media depictions of “genocide” in Rakhine State, urging foreign diplomats and reporters to “think for themselves”.

The government also urged the international community to provide more relief funding.

Union Minister for Border Affairs Lieutenant General Thein Htay said the international community had a responsibility to provide funding to resolve the intercommunal violence in Rakhine State.

The minister went on to criticise the international community, saying: “Even UNDP (United Nations Development Program) has not provided us with a normal country program for more than 20 years. We need such a program to help develop the state.”

The United Nations last month launched an urgent appeal for more than US$115 million to provide humanitarian assistance to more than 115,000 people displaced by violence in Rakhine State.

Lack of development in the region, and lack of international assistance, was the main reason for the violence, he said.

The minister was speaking at a December 8 press conference called at the conclusion of a visit to Rakhine State by high-ranking representatives of the international community.

The visit was led by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Khan, who was accompanied by UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs Valerie Amos and a number of foreign diplomats.

The border minister’s criticism echoed a statement issued last week by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which accused the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news network of “exaggerating and fabricating the incidents in Rakhine State” in a documentary about the “so-called Rohingya”. The government said it had handled violence “between Bengalis and the ethnic Rakhine people ... with full transparency”.

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The press conference Lt Gen Thein Htay urged diplomats to heed the appeal.

Al Jazeera aired the documentary, called “The Hidden Genocide”, from December 9 to 12 in English and Arabic.

Lt Gen Thein Htay said: “In Rakhine, there were only 250,000 Rokhingya in 1980 and now there are one million. Think for yourselves. Is this genocide?"

He said government teams had visited Rakhine State several times and assisted both communities without discrimination since violence first broke out in June. The purpose of the December 7 visit was to allow high-ranking international representatives to see the real situation there.

“We have nothing to hide, and we are asking for your help in resolving this issue,” Lt Gen Thein Htay said.

Concerning the question of citizenship of the Rohingyas, Union Minister for Immigration U Khin Yi responded by saying anyone could apply for citizenship and all applications would be considered under the 1982 Citizenship Law. Anyone who meets the criteria, which including showing their family has lived in Myanmar for three generations, qualifies for citizenship, he said.

Residents of Rakhine State trawl through rubble after an outbreak of violence in October. Pic: Kaung Htet

| JUSTICE is needed at Letpadaung: Daw Suu |

By Win Ko Ko Latt

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi says an investigation into the Letpadaung mine expansion offered near Monywa will reach a “just and right” result after a fair investigation.

She made the comments on December 8 at Saptwar village in Magwe Region’s Taungdwingyi township in response to a question from a monk, who said he was worried that Gustafsson would conclude if the government did not offer a more substantial apology for a raid on protest camps on November 29 that left scores of people, mostly monks, injured.

The National League for Democracy leader stopped in the village, where about 1000 people had gathered to see her, as her party made its way to Natmauk, the hometown of her father, General Aung San.

“We will find out what happened” with justice. We will recommend the correct solution based on what we really found in our examination,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was on December 1 tasked with heading the Letpadaung Investigation Commission, which has 16 members.

The monks asked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi how the community could move forward amid growing hardship and unhappiness for monks and laypeople in the area.

She said: “The commission’s recommendations are unlikely to answer a question: “It might not agree with all the various opinions. We will unveil a solution based on the true situation and what we see,” she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the commission is examining whether the injuries to monks were deliberate but added that everyone was innocent until proven guilty under the law.

“I hope all of you [monks] will deal with each other with compassion and accept the apology that has been offered. We will try to find a solution as quickly as possible that will satisfy not only the Sangha but all citizens.”

— Translated by Ei Ei Toe
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will then report the cases to President U Thein Sein. Even if the farmers cannot get their land back, we will try to reduce their losses,” said U Aung Thein. U Hla Myint, a farmer from Alwan Sut village, Thabyin township, who lost 13 acres of his land, said that he hopes to be compensated through the Farmland Nationalisation Act of 1953.

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A DRAFT Myanmar National Human Rights law aimed at broadening the work of the human rights commission and ensuring its independence has been sent to President U Thein Sein, the commission’s chairman said last week.

U Win Mra, chairman of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, said he hoped the president would approve the draft “very soon”.

"In order to protect human rights and to enhance our work, we need more authority to act and work independently,” he told The Myanmar Times on December 10 after a Human Rights Day ceremony at Inya Lake Hotel in Yangon.

The law will also resolve a dispute between the government and legislators over the formation of the commission, as it will have to be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for approval. In April, the parliament refused to approve the government’s funding request for the commission because legislators argued that its formation by presidential decree did not conform with the constitution.

"After the president has approved (the draft), we will send it to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw," he said.

While he declined to give details about the draft’s contents, U Win Mra hinted that it would increase or formalise civil society involvement in the human rights process.

"If we want to work independently, we have to have the support of the important role of civil society," he said.

He said that a team would be established to decide on a new structure and members for the commission, which was formed in September 2011.

"Old members can be reselected as they already know the tasks and procedures and new members can be added," he said. "There is chance that (the commission’s makeup) will change."

The commission’s letter of appeal to the president to mark Human Rights Day in which it outlined some of its activities since its formation, including the examination of more than 3000 complaints, the letters the commission had received until the end of November.

"Since it is the first time that a human rights complaint procedure has been established in the country, many people immediately started to send in their complaints soon after the establishment of the commission," U Win Mra said at the December 10 ceremony.

"Through this mechanism, a culture that human rights violations must be protected has been established." The statement said that the commission’s letters of appeal to the president and statements on the need to grant amnesties to prisoners had also led to the release of "thousands of prisoners and finally in a plan for transparent process to examine the cases of remaining prisoners as announced by the Information Team of the President’s Office".

"The commission is gratified that some of those released are currently playing an important role in the country’s democratisation process.

"The experience of the commission in protection work has vividly underscored the importance of the government’s cooperation and that of other stakeholders," the statement said.

Noting that Myanmar was the first country to vote for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, U Win Mra also used his address to call on the government to sign up to two subsequent human rights covenants, which came into force in 1976.

"It is high time for the Myanmar government to give careful consideration to accede to the two covenants to demonstrate its deeper commitment to human rights," he said.

The event was the first official Human Rights Day celebration in Myanmar since 1988, and also attended by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator Mr Ashok Nigam and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regional representative Matilda Bogner, as well as journalists, diplomats and civil society leaders.

At the ceremony Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said education is the key to building a strong foundation for respect of human rights. "Unless people can make their expressions not only known, but respected, their aspirations will be ignored," she said.

She added that Myanmar people need to learn how to reach decisions through consensus. "I’ve always said that Burmese people, the people of this country, not just the Burmese, all the different ethnic nationalities, are weak in achieving compromise through negotiation. This is something we have to learn through practice and through listening."

STOCKHOLM – Sweden asked India last week to clarify how Swedish-made weapons wound up in Myanmar in breach of an international arms embargo, after it was revealed the Indian army had purchased the arms. Trade Minister Eva Björling said.

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MCDC faces eviction action in Tada Oo

**By Si Thu Lwin**

The Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC) said it demolished the homes of those who were built illegally on land in Tada Oo township. The committee took action to demolish those homes after they received a deadline set by the General Administration Department.

But the residents argued they should be allowed to continue living there because they bought the properties and built their homes there. They said the transactions and took no action to stop them.

The city development council knew that the transactions took place in the two villages. Some of the buyers were even MCDC staff and police officers. But the committee did not prohibit the transactions at that time, said a woman from Kyangkhone village.

The committee then ordered us to leave and called us squatters," she said.

The complainants are yet to receive a response and the police officer who dealt with their case said the assistant township officials would decide how to proceed.

The two villages, Kyangkhone and Kengkhone, are not included in our jurisdiction. We forwarded the complaint from the group of villagers to the respective township office. We have to wait for their reply," Police Lieutenant Ran Po, the officer-in-charge at Aung Pinle police station, said last week.

Officials from the city development committee have urged Kyangkhone and Kengkhone residents to file charges against those who sold them the land but the residents say they just want to get back the land they bought.

"The plots were quite cheap when we bought them and we can't get back our land even if we prosecute the estate agents who sold them to us. We just want to have somewhere to live," a resident of Kyangkhone.

"This tragedy would not have happened if the development committee prohibited the transactions from the start -- they knew about them all along," he said.

MCDC said it demolished the homes because they were built illegally on municipal land. It took place after residents in Zeekone and Kyangkhone refused to leave by a deadline set by the committee.

But the residents argue they should be allowed to continue living there because they bought the properties and the committee was aware of the transactions and took no action to stop them.

"The city development council knew that the transactions took place in the two villages. Some of the buyers were even MCDC staff and police officers. But the committee did not prohibit the transactions at that time," said a woman from Kyangkhone village.

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The complainants are yet to receive a response and the police officer who dealt with their case said the assistant township officials would decide how to proceed.

The two villages, Kyangkhone and Kengkhone, are not included in our jurisdiction. We forwarded the complaint from the group of villagers to the respective township office. We have to wait for their reply," Police Lieutenant Ran Po, the officer-in-charge at Aung Pinle police station, said last week.

Officials from the city development committee have urged Kyangkhone and Kengkhone residents to file charges against those who sold them the land but the residents say they just want to get back the land they bought.

"The plots were quite cheap when we bought them and we can't get back our land even if we prosecute the estate agents who sold them to us. We just want to have somewhere to live," a resident of Kyangkhone.

"This tragedy would not have happened if the development committee prohibited the transactions from the start -- they knew about them all along," he said.

MCDC said it demolished the homes because they were built illegally on municipal land. It took place after residents in Zeekone and Kyangkhone refused to leave by a deadline set by the committee.

But the residents argue they should be allowed to continue living there because they bought the properties and the committee was aware of the transactions and took no action to stop them.

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NLD offers a challenge

MEMBERS OF the National League for Democracy should work for the party and not themselves, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said last week on a tour of her father’s hometown in Magwe Region.

“The party’s headquarters issued a statement saying senior officials would investigate allegations of impropriety in the ward assemblies, which are used to select delegates for township assemblies. The township assemblies then select delegates for the national assembly, which was the first in the party’s 24-year history.

The convening of ward assemblies has prompted a spate of complaints alleging that some members were using “undemocratic” means to secure positions. The party’s leaders initially responded to the issue by stating that the delegate positions were not permanent positions of responsibility. But Dr Win Thu, a member from Myingyan who travelled to Yangon earlier this month to discuss the complaints with the NLD leadership, said it had promised to take a stronger stance on the issue.

“I came to NLD headquarters in Yangon to inform them of unfair and undemocratic means used in ward assemblies in our township. I met U Nyan Win, secretary of the national assembly commission, and he released a letter for the issue dated December 7. The letter said the headquarters could not recognize ward assemblies that employ undemocratic means and procedures,” Dr Win Thu told The Myanmar Times by phone on December 10.

The letter says regional assembly commissions will investigate the complaints and send a report to the head office.

“These are about 7000 members in our township. However, most of them were not invited to participate in the ward assembly process,” Dr Win Thu said.

U La Ni, a member of the assembly commission for Myingyan township, said that he could not accept the ward assembly process.

“The process did not follow the official procedures … [ward leaders] did as they liked and I can’t accept that,” she said.

Although there are hundreds of members, some wards hold their assemblies with just 20 members,” she said by phone on December 10.

Members from Mandalay’s Pyaygitan township, from which many complaints have emanated over the assembly process, said they are collating a list of complaints to submit to the party’s headquarters.

“If the names of selected ward delegates are not included in the list (for the township assembly), we will inform the headquarters. And we will inform them of any other undemocratic issues that we uncover,” said U Ko Ko Aung.

“We want our party and country to follow democratic practices. If we can’t turn away from our mistakes now, it will be more difficult to repair them in the future. We want everyone to know that there are members who are using undemocratic means for their advantage in our party.”

The party’s Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Bhamo, U Min Thu, said some problems had appeared because the party had been seeking new members since November 2011, when it decided to contest the by-elections held in April.

“Opening the door allows fresh air to come in. If we close the door because a little rubbish comes in at the same time we won’t get any more fresh air,” he said.

He said that the disputes over the convening of the assemblies were an opportunity as a challenge for the party.

“Internal problems will arise because the party is being convoked in a democratic way in a country that has been without democracy for about 60 years. But we see that we have a chance to train people in democratic practices,” he said.

Doubts and disagreements should be solved through negotiation and dialogue, he said. – Translated by Thit Lwin
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TREATING people with disabilities as “second-class citizens” and excluding them from the workforce may have cost Myanmar more than US$1 billion, say non-governmental organisations.

Dr Mike Griffiths from the Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG) said the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) could be as much as US$1.2 billion higher if people with disabilities had been properly included in the workforce.

Dr Griffiths was speaking at a ceremony to mark the first anniversary of Myanmar’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry on December 7.

“We calculated this figure working from ILO (International Labour Organisation) standards,” he said.

Dr Griffiths is director of research at SPPRG, a joint initiative of ActionAid Myanmar, HelpAge International (Myanmar), the Leprosy Mission Myanmar and the Department of Social Welfare.

A recent national disability survey found that 85 percent of people with disabilities had no jobs or livelihood. About 1.3 million people, or 2.32 percent of the population, have a disability, and one in 10 households and more than 16 percent of all poor people are associated with disability.

“Most of them rely on casual labour as their primary source of income. Persons with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled persons to be poor, uneducated, unemployed, living in poor housing, landless, to die prematurely, to have food insecurity, to be unable to access public information, to be excluded from public places, and to be ignorant of their rights,” he said.

“Most of the them rely on casual labour as their primary source of income. Persons with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled persons to be poor, uneducated, unemployed, living in poor housing, landless, to die prematurely, to have food insecurity, to be unable to access public information, to be excluded from public places, and to be ignorant of their rights,” he said.

These factors combine to demonstrate the unacceptable truth that the majority of persons with disabilities are second-class citizens. This requires systematic addressing through enactment of the UN convention, a national disability law and comprehensive national social protection and disability promotion policy,” he said, adding: “Employment is better than charity.”

U Nay Lin Soe founder and program director of Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, said: “Daily income from work is the main engine for improvement of living standards because people with disabilities are twice as poor as others. We provide funds to help some of them work. Some open shops and some drive trishaws in Ayeyarwady and Bago regions.”

The Ministry of Social Welfare cannot provide enough assistance for disabled persons, who must rely on local and foreign NGOs, said Dr Griffiths, adding that a 1956 law on disabilities was ineffective.

A new law should be adopted to meet their needs, including the provision of loans for cottage industries and easy-drive cars, he added.

Ko Ko Naung, who has been blind in one eye since birth, told The Myanmar Times it had been hard to find a job after moving from the Ayeyarwady delta to Yangon because of discrimination from prospective employers.

“I tried to apply to many companies but when they saw me, they refused to give me a job because of my disability. When I worked in marketing some customers understood and treated me well but some were not acceptable,” said Ko Ko Naung, who now works Myanmar Independent Living Initiative.

“I faced much discrimination in my workplace before. Bosses didn’t like customers to see me and they would put me at the back of the office. I think most disabled people need to be very determined and confident otherwise they won’t be able to find a job.”
By Yamon Phu Thit

Myanmar centre of fight against drugs, says UN

Association, Dutch firm team up on milk project

HUNDREDS of young children in Yangon will receive free milk over the next three months to boost their nutrition and mental development.

Under a program operated jointly by the Government of Myanmar, the Netherlands-based Friesland Campina milk and dairy products company, milk will be provided to children aged six to nine at three schools in Mingalardon township from December to March, when term ends, association secretary Dr Hlaing told a press conference in Yangon on Monday.

The program aims to promote physical and mental growth, development and protection for school children, Dr Hlaing said.

“Children contain many nutrients essential for growth. Children are the future and are the primary users of our brainpower,” he said.

We focus mainly on primary school children because milk is the most suitable drink for their age while they are still growing. Milk contains many building blocks and energy to stimulate their growth,” Dr Hlaing said.

Starting this week, children will be provided with 200cc of steam milk once a week until the end of March under the K3 million, 3-year program.

“This is a pilot program that we want to expand in the next school term,” Ms Sarinthip Pimpaeng, marketing manager of Friesland Campina told the press conference.

Similar programs benefited more than 1800 primary school students from eight schools in Mandaly region in July and more than 2000 from eight Yangon schools from August.

“We do not want to stop what we started in previous years,” said Dr Hlaing, Dr Hlaing added.

“We are planning to form a foundation to expand our program nationwide,” he said.

BANGKOK – Myanmar is at the heart of a growing opium crisis in Asia that threatens public security, the UN said last week, urging regional help for the impoverished nation in stemming drug production.

Myanmar, the world’s second-largest opium producer, is a “top source of methamphetamine pills in the region, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said in a report on December 12.

“During the past five years, the availability and use of methamphetamine has increased significantly,” said Gary Lewis, UNODC regional representative.

Nearly 123 million methamphetamine pills were seized in the region in the first half of 2012, a 24 percent decrease on 2010, but a more than 500% jump from 2007.

“This and the increasing involvement of transnational organized criminal groups in the illicit trade of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) pose a growing threat to both security and public health in the region,” Mr Lewis said.

About 5.9 million methamphetamine pills were seized in Myanmar in 2011, compared to 2.2 million for the figure for the previous year, the report said, adding that the numbers “do not reflect the full extent of manufacture” because the drug is quickly trafficked from border regions into neighbouring countries.

Mr Lewis told a press conference in Bangkok that “all of the region need to work together” because many of the chemicals needed to produce the drug are thought to be smuggled into Myanmar.

“Large amounts of amphetamine and poppy cultivation we need to focus our attention on Myanmar,” he said, urging the region to focus on alternative development and law enforcement.

Myanmar, once the world’s largest producer of illicit opium until it was replaced by Afghanistan in 1991, has seen an increase in poppy cultivation over the past five years.

An estimated 17pc more land was used for growing the drug in 2012 compared to 2011.

The drugs trade is closely linked to Myanmar’s long-running civil war in remote areas bordering Thailand and China, with ethnic minority rebels widely thought to use drug profits to fund operations.

In May the reformist government signed a deal to wipe out opium and other drug production in eastern Shan State with a number of rebel groups with which it is engaged in ceasefire talks.

Mr Lewis said production of methamphetamine has increased to detect laboratories, along with distrust between the rebels and authorities means “there is a risk of continued production by groups who see that it is in their interest to hedge their bets”.

By Yamon Phu Thit
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<td>0130</td>
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*Includes codeshare services. **Taxes and surcharges are not included. Terms and conditions apply.
GOLD miners whose protest march from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw was last month broken up by police have called for fresh talks with the company at the centre of a dispute over mining rights in the Moemi area of northern Bago Region.

Four days earlier, six miners were arrested in a clash with police in the Moemi area of northern Bago Region.

The meeting was part of talks after chairman misses Dec 3 meeting

GOLD miners whose protest march from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw was last month broken up by police have called for fresh talks with the company at the centre of a dispute over mining rights in the Moemi area of northern Bago Region.

Four days earlier, six miners were arrested in a clash with police in the Moehla area of northern Bago Region. Miles are unhappy at what they describe as unfair treatment and broken promises from Myanmar National Prosperity, which won a tender to mine gold in the area in late 2011. In June, workers from the hundreds of small mines at Moehla began protesting at the company's tender to mine gold in the area. They approached Nay Pyi Taw on foot have each been charged with two offences, a lawyer said last week.

The miners walked from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw with the intention of protesting in front of the Ministry of Mines and the parliament over their dispute with the Myanmar National Prosperity company in Yamethin township’s Moehla Moemi mining region.

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After holding several illegal protests in the mining area, the miners applied for permission to demonstrate in Yamethin but were rejected twice. About 30 of them then protested in front of Myanmar National Prosperity company office in Yangon on November 3, 6 and 8, after which they decided to walk to Nay Pyi Taw. – Translation by Thit Lwin

Arrested miners charged

FOUR leaders of a group of gold miners who were arrested on November 23 as they approached Nay Pyi Taw on foot have each been charged with two offences, a lawyer said last week.

The miners walked from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw with the intention of protesting in front of the Ministry of Mines and the parliament over their dispute with the Myanmar National Prosperity company in Yamethin township’s Moehla Moemi mining region.

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Ministry urges mothers to agree to blood tests

By Yamon Phu Thit

A PROGRAM aimed at preventing mother to child transmission of virus is being hampered by a reluctance among pregnant women to take a blood test during pregnancy, a National AIDS Program official said.

Blood tests are conducted on a voluntary basis and fewer than 60 percent of women who benefit from the project agree to be tested, said Dr Khin Ohnmar San, deputy director and program manager of NAP, adding that the figures show there is low awareness about the risk of HIV transmission from mothers to children.

The NAP’s Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMCT) program is conducted at maternal and child health clinics, township and station hospitals and rural health centres in 245 townships throughout the country. PMCT services include voluntary HIV counselling and testing, treatment for HIV-positive mothers, prevention of HIV transmission to babies, improved obstetric and perinatal care, counselling on infant feeding practices and antenatal care.

The National AIDS Program launched the PMCT program in 2000 in cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund. In 2011, more than 3000 pregnant women received plans of action with the Ministry of Health figures show rates of transmission from HIV-positive mothers to their children was 13pc in 2011, positive mothers to their newborns was 13pc in 2011.

PMCT services. Ministry of Health figures show rates of transmission from HIV-positive mothers to their children was 13pc in 2011, positive mothers to their newborns was 13pc in 2011. However, only 320,000 agreed to a voluntary HIV test, shows NAP data.

“Pregnant mothers think they don’t need to take a blood test because they have no chance of being infected with HIV,” Dr Khin Ohnmar San said.

“We don’t know who is HIV-positive without doing a test and pregnant women need to understand the importance of these tests. These figures show we need to accelerate our education programs,” she said.

The drop-out rate of women who get tested but do not return to collect the results and receive post-test counselling remains relatively high, at about 15pc, Dr Ohnmar Aung, a HIV specialist at UNICEF, said during a workshop on PMCT in early October.

“Although they got tested and were diagnosed as HIV-positive, they never came back for post-test counselling and treatment because they are afraid of suffering discrimination. They deliver the baby at their home with a midwife without taking any proper obstetric care. This is really dangerous for both the midwife and newborn, she said.

“We need to do a lot more to … reduce discrimination. One of the reasons why few people agree to take a blood test is because they are afraid of discrimination.”

She said blood tests during pregnancy are critical for early diagnosis of HIV and prevention of transmission to unborn children. All pregnant mothers should have a blood test during pregnancy. This can prevent their child being infected with HIV even if they are infected,” she said.

After a pregnant woman is diagnosed as HIV positive, she needs to take prophylaxis and antiretroviral therapy from 14 weeks after conception to prevent infection of the embryo. NAP medical officer Dr Aung Thurein said.

HIV can be transmitted from mother to newborn during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding and without medication the chances of infection are between 15pc and 40pc.

“The baby of a HIV-positive mother should also be tested for HIV from birth. And even if it is negative we need to provide proper postnatal care” so the newborn is not infected through breastfeeding, he said.

According to WHO guidelines published in 2010, properly run PMCT programs improve the health of mothers and reduce the chances of mother-to-child transmission to 5pc or less.

The baby of a HIV-positive mother should also be tested for HIV from birth. And even if it is negative we need to provide proper postnatal care so the newborn is not infected through breastfeeding, he said.

A TOYOTA van was destroyed last week when a faulty wire sparked a fire but no one was injured in the incident, Yangon fire officials said.

The white Townace caught fire about 10:55pm on December 12 and the blaze was extinguished within about five minutes, the Yangon fire officials said.

The incident occurred on Thein Phyu Road between the Anawratha and Mahabandoola road junctions in Botahtaung township.

The official said the front windshield, dashboard, front tires, front cushion, both side mirrors and rear seats caught fire, causing damage estimated at about K800,000.

The driver of the vehicle, Ko Myo Min Naing, 39, has been charged with negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible materials under section 285 of the Penal Code, the official said.

Townace destroyed in fire

By Htoo Aung

A fireman extinguishes a fire that destroyed a Toyota Townace near the corner of Thein Phyu and Mahabandoola roads in Botahtaung township about 1pm on December 12. Pic: Thiri

A PROGRAM aimed at preventing mother to child transmission of virus is being hampered by a reluctance among pregnant women to take a blood test during pregnancy, a National AIDS Program official said.

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No belief in peace process: survey

By Cherry Thein

An NGO survey of 526 households in conflict-affected areas of Kachin, Shan and Kayin states found that few residents knew about the ceasefires, and peace and process and most of them did not believe that either the government or armed ethnic groups wanted peace.

Four non-governmental organisations—Gender and Development Initiative (Myanmar), Metta Foundation, Christian Aid and Knowledge and Dedication for Non-building (KDN)—conducted the "listening project" in conflict areas to research gender equality, human rights violations and the peace process between ethnic armed groups and government.

Between May 15 and June 5, the organisations interviewed 526 households across Bhamo and Monauk townships in Kachin State, Namhkam, Muse, Kutkai and Tarmoenyai townships in Kayin State, and Thandaung, Hpa-an, Hlaingbwe and KawKaren townships in Kachin State.

While Kachin State is the only area in which the government is still in outright control, with an opposition group, most agree the peace process in other areas of the country remains fragile, despite preliminary ceasefire agreements.

The survey also found different men and women viewed the benefits of the peace process differently, with women believing peace would bring better trading and economic opportunities and men that it would bring federalism and equal rights for ethnic minorities.

But due to gender inequality, women have little knowledge about the peace process and no chance to participate to express their views on conflict-related issues, partly because of cultural and religious values, the survey found.

I think women should participate in peace process but the problem is we don't know how we can, and which part. We feel we can't do anything but pray," a woman from Muse township was quoted as saying in the survey.

Gender and Development Initiative (Myanmar) researcher Daw Ja Ra told The Myanmar Times that both government and ethnic leaders seemed resistant to allowing women to participate in decision-making roles and gave little thought to gender issues in the peace process.

"If both sides ignore and exclude gender equality in the peace discussions, there will be no end to the gap or on gender issues during the rehabilitation and peace process. It is hard to discuss women's issues when there are no women involved in discussions," Daw Ja Ra said.

The government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 but still needs to implement many aspects of the convention and anti-discrimination legislation, Daw Ja Ra said.

Daw Ja Seng Khon, a member of the management committee of a relief camp in Kachin State, told The Myanmar Times that authorities have no chance to improve gender awareness because they are struggling to feed displaced people.

"We want to improve [camp residents'] knowledge of gender issues, especially in reproductive health, but there's no time because we spend all day struggling to get food and medicines for seasonal diseases," she said.

U Saw Heh Khalay from Thandaung in Kayin state said that there are some who did not believe peace processes due to traumatic experiences in past.

"I don't think those who are fighting understand peace. Some are angry about when they will go to fight again. This comes from a deep-rooted issue of discrimination against ethnic minorities on part of the government," he said.

One woman from Bhamo township, who asked not to be named, said she wanted the Tatmadaw to return the land it had taken since fighting broke out in June 2011.

"We are only asking for ownership of the land that was owned by our ancestor and not asking for the land of Myanmar people. If Myanmar people let it go, there will not be any more fighting," she said.

She said minorities feel the Bamar majority believe they are superior and not willing to relinquish any political control to minority groups.

The Survey also found evidence of human rights violations, including rape and other crimes. Respondents said they witnessed or were victim to 121 cases of rape and 62 deaths.

"Residents are living in fear and feel helpless. They don't know who they can inform to ensure justice when a human rights violation occurs, either by government or armed groups," the researchers said.

"I think women should have the right to fight again. This comes from a deep-rooted issue of discrimination against ethnic minorities on part of the government," he said.

U Wunna Maung Lwin, appointed by government and UNICEF to review their program of cooperation in 2013 and the minister emphasised that "it is important to review the tangible results the program has generated for children and their families, and to consolidate them at decentralised levels".

He added that "investing in children should be a key strategy in the National Poverty Reduction plan".

Mr Bainvel comes to Myanmar with more than 20 years of experience in the social development sector and was previously UNICEF representative in Russia and Jamaica.
UN under secretary general Amos makes visit

By Aye Sapay Phyu

THE government must work harder to reconcile the two communities of Rakhine State, the United Nation’s chief humanitarian official said last week. She also called on the government to allow the UN more access to people displaced by the fighting.

Ms Valerie Amos said people in Rakhine were still “living in fear” in the wake of fighting that had led to hundreds of deaths and the displacement of thousands of families from their homes. Her media briefing, on December 7, followed a tour of the stricken area.

Ms Amos, the UN’s under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said humanitarian needs were a major concern.

“The last year has seen remarkable changes within Myanmar, but humanitarian needs continue as the areas affected remain extremely impacted. The country moved ahead in its reform process it needs to address some critical humanitarian issues,” said Ms Amos.

Ms Amos said one of the reasons she was in Myanmar was to assess the impact of the conflict in Kachin and northern Shan states, which has forced some 75,000 people from their homes since fighting began in June 2011, as well as the inter-communal violence in Rakhine, where more than 115,000 have been displaced.

Ms Amos visited Jan Mai Kuang camp outside Myitkyina, where some 700 IDPs are housed. The camp is located in a government-controlled area and receives regular assistance from aid organisations. She urged the government to allow UN humanitarian workers access across the country, especially in Kachin, which are restricted for security reasons.

“The UN has not been able to provide assistance to almost 40,000 people as we are not permitted to go to Kachin Independence Army (KIA)-controlled areas. Local partners are providing food and other assistance but their stocks are depleted and with the winter months approaching, getting more supplies in is critical,” Ms Amos said.

“We have substantial experience working in insecure environments. We are working in other places where the security situation is much worse,” she said.

Ms Amos commended President U Thein Sein on his recent pledge to enact a range of measures, including pursuing a durable ceasefire in Kachin and addressing issues such as citizenship, return and repatriation in Rakhine State, and suggested ways forward.

During her visit Ms Amos travelled with the Minister of Border Affairs, Lieutenant General Thein Htay, to Myeik, Pakkaw, Maungdaw and camps outside Sittwe, where she met people from different communities.

“Tensions between the communities are still running very high. I was shocked to see so many soldiers everywhere keeping communities away from each other. People from both communities gave me the same message. They are living in fear and want to go back to living a normal life. There is a urgent need for reconciliation,” said Ms Amos said in a report released by her office on December 5.

In Maungdaw she saw new ventures with them.

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By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe and Nuam Bawi

Sensation Jason Mraz performs live in Yangon: What do you have to say?

Mone Bwat
Age 27
Drummer
I’m going to see the show with my friends. I was happy – and shocked – when I saw a video on the net of Jason Mraz saying “Mingalabar” for an MTV Exit promo. I didn’t think he’d actually end up coming here, since most famous singers end up in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia for their worldwide tours. Jason Mraz is huge right now, so this is an incredibly rare opportunity. I personally started listening to him after he released “I’m Yours”, and now I love all of his music. I’m not just going to the concert because Jason Mraz is a celebrity, but because he’s my favourite singer.

Ko Kyaw Phyo Thu
Private teacher, North Dagon township
I’m very surprised that Jason Mraz is coming to Myanmar and playing a free show. Also, Slot Machine, a famous band in Thailand, will be participating in the show. At first I was worried the stage wouldn’t be up to international standards and satisfy the bands, but I’m confident now that it’s going to be great. I’m really excited to see how Jason Mraz is going to communicate with a Myanmar audience. I can’t wait to go early with my friends and I’m going to try to get a space right in the front row.

Ko Myo Tun Oo
Age 30
BPI Pharmaceutical Rep, Hlaing township
My friends and I got our tickets at Junction Square without any difficulties. We’ve been waiting since mid-November when we first heard Jason Mraz was coming – we’re so excited. It’s good that Jason Mraz is going to entertain a local audience. Who knew a Grammy Award-winning artist would be playing in Yangon? I love the song “I’m Yours”, and it’s great that the show is free. I’m going to get there right when the gates open so I can get a good spot.
WHEN a bill to amend the Constitutional Tribunal Law was put to a vote in the Pyithu Hluttaw on November 15, two civilian parliamentarians joined the Tatmadaw MPs in opposing the changes. Both are from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party; one is Dr Sai Kyaw Ohn of Namkham, and the other is me: U Ye Tun of Hsipaw.

The bill was submitted earlier that day to the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyin. However, the Amyotha Hluttaw just forwarded the bill to the Pyithu Hluttaw. I would like to enlighten readers as to why I voted against the bill.

The proposed amendment was published in state newspapers on November 14 to allow people to read it and make suggestions. It is pleasing that this step was taken, as it allows ordinary people to make recommendations. However, representatives were not given any chance to discuss or propose amendments to the legislation when it was in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

Specifically I am not pleased with section 12(i) of the bill, which specifies that the tribunal should report to the president, Pyithu Hluttaw speaker and Amyotha Hluttaw speaker about their activities because they select the tribunal’s members. This means that after a person joins the tribunal, they will not be enough for them to dutifully fulfill their responsibilities. They will have to report what they have done to the president and hluttaw speakers.

Why should we be worried about this? Because it is important that tribunal members do not feel the need to be loyal to those who appointed them. Instead, the tribunal should carry out its duties in an unbiased manner to encourage true democracy. This also prevents the hlruttaw looking hypocritical, because only by encouraging the tribunal to be an independent judicial body can the parliament fulfill its stated aim of having an unbiased judicial system.

More appropriate wording would be: “In respect of the performance of duties, the tribunal shall send a formal message to the Union Government, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, state and region governments and state and region hluttaws.” If I had been allowed to discuss the bill, I would have proposed this change.

Paragraph 3 is also troubling. It says section 23 shall be made section 24, and section 24 will become 23.

This leaves open the possibility that the ruling of the tribunal is final only for the cases that belong to sections 23 and 24, but for other cases that the tribunal is asked to adjudicate, the original wording of section 24 will become 23. So I had to get my copy of the constitution out. Section 235. In hearing a case by a court, if there arises a dispute whether the provisions contained in any law contradict or conform to section 17 of this law regarding a case being under trial.

The implication of this is that when undertaking one of the eight duties outlined in section 12 of the Constitutional Tribunal Law – including the definition of the constitution, scrutiny of whether the laws promulgated by the hluttaws agree to the constitution and scrutiny of whether the decisions made by the executive bodies of the union, regions and states and self-administered areas agree to the constitution – the tribunal may not have the final, decisive authority to decide on a case. Only when the case is submitted by a law court, as per section 12(i) of the tribunal law, can we be certain the decision is final. If this is allowed to happen, our country will face many constitutional crises. Think of it like a football match where the referee does not always have the final say on all the decisions he is supposed to make.

The law should specify which body has the final decisive authority – but it doesn’t, so it does not conform to section 234 of the constitution, which says that the decision of the tribunal is final.

Because of this, the bill amending the Constitutional Tribunal Law submitted last month should not have been put to the hluttaw for a vote, and this is why I voted against it.

(Ye Tun is from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and is the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw in northern Shan State.)
AUSTRALIAN mining magnate Andrew Forrest pleaded with governments and businesses to do all they can to end modern day slavery during an address to business leaders in Yangon on December 14.

“We cannot rest until we extinguish this evil,” Mr Forrest said during his address at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) building in Lanmadaw township.

“We are all a little bit harmed by the existence of even one slave in the world,” added Mr Forrest, who is the third wealthiest Australian and founder of Fortescue Metals Group, the fourth-largest iron ore supplier in the world.

Matthew Friedman, project manager at United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), told the audience of several hundred that slavery is not an obsolete concept.

“Whenever a person loses control of their life, when they’re not getting paid, and they can’t leave that situation – what else can we call it?” Mr Friedman asked. “It’s slavery. Call it what it is.”

Mr Friedman said that there are more than 20 million slaves in the world, compared to 11.3 million over 450 years of the African slave trade (1450-1900).

“There are more slaves in the world now than at any time in history,” he said. “That’s an embarrassing thing for me to say.”

Mr Friedman cited specific scams that affected Myanmar citizens abroad. In one scheme, he said that Myanmar men and boys are tricked onto boats in Thailand and forced to stay on for four years.

“They’ll work 18 to 19 hours a day – and to be able to work that much they’re drugged. So this has a terrible effect on their bodies,” Mr Friedman said. “At the end of this four-year period they ask for their pay. But the captain says ‘You’re from Myanmar, I don’t have to pay you. Go away’.”

Police Colonel Ral Lyan Mone, from the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, overviewed the anti-trafficking programs undertaken by his agency and the co-operation taking place with neighbouring countries.

Col Ral Lyan Mone said forced marriage was overwhelmingly the most common fate met by Myanmar slaves overseas, according to 2012 statistics. He said other slavery scenarios for Myanmar victims included children forced to beg in Malaysia, physically abusive domestic work in Thailand, and prostitution in China.

“Most people when they think about human trafficking they think… a woman or a girl who is forced into prostitution… there are 4.5 million people worldwide in this situation,” said Mr Friedman.

“The typical scenario is a girl who is tricked or deceived… away from her home, put into a forced prostitution situation and forced to have sex with anywhere from five to 10 people a day, seven days a week until she gets a disease and is often cast out. It’s a horrible thing.”

Both Mr Forrest and Mr Friedman urged that support from the business community was essential to fight modern day slavery.

“Either donate your time or funding to help out,” said Mr Friedman.

The presentation was organised by the anti-slavery organisation Mr Forrest founded, Walk Free, and UNIAP. It came ahead of the historic MTV EXIT modern day slavery awareness concert in Yangon on December 16, which Walk Free and UNIAP are also involved in.

“Slavery does not have a right to exist in this world,” Mr Friedman said.

“There’s not a single person in this room who can come up with any justification why it should be there. So let’s all work together and see if can knock it out.”
Marine fish exports slump, says MMFA

By Myat Nyein Aye

EXPORTS of marine-caught fish to China are down by 30 percent over the past three months, industry sources say. As a result, prices have fallen below cost, it is reported.

The reduction has come despite catches being high, said U Maung Maung Soe, chairman of the Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association on December 12. “China buys about 60pc of our saltwater fish, with Thailand taking about 10pc. The rest is sold to local customers or as dried fish,” he said. “Myanmar people don’t like sea fish. Even a big sea fish brings in K500 to K800 a vis (one vis equals 1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds) in the domestic market, with dried fish selling for K400 to K500 a vis,” he said.

Until recently, Chinese buyers would pay $20,000 for 400 grams of groper (nga poke thin), a large saltwater fish. However, 400g of groper only fetches K15,000, said one exporter.

“All our big customer is China. Other countries don’t buy a lot of saltwater fish from us, and nor do Myanmar people. I want to build a canning factory here and export saltwater fish to countries like Bangladesh, where they eat a lot of canned fish,” the exporter added.

Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association has registered with Myanmar Livestock and Fisheries Ministry office to launch a public company with about K3 billion (US$3.55 million) in shares and 15 directors, said a member of MMFA.

“When we form the Myanmar Marine Fisheries company, we plan to build four factories – cold storage, ice, fish grading and canning. But the canning factory will be the most important facility,” he said.

In another setback for the industry, the fishers are complaining of high diesel prices, said U Soe Soe, a fisherman in Bokepyinn township in Tanintharyi Region. “We pay about K178,000 to K175,000 for a tank of diesel. This is not a fair price for us. If it was cheaper we’d be okay, but we have to set out with a full tank of diesel whether we catch any fish or not,” he said.

Fisherman used to catch about 30 viss a net, but now take in only about 20 viss – and the fish are smaller, said one fisherman.

Dyeing firms hope to grow with garment sector

By Soe Sandar Oo

As the country’s garment industry prepares to grow with the help of new foreign investment, the local dyeing industry is facing problems.

Shortage of electricity, skilled labour and paint are hampering the local industry, some sources say.

“I have plans to enlarge my factories as the garment sector has great expectations, but I still face problems in getting enough electricity, labour and paint for the dyeing process,” said U Kyaw Kyaw, owner of A Plus Three Silk Screen Painting in Hlaing township.

Currently, the paint used in the dyeing process is imported from China, Thailand and Japan. Small companies cannot afford to buy the 15-60 kilogram (33-132-pound) cans, so they buy 5-pound (about 2.3kg) packets of paint powder instead, he says.

“The paint in the packets is mixed with some kind of powder used in food production, but it doesn’t work in China,” he said, adding that the fake powder could damage clothing.

He said 80 percent of garments produced needed to be dyed before export or local sale. “Most of our orders are from women who want a flower pattern on a shirt. I try to find quality products so I can be assured that the price is K250, and K200 for an export market. Dyeing a shirt intended for the export market is cheaper because the volume is higher – an export order can be for at least 8000 shirts, while local orders run only to about 1000 or 1500 pieces,” he said.

Ko Nyan Sint Aung, a dye factory manager who worked in Malaysia for three years in industrial dyeing, said dyeing in Myanmar was mostly done by hand, but the quality of the work rivalled that of foreign products.

“If the dye is good quality and the workers are skilled, we can get more export orders,” said an exporter, adding that the electricity supply would also need to be made more reliable to ensure companies could better plan their operations.

However, U Min Naing, the manager of Golden Third Silk Screen Painting factory, said that they had received a contract order from the Japanese Garment Factory, for which they were using paint imported from Japan.

“Orders are about 30pc up for this year because we got an order for at least 20,000 shirts for one design. But a local order would be for only 500 to 600 shirts,” he said, adding that there was a strong association through which the industry could negotiate the most competitive prices.

Dyeing companies are not part of the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, he said.

“We hope it will continue to develop so we can get more export orders,” he added.

By **Myat Nyein Aye**

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By **Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, Inc.**

Saltwater fish prices have fallen by 25 percent in the past three months as a result of falling Chinese demand says the Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association. Pic: Boothee

By **Soe Sandar Oo**

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By **Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, Inc.**
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Vietnamese prawn farmers consider Myanmar venture

By Bill Savadove

SHANGHAI – China’s biggest overseas takeover bid, US$1.1 billion for Nexen of Canada’s Nexen, is a huge step in Beijing’s push for foreign acquisitions – but its drive to secure resources and markets is causing unease.

China’s accelerating overseas buys raise fears

China’s overseas acquisitions tripled to 177 and jumped five-fold by value to $63 billion, law firm Squire Sanders andtout for unspecified “Western powers” for alleged unfairness and protectionism.

“Chinese investors have been credited by some Western governments and media as a group of cash-rich predators and spies,” the state-run China Daily said in a commentary. “In Western powers that harbour China investment phobias should first drop their prejudice towards Chinese companies and let their entrepreneurs, not politicians, decide the business deals.”

A US congressional committee said in October that Chinese telecom manufacturers Huawei and ZTE should be excluded from government contracts because their equipment could be used to spy.

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Recently, China’s second-biggest oil firm, Sinopec, was refused entry to the US market by the Treasury Department.

But academics said more was at work than commerce, as China seeks growing influence in the region.

“China’s state-run companies have been expanding throughout the developing world and there’s been push back in many places,” said Eisenman, co-author of China: A Century of Engagement.

In Myanmar, opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will lead a probe into a new project that will see Beijing’s largest listed oil producer by value, would buy its stake in Nexen, for $15 billion.

By Myat Nyein Aye

A GROUP of Vietnamese prawn farmers has voiced an interest in setting up a 500-acre farm in Yangon Region following a visit to Myanmar, a Myanmar Fisheries Federation official said last week.

U Han Tun said during the weekly fisheries federation meeting on December 11 that the Vietnamese delegation discussed a possible venture with the Myanmar Shrimp Association on December 9.

“They joined us at an exhibition of livestock and fisheries products on December 7 and 8,” he said of the Vietnamese delegation. “They were very interested in prawn farming in Myanmar because it’s a relatively undeveloped sector but one that they understand,” he said.

“First, they wanted to study the farming environment around Yangon Region and perhaps later they will cooperate with the association to form prawn farm,” he said.

He said most commercially sold prawn is caught in the wild but the product enjoys strong international demand.

U Htay Myint, chairman of the Myanmar Shrimp Association, said there are about 250 prawn farms at Ngwe Saung in Ayeyawady Region, with most about 1 acre in size. U Htay Myint owns a farm and said he would welcome foreign investment in his business.

“I have several breeding ponds in Ngwe Saung and cold storage factories in Pathein township,” he said.

“If foreign companies want to cooperate with Myanmar businesses it will be good for us because we need more technology and new better management to improve our business,” he added.

U Htay Myint, the federation’s general secretary, said Vietnam is widely involved in prawn farming ventures in Australia and he would welcome its participation in Myanmar.

“It would be wonderful to work with Vietnamese businesses to develop our prawn farming industry. But we wanted them during negotiations that they have to partner with Myanmar companies because they cannot invest in projects here according to the foreign investment law.”

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EN BIRMANIE

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The French Embassy is looking for a Political and Protocol Officer to join its political chancellery and office staff in January 2013.

Responsibilities:

- Follow-up of the political and social situation.
- Contacts with political parties, civil society, local government, companies, etc.
- Protocol and relations with Myanmar administration.
- Translations and interpretations in French and Myanmar (also for official visits).
- Draft official correspondence, make phone calls to governmental, national and international partners.
- Organize and coordinate work plans for missions and delegations to visit Myanmar as well as seminars and workshops.
- Arrange meetings and receptions.

Qualifications:

- Applicants must hold a University degree in political science or any other field that would be advantageous for such a position.
- Applications must be submitted before December 23rd, 2012, at the latest.
- Eligible candidates should address their applications to the Human Resources Office, P.O. Box 521, GPO, Yangon, date of posting no later than December 24, 2012.

Applications should be addressed to UNFPA nationals for the post of Project Manager (IT). For details on duties and responsibilities, email: myanmar.office@unfpa.org
Woodside buys 50pc stake in MPRL’s A-6 block

By Soe Sandar Oo

The proposal provides the opportunity for Woodside and MPRL E&P to undertake a 3D seismic survey program in the block.

Ministry issues LPG cylinder warning

By Soe Sandar Oo

The Ministry of Energy has warned consumers of the dangers of using illegally imported and non-approved liquefied petroleum gas cylinders, a spokesperson said on December 10.

The spokesperson said most LPG cylinders are legally imported from Thailand by large companies but some non-approved – and unsafe – cylinders are also entering the marketplace, mostly through the Myawaddy border crossing.

“Non-approved cylinders are not safe to use and can explode if they are subjected to extreme heat,” he said.

“Approved cylinders have an automatic safety valve that cuts the supply if something goes wrong but the non-approved cylinders do not,” he said.

“Most people are not aware of this issue as it is our responsibility but controlling illegal trade is the Ministry of Commerce’s responsibility,”

He said some people import non-approved cylinders and then apply faked approval seals to fool buyers, adding that it is difficult for consumers to spot the difference.

“The Ministry of Energy is happy to grant import licences for proper LPG importers but this illegal trade is unacceptable,” he added.

However, Ko Naing, an employee of one of the big LPG trading firms, said consumers can spot fakes by looking at the safety bar.

Some cylinders have a manual safety valve that can be faked but cylinders that have automatic safety bars must be genuine,” he said.

He also downplayed the risk to consumers saying that LPG for domestic use is usually stored at relatively low pressure.

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for The Siam Gypsum Industry (Saraburi) Company Limited

P. O. Box 60, Yangon

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Dated: 17 December 2012
IMF warns Hong Kong property faces price correction

HONG KONG - Hong Kong could see an abrupt fall in property prices after years of dramatic increases, one of the world’s most expensive housing markets, the International Monetary Fund warned in an annual review of the territory’s economy.

Property prices in the Asian financial hub have skyrocketed 90 percent since 2009 due to an influx of wealthy mainland Chinese buyers, pushing home ownership beyond the reach of many of its seven million people.

“The sharp run-up in house prices raises the risk of an abrupt correction,” the IMF said.

A sharp price correction would lead to falling collateral values and negative wealth effects, which could trigger an adverse feedback loop between economy activity, bank lending, and the property market.

“The property sector is the main source of domestic economic risk,” the Washington-based organisation said.

However, it said the chances of a price correction that is large enough to generate a major macroeconomic and financial consequence is “fairly low in the near term.”

It also said the city’s government recent bid to slap new taxes on residential properties to dampen housing demand had only raised sufficient supply in order to boost home affordability.

Hong Kong announced a 15pc stamp duty on non-permanent residents and corporate buyers as well as a higher stamp duty on the resale of property within three years in late October in an attempt to rein in soaring prices.

With the global economic weakness continuing to affect its domestic economy, the IMF said it expects Hong Kong’s economy to grow 1.25pc this year, before rebounding to 3pc next year.

Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying had warned recently that the city needed to boost its housing supply and create more living space or risked losing its “best and brightest” talents.

--AFP

Heritage forum focuses on Theingyi Market

By Htar Htar Khin

STAKEHOLDERS from the government, civil society and the media attended a forum on urban development in Yangon on December 6 and 7 at which presentations on Theingyi Market were a highlight.

The ‘Housing for People and Urban Heritage for all’ forum was jointly organised by Germany’s Federal Ministry of Construction, and was held at the McCard Hotel in Yangon on December 6. Similar forums had been held in Nantong, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia.

Daw Hlaing Maw Oo, assistant director of DHSHD’s Urban and Regional Planning Division, gave a presentation focusing on the importance of green and open spaces.

“When we talk about green and open spaces in Yangon, we can see a clear tradition, but they are not connected,” she said.

“Let’s start to carefully consider if we should maintain these spaces or can we afford to lose them? They are like the lungs of the city.

“The chain starts somewhere. When we talk about green and ventilation through light and ventilation through loss of privacy, reduced natural and create more living space planning challenges such as traffic congestion, limited parking spaces, loss of privacy, reduced natural light and ventilation through overcrowding and overloaded public transportation.

She added that a number of different acts and laws regulate Yangon’s urban planners, particularly in relation to heritage buildings and religious or cultural sites.

“We must pledge to save the past for the present, and save the present for the future,” she said.

Mr Christian Gunther, a Master’s student at Cologne University, used Yangon’s Theingyi Market in Latha township as an example of urban heritage in transition.

“The aim of the thesis is to clarify the impact that urban transition on Yangon has on living heritage,” he said.

Mr Gunther added that people from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds live around the market and use it for commerce.

Professor Kraas added the market was a unique market and I don’t think there is anywhere else like it in Southeast Asia. And in 2005, we started conducting field work jointly with Yangon University,” she said.

“We choose Theingyi Zay for the study because we saw its huge potential as living heritage. As you can see, Yangon has number of excellent sites and Theingyi Zay is one. It’s a lively market and has a long tradition. If we go to the vendors, we can see that they have been there for many years – it’s living heritage,” she said.

She added that Theingyi Zay has clear architectural value but its social heritage is even more valuable.

“You will find long-term relationships among the vendors and also beyond the market to other parts of Myanmar and even beyond. There are long historic roots and it has deep economic and social cohesion,” Professor Kraas added.

She told The Myanmar Times that there are 189 heritage listed buildings in Yangon and “we’re currently setting up proposals and suggestions for not only buildings but also …sites such as cultural urban heritage sites.

“I’m very much convinced that Theingyi Zay is among the finest of these places. You won’t find many old and still living and not artificially made markets in Southeast Asia. So, it has unique setting – a unique Myanmar character,” she said.

The market was built in 1905 and has 1,156 shops.

“We’re not only talking about the architecture, we’re talking about the people, about very closely knit social communities, vending communities as well. And you won’t find that elsewhere in Myanmar,” she added.

Dusk in Hong Kong on December 12. The International Monetary Fund says Hong Kong could see an abrupt fall in property prices after years of dramatic increases in one of the world’s most expensive housing markets. Pic: AFP

Shoppers and store holders at Theingyi Market in Latha township last week. Pic: Thiti Lu
Shwegondaing flyover ready by late 2013

Developer says project expected to take about 11 months to complete, following ground breaking on December 12

By Htar Htar Khin

COMUTERS using Kabar Aye Pagoda Road to travel downtown will face 11 months of delays while the Shwegondaing Flyover is built, the company building the bridge said last week.

A Capital Development Limited press release issued on December 12 after a ground breaking ceremony at 8:46am said that when the flyover is finished it will allow traffic travelling north-south to bypass the heavily congested Shwegondaing intersection.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, chairman of Yangon Region Hluttaw U Sein Tin Win, Yangon Mayor U Hla Myint, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) departmental heads and other officials.

U Aye Thaw, the company’s project director, said surveying work was completed months ago.

“We’ve been doing pre-survey work since May, following instructions from the Myanmar Investment Commission and roads,” he said. “The Shwegondaing junction is heavily congested and the roads are narrow at that point, which is why we’ve consulted with design experts from Japan-based JFE Engineering Corporation to guarantee quality control, reduce the construction period and limit the impact on the environment,” he said.

The 420-metre-long four-lane flyover will sit 5.5m above the ground. It will start on the south side near the Jivatadana Sangha hospital and end about 70m north of Excel tower on the northern side of the intersection, he said.

U Aung, a 40-year old taxi driver who usually waits for passengers near Excel Tower, said the traffic congestion is the worst he has seen in the area.

“I’ve worked in this area for nearly five years as a taxi driver and the traffic is terrible these days. And the Shwegondaing Junction is one of the worst in the city,” he said.

“I’m glad they are building a flyover or it would only get worse,” he added.

U Aung said the roads are unable to cope with the increased traffic.

A 36-year-old grocery store owner in a backstreet behind Excel Tower said the flyover was necessary.

“I’ve lived for 11 years near Shwegondaing and I welcome the flyover project because it will ease traffic congestion,” he said.

“Many vehicles pass through this junction every day and it’s chaotic and unsafe, especially when you’re walking,” he said.

He added that Shwegondaing is a critical route out of the downtown area to suburbs to the north and east and described the flyover as “essential”.

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Win Mu Tin, M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L
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E-mail: makhinkyi.law@mptmail.net.mm
Dated: 17 December 2012

Impact malaria
TOKYO – They are found in more than two-thirds of Japanese households and visitors to the country have marvelled at their heated seats, posterior shower jets and odour-masking function.

But for the company that has sold more 30 million high-tech toilets, commonly known as Washlets, global lavatory domination remains elusive, especially among shy US consumers.

"It's because of the cultural taboo over talking about toilets," said Hiromichi Tabata, head of the international division at Washlet-maker TOTO, a company that also makes bath tubs, kitchen taps, basins and plumbing fixtures.

"Americans avoid talking about those kinds of things so we can't expect success from word-of-mouth, even if they recognise our products are excellent."

"Many celebrities say they love the Washlet when they visit Japan, but the fervour is temporary," he said in an interview last month.

Tabata with the toilet company's latest model at its head office in Tokyo. Pic: AFP

“We expect Europe will eventually get used to the idea...”

For a nation that claims globally recognised brand names such as Sony and Toyota, the lack of overseas presence comes as a surprise to many foreign visitors, even if they're initially baffled by its dizzying array of functions and Japanese signage.

In technology and hygiene-obsessed Japan, where restaurants provide a steaming hot towel for customers' hands, they're found in public toilets, office lavatories and over 70 percent of Japanese households.

"We bought that Japanese people, who are clean freaks, would like the idea of the Washlet," said spokeswoman Atsuko Kuno.

"But when it hit the market in the booming 1980s, the high-tech toilet wasn't an immediate success in conservative Japan either."

Some viewers were irate at horizontal position, possibly solving gender battles over flipped-up toilet seats in the home.

"But business continues to be robust for the toilet maker, whose rivals in the key domestic market include Lixil Group."

In the full-year to March 2012, TOTO posted a net profit of 9.27 billion yen ($114 million) on global sales of 452.7 billion yen, up 4.9pc from a year earlier.

"But only about 14pc of that revenue figure was from overseas sales."

Despite the challenges in reaching foreign consumers, tapping the hotel market has met with some success, executives say, while China and other East Asian nations have seen growing demand "because they have cultures similar to Japan," Tabata said.

"Localising products is also key."

Washlets sold in tropical markets such as Indonesia do not come with heated seats and blast lukewarm water into users' nether regions instead of the hot spray offered in chillier climes.

Despite the Washlet's relatively expensive price tag – the cheapest sells for about $900 – TOTO executives believe that liberal Europeans are a hugely promising market, especially as a Swiss rival is selling a similar product.

"We expect Europe will eventually get used to the idea of a heated toilet seat with warm water," Tabata predicted. – AFP

Firm aims to clean up in toilet market

"We expect Europe will eventually get used to the idea..."
Mass rally in Pyongyang celebrates rocket launch

SEOUL – Hundreds of thousands of North Koreans rallied on December 14 in Pyongyang to celebrate the country’s rocket launch, staging a choreographed show of defiance under the banner of Marshal Kim Jong-Il’s last wish.

The rally in central Pyongyang, shown on state television, came two days after the launch of the three-stage rocket and ahead of the anniversary on December 17 of the death of new leader Kim Jong-Un’s father.

The West fears the launch has taken the nuclear-armed state a step closer to firing intercontinental ballistic missiles across the planet and has attracted UN Security Council condemnation along with calls for toughened conditions, he said.

The “dear respected Marshal” visited the country’s rocket launch, staging a choreographed show of defiance under the banner of Marshal Kim Jong-Il’s last wish,” said Yoo (US$3.5 million) to a Libyan official, agreed to pay £2.2 million and 10.

Some 90 people died and nearly 1900 were wounded in a series of street clashes between “Red Shirt” demonstrators and security forces, which culminated in a deadly army operation in May 2010 to break up the protest.

Photo credit: AFP

Ex-Tham prime minister denies murder charges

About 90 people died and nearly 1900 were wounded in a series of street clashes between “Red Shirt” demonstrators and security forces, which culminated in a deadly army operation in May 2010 to break up the protest.

The charge against Abhisit, who was prime minister at the time, relates to the fatal shooting of taxi driver Phan Ramkong. DSI chief Tarit Pengthong announced the murder charges against Abhisit and Suthep on Monday and said it was prompted by a court’s ruling in September that Phan was shot by troops – the first completed inquest into the bloodshed.

Abhisit has said he had no choice but to take tough action adding he would accept trial rather than “bargain” over a proposal by his political rivals in government for a wide-ranging amnesty law that many believe could allow the return of the Reds’ hero, ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

Experts believe British-born Abhisit is unlikely to face jail because of his close ties to the Thai establishment. – AFP

Related report, P. 33.

Mass rally in Pyongyang celebrates rocket launch

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Photo credit: AFP

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Experts believe British-born Abhisit is unlikely to face jail because of his close ties to the Thai establishment. – AFP

Related report, P. 33.
Syrian coalition wins international backing

MARRAKESH – Arab and Western states recognised the National Coalition as the sole representative of Syrians on December 12, as the group also urged the US to review its blacklisting of the group.

The declaration, issued at a “Friends of Syria” meeting in Morocco, coincided with battlefield gains by jihadists fighting President Bashar al-Assad’s forces and a rapidly deteriorating refugee situation as winter sets in.

“Today, full recognition is given to the National Coalition as the sole representative of the Syrian people,” Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani told a news conference after the meeting hosted by his government.

The talks on the 21-month conflict brought together representatives from 114 countries, including about 60 ministers, the Syrian opposition and international organisations.

They came a day after US President Barack Obama endorsed the National Coalition move by the European Union.

The Friends of Syria again called on Assad to stand down and stressed that his regime would not escape punishment for violations of international law.

A statement also warned Damascus against using chemical weapons, saying this “would draw a serious response from the international community”.

Those at the meeting also called for unimpeded access for humanitarian groups inside Syria.

Coalition spokesman Yaser Tabbara underlined hopes the Marrakesh meeting would help alleviate a mounting humanitarian crisis and support the needs of “liberated” areas.

Tabbara said the meeting amounted to “about $145 million” (including $100 million from Saudi Arabia) to $14 million from the US.

Under pressure to unite, the opposition agreed on November 11 to establish the coalition and group the various rebel forces under a supreme military council.

Jihadist rebels in Aleppo, a key front line in northern Syria, rejected the agreement, saying they want an Islamic state.

Among them was Al-Nusra Front, which the US blacklisted on December 11 as a “terrorist” organisation, citing its links to al-Qaeda in Iraq.

National Coalition chief Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib called on Washington to “re-examine” the move. — AFP

UN climate talks take ‘modest’ step forward

DOHA – A UN climate conference has extended the life of the Kyoto Protocol, the only binding pact on curbing greenhouse gas emissions, in a small but symbolic victory in the fight against global warming.

It took much haggling and many hours of lost sleep in the Qatari capital to arrive at the deal on interim measures to halt climate change pending a new, global pact due to take effect in 2020.

An extension of Kyoto was finally approved on December 8 with the 27- member European Union, Australia, Switzerland and eight other industrialised nations signing up for binding emission cuts by 2020.

They represent about 15 percent of global emissions.

UN leader Ban Ki-moon welcomed the deal, dubbed the Doha Climate Gateway, as an important first step but said through his spokesman that “far more needs to be done.”

The protocol locks in only developed nations, excluding major developing polluters such as China and India, as well as the United States, which applies to ratify it.

In practice, experts say the lengthening of the protocol will make little difference to pollution levels as it covers such a small portion of emissions and its signatories all have their own legislated targets anyway.

“It is a modest but essential step forward,” European climate commissioner Connie Hedegaard said.

At the end of talks that ran almost 18 hours, paralysed as rich and poor nations argued over financing and compensation for climate damage.

After 12 days of haggling that ran agrained almost from the start, conference chairman Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah finally rushed through the package on the evening of December 8.

He had earlier urged delegates to seek consensus and not “open the Pandora bag” again because “we will never finish” — a warning that was largely ignored. Al-Attiyah was left working through the night for more than four hours as bartering continued.

The weak prime minister reduged over countries’ offers to help as he gavelled in quick succession and proclaimed: “It is so decided” to load applause. — AFP

New Mali PM unveils plan for unity govt

BAMAKO – Mali’s new Prime Minister Diango Cissoko started drawing up a new unity government on December 12 that could bring the consensus needed to launch a foreign military intervention in the Islamist-occupied north.

Cissoko pledged to regain control of the north amid international condemnation over the outer limits of his proposed government and a growing_rewards for stopping the army’s plan to deploy.

The United Nations Security Council, which is awaiting more details on the mission before giving the green-light, has said it remains committed to “authorising as soon as possible the deployment of an African-led international support mission in Mali.”

Cissoko, a veteran civil servant, was swiftly appointed by interim leader Cheick Modibo Diarra. 

The new premier has not said who would replace him as foreign minister, but said through his spokesman that “would draw a serious response from the international community”.

Among them was Al-Nusra Front, which the US blacklisted on December 11 as a “terrorist” organisation, citing its links to al-Qaeda in Iraq.

National Coalition chief Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib called on Washington to “re-examine” the move. — AFP

Israel raps Europe

JERUSALEM – Israel’s Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman criticised Europe on December 11, saying the treatment of the Jewish state was comparable to policies during Arab boycott.

Lieberman said Europe should have followed a speech by Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal last week, who warned Jews would not “cede an inch” of historic Palestine, which covers modern Israel.

“One again, Europe has ignored calls for Israel’s destruction,” Lieberman told Israeli public radio.

UN team in Iran

TEHRAN – A team from the UN atomic watchdog arrived in Iran on December 13 for talks with nuclear officials on Iran’s controversial nuclear program, ISNA news agency reported.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says the aim of the talks is to sign an agreement on a “structured approach” giving IAEA inspectors access to sites and people working in the program.

The resumption of talks with the IAEA follows several meetings since the start of 2012, all unsuccessful. — AFP

Mandela recovering

JOHANNESBURG – Hospitalised anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela was still being “recuperating” after receiving treatment for a lung infection, South African President Jacob Zuma said on December 11.

“Mandela is recovering from a lung infection at a Pretoria hospital,” he said using Mandela’s clan name ahead of the unveiling of a monument to the former presid at the central city of Bloemfontein.

Mandela was admitted to hospital on December 8.

Briefs

Mandela recovering

Israel raps Europe

UN team in Iran

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DATED: 17 December 2012
UN Security Council condemns launch

UNITED NATIONS – The UN Security Council condemned North Korea’s rogue rocket launch on December 12 as the United States pressured China to support punitive action against its ally.

North Korea took a defiant stance against international fury over its launch however and China signaled it was reluctant to take a tough new measures.

The UN Security Council held emergency talks after the North, already under international sanctions for nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, ignored pleas from friends and foes and went ahead with a rocket launch that it said put a satellite into space.

“Members of the Security Council condemned this launch, which is a clear violation of Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874,” said a statement released after the meeting.

The council highlighted a “stoking the flames.”

The United States said there would start immediately on international action.

China’s UN ambassador Li Baodong refused to take a tough new measures.

Li opposed mentioning in the statement that the North had used “ballistic missile technology” but eventually gave in after pressure from Rice, the diplomats said.

In Beijing, the Chinese government responded relatively quickly by expressing “regret” and pressing North Korea to abide by UN resolutions.

But in a commentary, state news agency Xinhua also decried “bellicose rhetoric and gestures.”

North Korea insisted the launch was not a banned intercontinental missile test but carried a scientific satellite into space.

The rocket set alarm bells ringing in Japan and South Korea, which put their militaries on alert.

The launch was a “clear violation” of a 2009 UN Security Council resolution which bans North Korea from using ballistic missile technology, said UN leader Ban Ki-moon.

Russia labelled Pyongyang’s defiance of UN resolutions “unacceptable” and warned the launch would have a “negative effect” on regional stability, while the European Union threatened new sanctions.

Masao Okonogi, a professor of Korean politics at Keio University in Japan, said the launch would alarm the United States.

“Putting a satellite into orbit means that you have technology to get a warhead to a targeted area. Now, North Korea is becoming not only a threat to the neighbouring countries but also a real threat to the United States,” he said.

But the White House said it would ignore international warnings.

“We will continue to exercise our legitimate right to launch satellites,” said a foreign ministry spokesman. – AFP
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The end of the world, or a calendar?

CANCUN, Mexico – Gonzalo Alvarez, who arrived in Cancun last week for two weeks of reverie linked to a major milestone in the Mayan calendar, seemed reasonably cheerful for a man about to swallow up by the Apocalypse.

“We came to party and to get ready for the beginning of a new era,” Alvarez, 39, an architect, said at Cancun’s airport on December 10. Alvarez had travelled to Mexico from Florida to witness the beginning of a new Mayan era on December 21, 2012, which will be marked with celebrations throughout southern Mexico and Central America.

Mexico is one of five countries preparing to observe the date, which marks the end of a more than 5000-year era in the Mayan “Long Count” calendar, which began in 3114 BC. In neighbouring Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, while Mexico is one of five countries preparing to observe the date, which marks the end of a more than 5000-year era in the Mayan “Long Count” calendar, which began in 3114 BC. In neighbouring Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, with tourism also big business a date for celebration.

For many people in this region, December 21 will be the start of the new Mayan era. The prophesy to which they refer is in an ancient Mayan monument in Tortuguero, Mexico, and is believed to have been left by a Mayan ruler. The Mayan leader, fresh from defeat on the battlefield, declared that the military setback was but one event in a larger cycle of time that would end in 2012.

Many scholars say the prophecy was misinterpreted and was not meant to suggest the end of all time, but simply the end of the old Mayan calendar and the beginning of a new one.

Indigenous experts scoff at the faulty and sensational misreadings of the Mayan calendars.

“They are not telling the truth about time cycles,” Jose Romero, 39, a film director, told AFP. “Romero blames Hollywood for a rather fantastical interpretation of the hieroglyphs “without much knowledge of the facts” of Mayan history and culture.

Meanwhile, the belief that the world will end on December 21 has travelled far beyond Meso-America.

In the Russian city of Tomsk a company is selling a “Apocalypse kit” that includes food and medicine with a bottle of vodka – or tequila if the customer prefers.

In the French Pyrenees, authorities have temporarily closed access to a mountain to avoid throngs of people fleeing from apocalypse.

Indigenous leaders in Mexico, critical of the way the date is being commercialised, have convened a Mayan Peoples Council to focus on the cultural significance of the new era.

In neighbouring Guatemala, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu has also criticised the commercialisation of the event. Menchu is not the first native Mayan to decry the exploitation of her heritage.

“We are speaking out against deceit, lies and twisting of the truth, and turning us into folklore-for-profit,” Felipe Gomez, leader of the Maya alliance Oxlajuj Ajq’ep, said in October. “They are not telling the truth about time cycles.” – AFP
From Philippines, a reason for hope

COMMENT by Pankaj Mishra

IT wasn’t an incredible photo-op and it’s unlikely to be included in this month’s Valdai Valedictory round of 2012 high elections – in fact, it was barely reported.

One of this year’s most remarkable events, however, was the agreement between the Philippine government and the insurgent group Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

If successful, it may not only turn the pages of secessionist violence in the Philippines – the country’s largest island in the Philippines; it may also inspire hope in a wide swath of Asian countries damaged, politically as well as economically, by intersective conflicts.

Divide-and-rule European imperialists, favouring one ethnic group and persecuting another, or drawing arbitrary lines in the sand or the grass, thereby imagined national and religious differences into political antagonisms within Asia’s local societies. Their local opponents – newly educated natives – hardened religious and ethnic identities by turning them into a basis of anti-imperialist solidarity.

In the principle of self-determination was widely exported from relatively homogeneous Europe to multicultural Asia, where it was embraced by rising native elites as a way to resist the proliferation of hastily and poorly imagined national communities – unstable nation-states where patchworks of relatively autonomous groups and individuals with multiple, overlapping identities had existed.

Since then, postcolonial insurgencies, national liberation – centralised states, administrations and large, resource-rich territories – have made the map of Asia bleed red.

Tamilis in Sri Lanka, the Pattani Muslims in Thailand, Baloch secessionists in Pakistan, Uighurs in China’s Xinjiang province, India’s Kashmiri Muslims and northeastern minorities – there is hardly an Asian nation-state where centralising governments haven’t fought, often with brute military force, to hold down religious and ethnic minorities.

The secessionists have occasionally succeeded, if after much horrific bloodshed, as in East Pakistan and East Timor. More often they have looked to be upholding doomed causes. But the sheer strain of fighting them has had uniformly devastating results, whether in Indonesia, Thailand or Sri Lanka: an enhanced political and economic role for men in uniform, the diminishment of independence and nationhood, civil liberties.

To uphold territorial integrity turned the army into the most powerful institution early on in Pakistan, Indonesia and Myanmar, and set back prospects for democracy. The Javanese leader Sukarno prepared his own demise by often deploying the army to suppress dissidence across the Indonesian archipelago.

More recently, Thailand’s former General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, who had been empowered by then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to crush the insurgency by Pattani Muslims, went on to lead a military coup against his civilian boss in 2006. In India-ruled Kashmir, the local military chiefs openly overrule the state’s elected chief minister.

Even in countries with stronger traditions of civil rule and electoral democracy, such as India and Sri Lanka, an authoritarian-minded nationalism has productively deployed ethnic and religious minorities as a foil.

Fearing loss of likely support among Myanmar’s Buddhist majority, even Aung San Suu Kyi is reluctant to denounced the disenfranchisement of the country’s Rohingya Muslims. Her stance on the militarised state’s longstanding battles with the Kvin, Shan, Chin and Kayah minorities is not much clearer.

Myanmar’s prime minister, Thein Sein, renewed cease-fires with these obdurate secessionists. But violence in Rakhine State in the resource-rich north has worsened.

Myanmar’s_scan to preserve its federal principle has deepened compromised Malaysia’s great potential. India’s Hindu nationalists rose to power on a program of demonising Muslims.

The battle against bigotry has been complicated. Mistrust has deepened as a result. Northern Pakistan’s Baloch are more likely to hold the flag of Allah while the flag of Pakistan was the object of their violent opposition. The battle against bigot has been complicated. Mistrust has deepened as a result.

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‘ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012’, powered by Mahindra XUV500, passes through Myanmar

Myanmar, December 12, 2012: The ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012, which is powered by 28 Mahindra XUV500s, passed through Myanmar between December 11 and December 15, 2012, before entering India.

The second edition of the ‘ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012’ organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) was flagged off on November 28, 2012. The three-week long rally will see 28 XUV500s travel through 8 ASEAN countries over 8,000 kms. The rally will conclude in India on December 20, 2012. En route, the convoy crossed highways, dirt tracks and even made a ferry crossing, before making its way through mountainous terrain, verdant valleys and the coastal areas of Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. The expedition will now move on to India. At the end of the rally, the formal flag in of the ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012 will be held in Delhi where the heads of states of the ASEAN countries will be present.

According to Vivek Nayer, Chief Marketing Officer, Automotive Division, Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd., “We are happy that the Mahindra XUV500 has been chosen as the exclusive vehicle to power the ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012. The XUV500 was conceived and built as a Global SUV and therefore it is now going places across international borders. We are confident that the tough and rugged Mahindra DNA will ensure that all 28 vehicles will come through with flying colors in the 8,000 km long rally that will traverse grueling conditions across the ASEAN countries”.

“The ASEAN rally is in sync with one of the pillars of the Mahindra Brand proposition of ‘Accepting No Limits’. We are particularly pleased that the rally gave participants the chance to drive through several nations, where the Mahindra Group has a presence or will soon establish one, including Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. Mahindra UVs are noted for proving themselves in the toughest rallying conditions with notable examples being the grueling Rally dos Sete Cidades in Brazil and the recent Tri Nation rally,” said Ruchir Irani, Chief Executive, International Operations, Auto and Farm Sectors, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

“We are absolutely delighted to be a part of the ASEAN Rally. This event demonstrates the tough and rugged DNA of Mahindra vehicles and will help build the Mahindra brand in Myanmar,” said Mr. Rajul Goenka, Executive Director of Bandoolla International (S) Pte. Ltd., Mahindra Distributor in Myanmar.

The ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012 can be tracked online on XUV500’s website www.mahindraxuv500.com/asean and on www.facebook.com/mahindraxuv500 and www.twitter.com/mahindraxuv500.

Proposed Route Map:

Ceremonial Flag off
November 26 - Indonesia
November 27 - Indonesia

Leg 1
November 27 - 28 - Singapore
November 28 - Singapore - Malaysia
November 29 – Malaysia – Thailand
November 30 – December 2 - Thailand
December 3 - Thailand – Cambodia
December 3 – Cambodia
December 6 – Cambodia – Vietnam
December 12 - Cambodia – Vietnam

Leg 2
December 7 – Vietnam – Cambodia – Laos
Day 7 - 8 - Laos
December 10 – Laos – Thailand
December 11 – Thailand – Myanmar
December 15 – Myanmar – India (Kohima)
December 16 – India (Guwahati)
December 17 – Guwahati (Flag in)

Ceremonial Flag in
December 20 – New Delhi
India must accept China in its backyard: FM

NEW DELHI – India’s foreign minister has said New Delhi cannot accept China’s growing presence in its own backyard as Beijing steers away from its traditional diplomatic efforts in South Asia.

New Delhi has been wary of growing Chinese influence around the region, where Beijing has forged ties with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Myanmar, often through funding and building infrastructure.

Speaking at a conference in the Indian capital on December 10, Salman Khurshid said India should be prepared to accept the new reality of China’s presence in the region, which means that India and its friends will have to think of China “as an important business or diplomatic partner, just as China is placed in the Indian Ocean... this is an important geopolitical shift for what we will see as the emerging Asian century,” he said.

Khurshid, 59, was appointed foreign minister just over six weeks earlier amid expectations that he would be the first of a wave of old hands attempting to forge a return to the 1970s and 1980s-style diplomatic strategy that has favoured caution over ambition.

The minister, whose speech was sent to AFP by the foreign ministry, said India needed to develop its relationship with China into meaningful bilateral relations in the coming years.

“China is aggressive. China is a partner for us. China is a neighbour for us... the real creativity of India’s foreign policy will come in being able to combine the strengths of China with the strengths of India,” he said.

Relations between India and China have not been improved by their unresolved border dispute, which are often prickly and marked by mutual distrust, a legacy of a brief border war in 1962.

India’s army chief said last week that Beijing’s growing maritime strength was a major cause for concern and New Delhi needed to adapt its strategy accordingly.

AFP

Briefs

Inequality widens in China, survey finds

SHANGHAI – China’s wealth gap has widened to the point that it is the world’s most unequal nations, a Chinese academics said on December 10, as huge numbers of poor people risk being left behind by the economic boom.

China’s Gini coefficient – a commonly used measure of inequality – was 0.61 in 2011, according to a research center for China Household Finance said, well above what some academics deemed as the warning line of 0.40.

A figure of 0.2 would represent equal society, and 1 total inequality.

RF tpynoll toll rises above 900

MANILA – The death toll from Typhoon Yolanda, which hit the Philippines this year, has reached 900, with hundreds still missing, the government said.

Typhoon Bopha killed 903 people and left 500,000 on southern Mindanao island, where foods and water supplies have not been able to reach nearly 2000 villages, the civil defence office said.

A total of 615 people remain unaccounted.

The typhoon destroyed 149,000 houses, it said.

Hun Sen admits human rights ‘gaps’

PHNOM PENH – Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said on December 10 his country enjoyed greater freedom compared to the dark days of brutal Khmer Rouge rule but admitted there were “gaps” in the nation’s human rights record.

“Now there is so much freedom. But it doesn’t mean that we don’t recognize the freedom can be filled,” Hun Sen said in a speech on national radio.

His comments came as thousands of activists packed the capital for International Human Rights Day to denounce Cambodia’s rights record, which campaigners said has been “in freelday” this year.

Malaysia seizes 24 tonnes of ivory

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysian customs have seized 24 tonnes of unprocessed elephant tusks worth almost US$800,000 on December 11 after such haul being made in the past.

A total of 615 people were rounded up.

The containers had origins in the western African nation of Togo and were believed to be headed to China.

AFP
providing office works information; operation of computers, particular of documents or magnetic tapes; office functions; industry management assistance; preparation of financial human resource consulting services; business process process improvement consultation in the field of business; by the Internet or mobile telephone communication or other communication means; providing information for customer communication means and providing information for other relating thereof; providing information for the sales of goods the Internet or mobile telephone communication or other communication means; conversion of sound, image and text information to sound, image and text signals by computers; data conversion to computer databases; electronic interchange of photo image in data form; information processing by computers; remote monitoring of computer systems; expansion and addition of functions and configuration of computer programs and computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic disks and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); verification of connection between computers; confirmatory verification of computer program behavior; computer consulting and instruction concerning maintenance and installation of computer programs, apparatuses using computer programs or apparatuses used by computer systems; computer system integration services; providing general information technology support services, including, troubleshooting in the nature of diagnosing computer hardware and software problems and repair of computer software problems via the Internet, telephone, email and in person; oversight and implementation of technology systems, including, computer project management services; enterprise resource planning implementation services, including, the definition, acquisition and implementation of management information systems; data migration services; computer security service; rental of computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic disks and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); providing computer programs and providing information relating thereto; rental of servers; rental of memory areas of servers for communication networks; cloud computing services; consulting services in the field of cloud computing; application service provider (ASP), including, providing, hosting, managing, developing, and maintaining applications, software, web sites and databases, and software as a service (SaaS) services; providing, installing and maintaining, in the field of datacenter architecture, public and private cloud computing solutions, and evaluation and implementation of Internet technology and services; Paas (Platform as a Service); Iaas (Infrastructutre as a Service); industrial analysis and related services; preparation of computer programs and computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic disks and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); technical advice relating to performance, operation of computers and other machines that require high level of personal knowledge, skill or experience of the operators to meet the required accuracy in operating them; services in the field of science and technology, such as research and development related thereto; research and consultancy in the computing sector; research and development of computer technologies; quality control; design and development of computer hardware and software; creation and development of websites and Internet portals (search engines)
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Comedian Zaganar finds humour in his darkest days

By Zon Pann Pwint

COMEDIAN Zaganar, renowned for his ability to always see the lighter side of life, has published his second book entitled Phuhsone (The First), detailing the days of his first prison term that lasted a year.

Zaganar was first arrested in October 1988 for taking part in that year’s national uprisings. As a well-known comic, he found humour in the hardships of prison life.

“The punches and kicks he received while being interrogated and his poor diet of bean soup became fodder for jokes. He wrote down his experiences when released in April 1989 while they were still fresh in his mind, but gave up hope of publishing the book for 20 years.”

“I don’t want to forget them,” Zaganar said at the launch of his new book held at House of Media and Entertainment (HOME) on December 7.

“We took part in the 1988 uprising. Those who fell asleep while protesters marched passed their houses are working as key figures in this country’s administration. We have to write about it,” he said.

Zaganar is the stage name of U Thura. He first took to the stage at Yangon University during his days as a student.

He then founded Moe Nat Thuzar Anyeint Troupe in 1983 and formed a second troupe Mya Ponenamar a year before he was imprisoned.

“In the transitional period, people want to chronicle the 88 uprising and to make a documentary film but we don’t have the complete records,” he said.

He added that when he visited Cambodia he had met Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) which chronicled the ‘88 period.

“We have to chronicle the accounts of the 1988 uprising and compile a book. Former political prisoners like U Min Ko Naing, U Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Jimmy and myself wrote books which are based on the accounts and the events that we ourselves witnessed. We did this so that one day we could compile a complete book about the ‘88 uprising and about the prisons we were locked up in,” he added.

Zaganar starred in his first film in 1985 after graduating from university. He was the leading man in four films including Zaganar in 1986.

“I wrote about my life in prison not because I don’t want to forget it and I want to document it,” he added.

He faced a second prison term of five years in May 1990 and was freed in 1994.

Undeterred, he returned to his career as a comedian but was banned from performing on the stage in the same year and faced another ban from acting in and directing films in 1997.

Though this ban was eased in 2001, another one was imposed four years later in 2005.

Zaganar said he hopes to write a total of four books documenting his four stints in prison.

“The last time I was in Myitkyina prison so that I will write about Myitkyina prison. I support the other former prisoners recording where they were held. For example, Ko Jimmy was held in Taunggyi prison and he wrote about it. One day we will be able to keep an archive containing detailed accounts of the 41 prisons in Myanmar,” he explained.

Zaganar was last imprisoned in 2008. He was released as part of an amnesty on October 12, 2011.

Sung Thin Par ends seven year hiatus

By Nuam Bawi

SINGER Sung Thin Par is set to release her first solo album in seven years. A Thit (New), her fourth album as a solo artist, will come out on December 22.

This album is produced by Forever Blossom Co., Ltd, a media content provider for MRTV-4 and Mandalay FM. It is the first album that the company has produced.

“We have been only focused on broadcasts for out TV channels. This is the new step for us to produce a music album,” Pyae Phyoe Han, the director of Forever Blossom, told a press conference at the Park Royal Hotel on December 12.

“When we started looking for a singer for this project we knew that we wanted to produce a veteran’s album. We did not want to produce a new singer’s album for this project. When we spoke with Sung Thin Par, she said she had already recorded and we decided to produce her album without even listening to her songs because we believed in her,” U Kyaw Win, spokesperson for Forever Blossom told The Myanmar Times.

Forever Blossom produced the album with the help of Thai-based Gold Disc. Despite the extra costs brought due to music piracy, Forever Blossom felt the need to focus on quality.

“We wanted to upgrade the quality of the CD and the appearance of the album. The quality of Myanmar CDs is very bad. After two or three plays, the CDs start to have problems and don’t work. This disappointed a lot of fans. The fans started thinking that it made more sense to buy the pirated CDs at a very cheap price because they are almost the same quality as the originals,” said U Kyaw Win.

“We decided to make this album with Gold Disc because we would like to present a product of higher quality than the CDs being made by the pirates.”

Sung Thin Par said that her seven year hiatus had made her feel like a new singer and served as the inspiration for the album’s title.

“There was a long gap between my last solo album and my new solo album, so I feel like I’m a new person for all my fans. This is the first time that I have released a solo album which includes only original songs,” Sung Thin Par explained.

Although I’m an older singer, my mind, my inspiration and my voice on this album are all new. She is hoping that her efforts will be well received by her fans.

“I would like to hear some loud cheers from out TV channels. This is the new step for us to produce a music album,” she said.

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Dated: 17 December 2012
Spielberg takes awards lead with Golden Globe nods

LOS ANGELES – Steven Spielberg’s “Lincoln” led nominations for the Golden Globes Thursday with 13 nominations, a healthy lead over second-place contender “Silver Linings Playbook,” with seven nods. Both the veteran filmmaker and his major star, Daniel Day-Lewis, have already been named as Oscar candidates, which could put them both in the running for the best actor and best actress Golden Globe awards.

The announcements come as “Lincoln” accelerates into its annual awards season, after the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) nominations announced Wednesday, in which “Lincoln” and “Silver Linings Playbook” were joint leaders. After a US presidential election year, Spielberg will be hoping to fare better with “Lincoln” than he did with his last year’s epic “War Horse,” which was nominated for six Oscars and two Globes but went home empty-handed.

In the best drama category, Spielberg’s movie — about Lincoln’s battle to free slaves against the backdrop of the Civil War — is up against “Argo,” “Django Unchained,” “Life of Pi,” “Ang Lee and “Zero Dark Thirty.”

It’s very gratifying to get this many nominations from one film,” Spielberg said. “It’s hard on and so much passion about,” said Tarantino, who won an Oscar for 1994 film “Pulp Fiction.”

Bigelow, whose 2008 Iraq war movie “The Hurt Locker” won six Academy Awards, added: “It’s an honor, sincerely, and very humbling. We managed to pull it out this way by the HFPA.”

Attleck, nominated for directing “Argo,” was modest about his skills behind the camera.

“It’s a huge accomplishment. I’m very grateful,” said Attleck, who was also nominated for best supporting actor for “Silver Linings Playbook.”

Other nominations leaders included “Les Miserables,” which led with 8 nods, including best actress for Anne Hathaway and best actor for Hugh Jackman, who will be hoping to double his Oscar chances by winning here as well.

Also, there have been changes to the Myanmar Traditional Arts and Arts Organisation, so they will not have any 2012 year end show, said U Min Lwin, owner of Gallery 65.

Artsit Nyo Hla, Myat Kyawth, Khin Maung Yin, Tin Maung Oo (Mandaray), NCS (Nyein Chan Su) and others will all have their work displayed.

The end of the year is the last of 22 exhibitions that were held at Gallery 65 in 2012.

Conservators of the paintings at Gallery 65 are Mr. Zaw Latt, who will be hoping to have the paintings back in place and ready to be displayed in the new year.
performance artists create change

By Nathalie Johnston

THERE is certain skepticism when it comes to performance art worldwide, but in Myanmar, this branch of visual art is one of the fastest-growing mediums among artists.

While no widely accepted definition exists, one could describe performance art as a body-based practice, where an artist's actions and movements represent an idea that he or she is trying to express. Challenging more traditional art practices is exactly what these performance actions aim to do.

Myanmar is no stranger to artistic forms and traditions. Rich cultural practice has existed for centuries in writing, theatre, puppetry and temple art.

Modern and contemporary visual painting arrived under British colonialism and Myanmar has produced many accomplished painters in these genres ever since. However, the alternative art practices like installation, video and performance, which carry a strong and more immediate message about where the people in Myanmar come from and where they are going.

In the mid-90s, artists such as Hsein Lin and Nyein Chan Su walked the streets of Yangon, documenting their actions with photography. Aung Myint, one of the fathers of modern painting and Phyu Hnin, one of Myanmar’s first female modernist artists, have both played important roles in the development of performance art in Yangon.

Aye Ko, of New Zero Art Space, was the first to bring an international performance artist – Japanese artist Seiji Shimoda – to Myanmar. This first generation of performance artists paved the way for the young and enthusiastic artists working today.

Mrat Lunn Htwann, Nyan Lin Htet and Moe Satt were younger artists who worked almost exclusively in performance art and helped bring it into the mainstream art scene in Yangon.

This December was the 5th year of the Beyond Pressure Contemporary Art Festival. Curator Moe Satt originally founded Beyond Pressure as Myanmar’s first and only performance art festival.

His hope was that, “artists would continue to practice alternative art forms after the transition period.”

Both Nyan Lin Htet and Mrat Lunn Htwann have also organised events through shows such as Theatre of the Disturbed and Body Reports, respectively. It is because of pioneering artists like the first and second generation that performance art has grown in popularity.

The question is, why is performance art so popular? Why are more artists in Yangon and Mandalay choosing to work with this medium?

It doesn’t make any money. You can’t sell a performance piece at least not in an undeveloped art market such as Myanmar’s. So what is the attraction?

Artists all over the world use performance in order to have a “live presence” in their work. But in a city such as Yangon, artists comment not only about their own personal experiences but also on the world around them, whether it’s the political and economic changes happening in Myanmar, censorship, Buddhism, society, feminism or other issues.

Several artists have recently performed with weekly journals: reading them aloud, burning them for the people around them. Others go for pure action: some have used eggs, props and experiments.

Still others involve audience members, and not always purposely.

Less than two weeks ago, two audience members, including myself, were hit with eggs that were being used in a performance piece. How is that for performance art in your face?

The most recent Beyond Pressure performance event was held in a public space at Karaweik gardens with spotlights and video cameras focused on the artists.

Families and bystanders crowded the area, whispering questions to each other: “Are they making a movie?” or “Is it a magic show?”

One by one artists created their works in front of the bewildered yet captivated crowd.

Instan Rafiza, an artist from Malaysia, released dead ones and respectfully burying them in the ground.

Zoncy, a female artist from Myanmar, used plastic wrap to cover her face in flowers, not before she passed around the flowers for people to smell.

Ma Ei, another female artist from Myanmar, allowed audience members to put cosmetics on her face.

Mrat Lunn Htwann invited everyone to give him one possession to place on a table so that he could use them in his performance.

The audience interacting and objects becoming action is also what performance art is all about.

Artist Aung Ko once said: “We are just human beings and we should relate to each other that way.”

Performance artists often state simply that they want to bring the everyday into their art by using their body. It is that simple. Living in a proverbial cage in a crippling system for so long, performance art offers something liberating. It is not theatre. There is no script. Nor is it a painting, where an artist puts down the brush when the painting is complete.

Things can go wrong, audience members get involved and artists come together.

At the New Zero and French Institute International Multimedia Show in mid-December, artist Nyein Win said he “really wanted to work with the young performance artists.”

As a poet and artist working in the field for 20 years, it was an important step he took to include others in a collaborative performance; the artists use the same space, but do not interact. It was a great example of performance bridging the generation gap.

Visiting international artists are often surprised about the development of alternative art forms such as performance in Myanmar.

Vietnamese artist Tran Thuc Le commented: “The passion and talent reminds me of art in Vietnam 20 years ago.”

All the artists seem excited for the future of art in Yangon. With many talented artists and a passion for art happenings, everyone wants to be a part of it.

However, as with any change, there are those who are happy and those who are not. There might be trouble, or a bewildered audience, or even a revelation, but in a country changing as quickly as Myanmar, it’s best to expect the unexpected.

( Nathalie Johnston is an independent researcher at Myanmar Art Evolution, an online platform exploring alternative art and culture in Myanmar. Originally from the US, she received her MA in Art History in Singapore and is based in Yangon.)

Myanmar’s new generation of alternative artists are turning to performance to express themselves anytime. There might trouble, or a bewildered audience, or even a revelation, but in a country changing as quickly as Myanmar, it’s best to expect the unexpected.
December 17 - 23, 2012

ROCK STARS SHINE AT HURRICANE SANDY BENEFIT GIG

NEW YORK – Rock music royalty, including the Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters and Paul McCartney, turned out for a star-studded line-up on December 12 to raise money for victims of superstorm Sandy.

The “12-12-12” concert at Madison Square Garden brought a Who’s Who of rockers under one roof for the event, which was broadcast live across 37 US television networks and a multitude of Internet livestream sites, as well as radio. Organisers expected two billion people to tune in worldwide.

Musicians also included The Who, Jon Bon Jovi, Eric Clapton, Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, Billy Joel, Alicia Keys, Chris Martin, and rapper Kanye West, who lit up the Twittersphere by performing in a black leather skirt.

While music stars strutted their stuff, movie and TV performers including Leonardo DiCaprio, Chris Rock, Susan Sarandon, Whoopi Goldberg, and political humorist Jon Stewart fronted a telethon that had some in the crowd in tears of laughter.

But even the funnymen were serious about the fund-raising drive. At the end of the night, Robin Hood Foundation announced that the “12-12-12: The Concert For Sandy Relief” had raised $32 million for the fund-raising drive.

LOS ANGELES – Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar is to receive a posthumous lifetime achievement Grammy award, organisers of the music industry’s top prize said on December 12.

Three-time Grammy winner Shankar, who died on December 11 in southern California at the age of 92, after failing to recover from surgery at a hospital in La Jolla, near San Diego last week. His family was at his bedside.

As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West, it added.

Shankar died on December 11 in southern California at the age of 92, after failing to recover from surgery at a hospital in La Jolla, near San Diego last week. His family was at his bedside.

The sitar pioneer taught the world to appreciate the unique sound of his instrument, and helped to popularise traditional Indian music.

Shankar was born in 1920 in the city of Allahabad, India, and began playing the sitar at the age of five. He went on to study under the legendary Indian musician Bopanna Ramakrishna Pillai, and later settled in the United States, where he taught at the University of California, Los Angeles.

His music was characterized by its spiritual and philosophical themes, and he was a key figure in the development of the sitar as a solo instrument.

Shankar’s influence extended beyond the world of classical music, as he had a deep connection with Western music and culture. He worked closely with musicians such as George Harrison of The Beatles, and was a frequent collaborator with the greats of the rock era.

Shankar’s music was featured in numerous films, and he appeared in several documentaries and television shows. His work has been widely celebrated, and he was a recipient of numerous awards and honours.

As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West.

Shankar received a Grammy nod only last week, when the Academy announced those shortlisted, including his “The Godfather of World Music”, and Yehudi Menuhin, widely considered one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century, compared him to Mozart.

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Shankar died on December 11 in southern California at the age of 92, after failing to recover from surgery at a hospital in La Jolla, near San Diego last week. His family was at his bedside.

The sitar pioneer taught the world to appreciate the unique sound of his instrument, and helped to popularise traditional Indian music.

Shankar was born in 1920 in the city of Allahabad, India, and began playing the sitar at the age of five. He went on to study under the legendary Indian musician Bopanna Ramakrishna Pillai, and later settled in the United States, where he taught at the University of California, Los Angeles.

His music was characterized by its spiritual and philosophical themes, and he was a key figure in the development of the sitar as a solo instrument.

Shankar’s influence extended beyond the world of classical music, as he had a deep connection with Western music and culture. He worked closely with musicians such as George Harrison of The Beatles, and was a frequent collaborator with the greats of the rock era.

Shankar’s music was featured in numerous films, and he appeared in several documentaries and television shows. His work has been widely celebrated, and he was a recipient of numerous awards and honours.

As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West.

Shankar received a Grammy nod only last week, when the Academy announced those shortlisted, including his “The Godfather of World Music”, and Yehudi Menuhin, widely considered one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century, compared him to Mozart.

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Hepburn, a master of film and fashion

By Peter Rainer

NEW YORK — For my money, Katharine Hepburn was America's finest actress. But America's finest clothes horse?

An exhibit — “Katharine Hepburn: Dresses for Stage and Screen” at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center through January 12 — makes the case.

With her preference for slacks, Hepburn cultivated a stylishly androgynous look that made her an icon to many, if an irritant to some. By the way, note that I am not using the word “pants” here in deference to her immortal line in Pat and Mike (1952), the best of her nine movies with Spencer Tracy: “They’re not pants, they’re slacks. Watch your language.”

It’s Hepburn’s performances, of course, and not her costumes, that are interesting. Before a 66-year career, she appeared in 44 films and eight television movies, as well as some 33 plays. The drabness is awfully low for such an extended run.

In fact, there weren’t more than a few of them. She was infelicitously miscast as a Chinese patriarch in the Peck-filmed Silk O’China (1943). With her Yankee veneer and Brylcreem exteriors, who less Mandrin than Hepburn? And even though Kenneth Tynan once referred to her as the “Garbo of the Great Outdoors,” that’s because he was referring to the uneducated Ozark mountain girl Trigger Hicks in Spilfire (1934).

In her 1991 autobiography Me: Stories of My Life, which is so stylistically staccato that it makes Stories of My Life, which is so

One of the last hand-made eyewear craftsman, but you are also

With only 14 grammes of tortoiseshell needed for one pair of glasses, the film says it uses around two to three

It’s true it is costly,

“Then I thought of something. I’m not rich, but we are not millionaires, this kind of work, this is right for me.”

A doped-up haze, she evokes abject terror.

To care for the dying Tracy, he decided a few years earlier not to do the play in Hollywood. Hepburn said of his role as Philadelphia blueblood Tracy Lord: “I gave her life and she gave me back my career.”

Hepburn’s best comedies also include Adam’s Rib (1949), where she and Tracy parry as married lawyers on opposing ends of a court battle, and The African Queen (1951), where her spinster Rosie, in a performance inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt’s smile-in-the-face-of-adversity fortitude, settles in with Humphrey Bogart’s gin-soaked river rat.

Films like these set her firmly in the pantheon of Hollywood’s most accomplished comedians. What is virtually unprecedented is how she could be equally great in tragedy. As drug-addicted Mary Tyrone in Sidney Lumet’s film of Eugene O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey Into Night (1942) she gives her finest performance. In her final scene, dragging around her wedding dress in a doped-up haze, she evolves abject awe and terror.

In other words, almost an entry-level model.

“Then I thought of something. I’m not rich, but we are not millionaires, this kind of work, this is right for me.”

Not pants, they’re slacks. Watch your language.

“Was a Southern sort of mountain spirit. Shame on you, Kathy.”

But of the glories, there is almost no end. In her very first movie, Bill of Divorcement (1932), opposite John Barrymore, she already was sui

Hepburn was as indomitable as any

“Always a leader, always a trailblazer, always a true artist.”

A master of film and fashion.

The next step towards Broadening what they offer is to come from customization — allowing people to change the size and colour on standard models.

Bonnet was snared in controversy recently when a star journalist, Audrey Pulvar — then in a relationship with a Socialist minister — was outed for wearing a pair of their steeply-priced glasses.

It’s true it is costly,

But we artists are not millionaires, this kind of high craft is extremely time-consuming.

Making glasses to measure means studying the face in

“Then I thought of something. I’m not rich, but we are not millionaires, this kind of work, this is right for me.”

A master of film and fashion.

IT TIMEOUT

December 17 - 23, 2012

PARIS — What did Yves Saint

And that is before all the

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“Then I thought of something. I’m not rich, but we are not millionaires, this kind of work, this is right for me.”

A master of film and fashion.
Mutton meatballs and Greek salad

**Main Tips**

Make sure to pat the mince dry before mixing. Add ⅛ teaspoon chili powder for extra spice. Do not take the teaspoon chili powder for dry before mixing. Add ¼ teaspoon extra spice. Do not take the teaspoon chili powder for dry before mixing. Add ¼ teaspoon extra spice.

**QUAFFING QUOTE**

“Miracles are like meatballs, because nobody can exactly agree on what they are made of, where they come from, or how often they should appear.”

— Lemony Snicket in The Confusional Carnival

**NEXT WEEK**

Xmas dessert – quick and easy ice cream cakes, a free form for your creations.

---

**Red Wine**

Marquis de Chasse Merlot & Cabernet 2009

Marquis de Chasse’s take on this classic blend is a smooth and reliable drop that pairs well with red meat but is just as easily savoured on its own.

**White Wine**

Oustatic Sauvignon Blanc

“Oustatic will give you great emotions,” intones the label. Indeed, but which emotions. The “intense aromas” arrive as promised but the somewhat tart taste failed to excite.

---

**FOOD REVIEW**

**Home style it ain’t**

Happily, that did not happen.

My main beef was with the food. This is Myanmar fare customised for the sensitive Western palate, which is fine when you do it well, as some Yangon establishments do. But the chicken and gourd soup (K4900) and eggplant, or aubergine, salad (K2000) were in my opinion too far removed from what I consider to be their original state.

The salad was overly dry and creamy, and lacked its normal delicious smokiness. The chicken and gourd soup seemed to have coconut milk in it.

The prices are a little expensive considering what you get, and the dishes are a little different: a rum sour was K4000, while a glass of Red Mountain shiraz was K5900. Only afterwards did I realise they forgot to charge me for the Thai-style emmetle with pork (K2500).

Nevertheless, La Maison 20 exudes potential. With some tinking to the menu, it could become an established fixture on the Yangon dining scene. – TK

---

**Mutton meatballs with Greek salad**

(6 servings)

**INGREDIENTS**

500 g of mutton (minced) 2 tablespoon of red wine vinegar 1 egg 1 onion (finely chopped) 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds ½ teaspoon of ground coriander 1/8 teaspoon of salt 1 cup of natural yoghurt ½ cup of vegetable oil ½ cup of natural yoghurt Freshly grinded pepper Fresh mint leaves and wedges of lemon to serve

**PREPARATION**

Put the minced mutton dry with a paper towel. Add egg, onion, cumin seeds, mint, dried coriander and minced mutton into the bowl and mix well.

Then scoop the mixture with a tablespoon and roll into a ball. Lay the balls on a plate, cover with clear plastic wrap and refrigerate for half an hour.

In a frying pan heat up the vegetable oil over high heat. Fry the meatballs under golden brown. Then add ⅛ cup of water and cook them through while covering.

When the meatballs are tender, drain all excess oil.

**Tortilla**

Dampen a paper towel with water.

Then lay the tortillas on the plate and cover with the damp paper towel and microwave for 5-6 sec until soft.

Or heat them in a non-stick frying pan.

Serve the meatballs with tortilla, yogurt, olive oil, fresh mint leaves and lemon. Cut the green peppers into pieces the same size as the meatballs. Dampen a paper towel and microwave for 5-6 sec until soft. Then lay the tortillas on the plate and cover with the damp paper towel and microwave for 5-6 sec until soft.

**SHOPPING LIST**

Kalamata olives, tortilla, marinated feta cheese are from Sharky’s.

---

**La Maison 20 Restaurant & Bar**

20 Karab Aye Pagoda Road, Yankin township, Yangon

Tel: 01-664-204, 01-667-504

**Score BOX**

Food: 7
Drink: 7
Atmosphere: 7
Service: 8
X Factor: 8

---

**Red Wine Marquis de Chasse Merlot & Cabernet 2009**

Marquis de Chasse’s take on this classic blend is a smooth and reliable drop that pairs well with red meat but is just as easily savoured on its own.

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“Oustatic will give you great emotions,” intones the label. Indeed, but which emotions. The “intense aromas” arrive as promised but the somewhat tart taste failed to excite.

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December 17 - 23, 2012

sociAlite

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the Myanmar Times

Yadana Kyaw Oo @ Luminarc 2012 Design Show

Thandar Bo @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening

Ma Tin Tin Aye, Ma Chaw Chaw Myint, Ms. Charlene Chan, Mr. Ethan Hua and Mr. Ho Choon Heung @ Prolink new product launch event

Daw Nelly Tun and U Ma Oo @ Art in Myanmar magazine launch

U Win Lwin Oo, Mr. Quek Ser Yang and Mr. Felix Loo @ a.g.o.p. design

Directors of Hitachi @ Grand opening of the Hitachi showroom

H.E. Dr. V.S. Sheshadri @ Grand opening of United Bank of India

Make-up artist @ One Touch new product launch

Khin Thazin Yu Wah, Daw Phyu Phyu Nyunt, Ma Phyu Thwe Myint, Daw Aye Aye Myint, Khine Thazin Yu Wah and San Htut @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening

Attendees @ One Touch new product launch
First, she jetted to United Bank of India at Kan Daw Gyi Palace Hotel, then down to the new Hitachi showroom on Alone Street. On December 6, she was at Traders Hotel for the Prolink product launch and continued on to Chatrium Hotel where One Touch condoms were promoting their product. Socialite took a much needed break, sleeping in on December 7, but was back at it that evening attending the wedding reception of Ko Bo Bo Win and Ma Eizali Lwin where she wished the happy couple all the best. On December 8, she went to the opening ceremony of a.g.o.p design studio in Kamaryut township then caught the Luminarc 2013 design show at Market Place in Bahan township.
**Travel**

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**Haphazard obs.**

A couple weeks after arriving in Mandalay, I decided to return to Yangon for a few days. The city had changed quite a bit since my previous visit. The streets were narrower and more crowded, and the buildings were taller. The temples and pagodas were still there, but some had been renovated. The market was bustling with activity, and the food was delicious. Overall, I had a great time exploring the city and seeing the sights. It was a great opportunity to experience the different cultures and traditions of Myanmar.
One of the benefits of the workshop was that we did not spend all day sitting inside, but went on some interesting fieldtrips: one to a waste management project and the other to a coca plantation. This gave us the chance to experience village life in Nepal, and to interact with the locals as well. I felt I would not be able to move forward any more than the metal healing bowls.

The villagers painted our foreheads with red dots and draped us with garlands as a symbol of welcome. The field trips were also absorbing, even though they involved a bit of trekking, which I found fascinating. Some of the other participants in the workshop were much better than I was, and they kept going even when I felt I would not be able to move forward another inch.

The town life observed in Nepal, and the little girls from the village in dancing and singing their cheerful songs in the sun. The town life is very different to the countryside. The town life was very different to the countryside. The town life was very different to the countryside.

It didn’t help that I didn’t like the country. The country has too much to offer. Sometimes I feel like to go back and try some of the many adventures available for tourists, including rock climbing, bungee jumping, jungle safaris, mountain biking, rafting and paragliding. For Myanmar nationals, Nepal gives 15-day visas at a cost of US$25. I would highly recommend the trip, and I would suggest staying as long as you can.
Dogs are delicacy and man’s best friend in Vietnam

By Tran Thi Minh Ha

HANOI – At a packed Hanoi restaurant, one of Vietnam’s growing ranks of proud pooch owners tucks into a traditional delicacy to mark the end of the lunar month – a plate of juicy dog.

“Never kill our own dogs for their meat. Here I’m eating in a restaurant so I don’t care which dogs they killed or how,” Pham Dang Tu, 40, a university student and dog owner, said. “The generation now generally seem to love animals very much.”

In the countryside, local mongrels are kept as pets or guard dogs. It is these, more non-descript, animals which are most vulnerable to the dog bandits. Most of the dogs sold in Hanoi’s restaurant are local breeds raised specifically to be eaten, as local dogs are also kept as pets in the countryside, it is hard to know which animals are stolen, and which are farmed.

While exotic pet dogs are found only in cities, “in the countryside people will continue to see dogs as meat”, he said.

Dog is served in a range of exotic foreign breeds – Chihuahuas and Huskies are particularly popular – favoured by Hanoi-based pet-owners.

In his busy restaurant, Giang said that his small establishment served up to seven dogs a day at that time of the month – and business is reliably solid.

Dog theft-related mob violence has spiralled over the last few years.

In June, a man was beaten to death after hundreds of villagers caught him red-handed trying to steal a family dog in Nghe An province, the Vietnam Express news portal reported, triggering an outpouring of public support for the mob.

“It’s not right to beat a man to death but anyone in this situation would do the same,” one resident, who lost a pet to the bandits, wrote on social media.

In Hanoi’s Reunification Park, hundreds of dog owners walk their pet dogs every day, showcasing the range of exotic foreign breeds – Chihuahuas and Huskies are particularly popular.

Calle de la Salsa

Tuesday is salsa night at 59th Street Bar, featuring free dance classes (salsa, bachata, mambo, merengue and more), plus dance shows with drink specials, with music by DJ Mani and special guests.

Wednesday wine

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at theQP Innya Shop (30 Inya Road). Take four or five wines for K10,000 Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 092-3721-871.

Live music

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

If you would like your event listed in Event Flash, please email editors@myanmartimes.com.mm.
THE FRENCH field and an excellent level - arrange meetings & situation, - contacts with gouv.fr at Ambassade Experience in facilitating remote locations and high quality performance in participatory planning, international agencies. Professional experience: University diplomas Qualifications/ 
50%) to the project (written& spoken), good
accounting software. Finance Manager (SI) is seeking (1) Financial
Manager in Yangon: 4 years experience in Logistics field with in
Yangon. We are Mandalay Region and in Ayeyawady Region,
the position. Very good
log. coordo@ solidarites-
Society is seeking (1)
Engineer - ME (Electrical) - 5 years
experience in Travel
programs, good
experience of English
point. Ability to
is looking for two

HOTEL BUSINESS
Kandawgyi Palace Hotel - M : 5 years experience.
Tour Operator - M/F (2). Experience in
Developing tour
media; monitor media
point. Able to use
for continuous learning,
ability to

Ingo Positions

HelpAge International is a 3-year project entitled “Improving long-term Care Organisations to Reduce Poverty Amongst Older People in Myanmar”. HelpAge International has offices in Yangon, Mandalay, Myitkyina and Kyaing Tong.
I am seeking a qualified and experienced professional for the following positions:

Job Title: Project Manager & Training Co-ordinator Location: Yangon with frequent travel (minimum 50%) to the project and Yangon Region. We are looking for candidates with excellent leadership and

A leading local tour operator is looking to expand its operations.

B.Ed (World Languages) or equivalent

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**Anti-racism body slams ‘weak’ FA, Premier League**

LONDON – The chairman of an anti-racism group has accused England’s Football Association and the top-flight Premier League of lacking morality and leadership over their handling of recent racist incidents.

Herman Ouseley, who heads the Kick It Out organisation, described Liverpool over the racism incidents involving their players John Terry and Luis Suarez, saying they “failed to take a stand against unacceptable behaviour.”

“The big clubs look after their players as assets. There was no bold attitude from them, to say that they would not put up with it.”

Terry served a four-game ban earlier this season after being found guilty of racially abusing Queens Park Rangers’ Anton Ferdinand by the FA, while Suarez was hit with an eight-match suspension for a similar offence last season.

Despite the punishments dealt out to the two players, Ouseley said the football authorities should have been more outspoken in their criticism.

“The condemnations have been mealy-mouthed,” the former head of the Commission for Racial Equality said.

“We want all players and fans to feel comfortable about reporting abuse. But the FA did not say anything about the lies and distortions which came out in John Terry’s and Ashley Cole’s evidence. Instead the players are protected.”

“The Premier League could have set the tone; they and the FA do a good job in community work. But I have not heard anything from the Premier League.”

Ouseley also chastised the former Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish and Chelsea coach Andre Villas-Boas for giving too much support to Suarez and Terry during their respective cases.

“We were observing the process but the managers were speaking out and sticking up for Luis Suarez and John Terry,” Ouseley added.

“The FA should have asserted themselves, instead they failed to put up a stand against unacceptable behaviour.”

Leadership is so important; you have to send the message that you will not tolerate this. That’s what they failed to do,” said Ouseley.

**Calls for Pacquiao to retire**

Referee Kenny Bayless holds back Juan Manuel Marquez as Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines lies face down on the mat after being knocked out by Marquez on December 8 at the MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas, Nevada. Pic: AFP

MANILA – Philippine media commentators have put pressure on boxing great Manny Pacquiao to retire after his heavy defeat in Las Vegas, with one comparing him to Parkinson’s disease sufferer Muhammad Ali.

The southpaw, who turns 34 on December 17, has vowed to fight on. But many suspect that nearly 18 years of pro ring combat are now taking their toll on the man once seen by many as the world’s finest pound-for-pound fighter.

Pacquiao, a national hero, was knocked out by Mexican rival Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas on December 8 in his second consecutive defeat.

“Pacquiao got hit hard but in the end, he was conquered by Father Time after it turned out he could no longer take a solid punch,” wrote sports columnist Recah Romasanta in the Manila Standard.

The sight of Roach himself riddled with bullet wounds after the bout has added to the gloom.

Daniel Welling acknowledged the calls for Pacquiao to retire after his last winning title defence in November 2011, when he retained his WBO welterweight crown against his old foe Marquez, now 39.

“Pacquiao had won a split decision against Marquez in 2009 and the Philippines boxer was expected to equal his rival’s 10 championship defences. But he turned out he could no longer take a solid punch,” wrote sports columnist Recah Romasanta in the Manila Standard.

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**Ye spearheads China team for Australia**

Despite their misgivings, many more

The Chinese are always strong and the women’s 200m individual medley final was a great race, with plenty of swim to lead the way. From a South African point of view, they have also been very strong over the shorter distances and someone like Chad le Clos is able to back up and race well across a variety of events.”

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Ye, who scored a medley double at the London Games, will rekindle her rivalry with Australia’s Alicia Coutts at the meet on January 18-19 which also features swimmers from South Africa.

Count’s Australia’s best performer in the pool in London with five medals, took silver behind Ye in the Olympic 200m individual medley final.

Another Olympic gold medallist, London 200m butterfly champion Jiao, is part of the strong Chinese team but the distance superstar Sun Yang is missing.

Chad le Clos spearheads the South African line-up. La Clus shocked the world when he defeated American great Michael Phelps in his new 200m butterfly in London, as well as winning silver in the 100m butterfly.
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Three losses for cricketers in Thailand

By Tony Yoo

The Myanmar national team lost all three of its group matches and was eliminated from the Asian Cricket Council Trophy Challenge held in Thailand last week.

The team took on Qatar in its first match on December 7, and was bowled out for 54 after winning the toss and choosing to bat.Extras top scored with 18, as no batsman managed to reach double digits.

Three Myanmar players scored 8 runs each as it painstakingly resisted the Qatari bowling for 23 overs at the Chiang Mai Gymkhana ground.

In response Qatar reached the target in 13 overs, but not before Myanmar new ball bowler Abdul Rahman took two wickets (2/17).

The Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club hosted Myanmar’s first encounter, with against another Middle Eastern opponent, Bahrain.

Myanmar again won the toss but this time opted to field to dismiss Bahrain for 250 in the 46th over.

Opening bowler Aye Min Than (2/20) led the Myanmar effort in which all six bowlers took at least one wicket. Imran Sagaj (77 off 80 balls) and Boudhridge (41 off 85) hit half-centuries for Bahrain.

Myanmar unfortunately gifted 36 wides, which was the highest score after extras contributed 11.

Of the match Qumar Saeed bagged 5 wickets (5/13) for Bahrain.

After the two demoralising defeats the national team looked ahead to the December 10 battle against China.

Last week The Myanmar Times reported that this was the game that the Myanmar cricket team thought it had the most realistic chance of winning.

China was sent in to bat by Myanmar, and was in trouble at 3 for 45 at the Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club.

However all rounder Zhang Yufei (39 off 56) then steadied the innings, as China accumulated 187 runs by the time the final wicket fell in the 48th over.

For Myanmar the best of the bowlers were Abdul Rahman (3/34) and Min Wai (3/40).

Myanmar then answered with its best batting in the tournament – but it was not enough, as it fell 190 runs short after 35 overs. Chinese captain Wang Lei took four wickets (4/14) to destroy the Myanmar top order.

Singapore eventually won the tournament after defeating Bahrain by 24 runs in the December 13 final. The island nation now looks forward to returning to the "elite" tier of the ACC.

With funding from the ACC dependent on its performance in this tournament, the immediate future of cricket in Myanmar is uncertain. The sport will play a role in next year’s South East Asian Games, but Myanmar Cricket Federation will now have many headaches about that prospect.

Goal-line technology a ‘no-brainer’ says Lampard

YOKOHAMA, Japan – Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard, whose “goal” against Germany at the 2010 World Cup was missed by officials, believes the introduction of goal-line technology into football is a “no-brainer.”

Lampard came on as a substitute in Chelsea’s semi-final win over Monterrey at the Club World Cup December 13 – the first time the English Premier League side had ever played a match where a goal-line system was available to the referee.

“I have been in favor of technology, particularly when it was clear it would be a quick and simple measure, and wouldn’t take much time from the game.”

The 34-year-old said ahead of the match in Yokohama, Japan.

“Anything we can do to help referees, who have a very tough time trying to have their eye across everything – … we have to try,” he added.

“It doesn’t break the game up, and it could add the excitement factor as it has in cricket, then why not?”

It was the England international’s long-service range effort, which cannoned off the crossbar and dropped over the line before bouncing back out, in South Africa two years ago that sparked FIFA into investigating the use of goal-line technology.

The world body is trialling two systems at the Club World Cup in Japan – camera-based Hawk-Eye and GoalRef, a system that uses magnetic fields and a ball with a special chip to determine its trajectory and position.

Both inform the referee within a second if a goal has been scored.

GoalRef was available to the referee during Chelsea’s semi-final win at the International Stadium but the match passed, like every other so far at the tournament, without the need for technology to judge a contentious incident.

FIFA will analyse the performances of both systems during the Japan showcase early next year before choosing which country’s Confederations Cup.

The body insists the technology will never be used to determine whether or not the ball has crossed the line, something Lampard agrees with.

“As long as it’s around specific goal chances, then I think I’ve always been for it, and my one (against Germany) has brought it more to the fore, so I hope China TV,”

“If it helps the middle ground where the human eye can argue about it, it’s a no-brainer.”

– AFP

AFC Challenge Cup qualifying set

By Aung Si Hein

HOST nation Myanmar has been placed into Group A for the qualifying stages of the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup. The national team will clash with India, Taiwan and Guam when the stage kicks off in March 2013.

The group-stage qualifying draw was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 15.

There are five groups comprised of four teams. The winners of each group as well as the second best two teams will qualify for the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup together with host nation the Maldives.

Group B matches will be held March 17-21 2013; all others will be on March 2-6.

Group B is comprised of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Macau. Kyrgyzstan will host the group. Group C includes Laos, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Mongolia, with Laos hosting.

Group D sees Nepal, Palestine, Bangladesh and Mauritius square off. Nepal will be the host nation.

Group E includes Philippines, Turkmenistan, Cambodia and Brunei, with Philippines serving as the host.