United States President Barack Obama will make history next week by becoming the first sitting US president to visit Myanmar. Just two days after President Obama was re-elected for four more years, the White House ended weeks of speculation by confirming the visit on November 8. It did not initially give the date of the visit but the State Department and a Myanmar government official said it would take place on November 19.

President Obama will be joined in Myanmar by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said on November 9. President Obama and Ms Clinton are scheduled to meet President U Thein Sein and National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon. President Obama will also speak to civil society organisations, the White House said in a statement.

The visit to Myanmar is part of a larger Southeast Asia trip from November 17 to 20 that will see President Obama travel to Bangkok and Phnom Penh, where he will also become the first US president to visit Cambodia. The trip continues the efforts of his administration to strengthen ties with ASEAN as a whole and in particular Myanmar, which it decided to engage rather than isolate following a policy review in 2009.
Kishore huffs and puffs, to no avail

LET us recall the tale of a drunkard, who huffs and puffs, from the ravages of the night before, flags down a priest on a bench outside the Roman Catholic cathedral. Drinking from a bottle and with red lipstick on his cheek, the Australian nanny looks at himself and begins reading a newspaper. After a moment, he turns to the priest and asks: “Father, what causes alcoholism?”

The priest says: “My son, it’s caused by drinking too much, fermenting with toxic women, abusing your body and showing contempt for society.”

The drugged looks startled. “My God, that’s very bad news.”

This is how perhaps he’s spoken too harshly, the priest adds. “I’m sorry if that upset you. Arthritis is very unpleasant. Have you had it long?”

“Oh, I don’t have it,” the man says. “But I was just reading here that the Pope does.”

The anecdote illustrates that when you condemn someone, you better be sure you know the context and the background. Otherwise, you are liable to score points a sanctimonious hypocrite, as the Singaporeans love to compute and former diplomat, Kishore Mahbubani, did last week.

Writing in the Australian Financial Review, Kishore stated that, but for an accident of history, Australia would be full of Asians, not Westerners. His take on Australia’s Western destiny was coming to an end, it had to start preparing for its Asian destiny.

“Sadly, no major Australian newspaper or pundit commented. This made me aware that Australia’s intelligentsia is still reluctant to face head on Australia’s painful new geopolitical realities.”

How typical of Kishore to be raised at the Michigan State University, his home in the US, that he had never bothered to react to the outrage. It is the same shame for the poor man, whose whole ethos as an intellectual is based on eliciting indignant outrage from his largely Western audience. He should huff and puff and only hear the sounds of silence. Oh, the initially human condition.

Kishore should hardly be surprised, given the context he displays in chastising Australia’s “intelligence” to mass, simply because they ignored his wacky toxic. “Unlike the Smugly presumptuous priest above, however, Kishore Singapore is the Pope in the anecdote’s punchline.

For when he writes that as Western power recedes, Australia will be left “beached” alone as the solitary Western country in the Asia-Pacific, he neglects to mention that few countries are more Western than his own. Singapore’s parliamentary system, judiciary, academia, social and linguistic and cultural parameters are all Western, mostly inherited from the British, but often supplemented by American and even Australian refinements. As they walk around a Kishore-preferred town like Melbourne or Vancouver than any truly Asian city, Singaporeans dress, speak, think and behave like every other Westerner.

They take pride in it. And good luck to them, although that is why the neighbours mockingly refer to them as “ugly Singaporeans”.

The ugliness is redolent in the implication that Australia should cease complaining about the abuse of human rights, that it is not capable of moderate and media repression in many nations to its left, or should ignore the murder of Chitl Wuttty, the oppression of Thich Quang Do, and instead emulate Kishore’s condemnation of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to jailed writer Liu Xiaobo.

As for the inherent ethnic problems that successive central governments have failed to address since independence in 1948.

The complexity of the Rakhine and Rohingya communities lies in the fact that they are not considered citizens of Myanmar. This makes it unique from other conflicts in the country. While other ethnic minorities demand autonomy under a federal system, the Rohingya struggle to be recognized as an ethnic group of the country.

Some have suggested that the Rohingya issue could have won a Nobel Peace Prize. Some others have opined that opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been careful not to say too much about the conflict for fear of a backlash in the 2015 general election.

President U Thein Sein once suggested resettling the Rohingyas in a third country or countries, a proposition that the UN high commissioner for refugees Antonio Gutieres rejected outright. Recently, Tin Oo Ojea Quintana, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, suggested that the Myanmar government pursue a policy of integration and reconciliation between the Rakhine and Rohingya groups.

Recent developments indicate that both the Rakhine State and central governments have taken certain measures to end the violence, including the state government’s issuance of an article of Criminal Procedure in some townships and President U Thein Sein’s declaration of a state of emergency. Are such measures likely to bring peace and harmony in the state?

When considering the conflict in Rakhine State – or elsewhere in the country – one must understand that it is the consequence of inherent ethnic problems that successive central governments have failed to address since independence in 1948.

The complexity of the Rakhine and Rohingya communities lies in the fact that they are not considered citizens of Myanmar. This makes it unique from other conflicts in the country. While other ethnic minorities demand autonomy under a federal system, the Rohingya struggle to be recognized as an ethnic group of the country.

Both governments – Myanmar and Bangladesh – should promote dialogue to address the issue amicably. No bilateral agreement can be reached, perhaps both governments could approach a neutral third party, such as the United Nations, for mediation or an alternative arrangement.

One opportunity beckons after violence in Rakhine

By Nehginpao Kipgen

The violence between the Buddhists and the Muslim Rohingyas communities in western Myanmar, which has been abated, has not abated. The simmering tension flared again on October 21. The government said on October 31 that 89 people had been killed, 136 injured, more than 2000 made homeless. More than 5000 houses were burned down between October 21 and 30.

Questions have been asked as to why the conflict has not been resolved when Myanmar has such overwhelming support from all actors in the international community. It has the international community, both in the East and West. Is it because the government has no option but to resolve the conflict, or is it because the government does not have adequate resources and the experience to handle the conflict?

Reconciliation programs will succeed only when the Rakhine and the Rohingyas are willing to compromise on their differences and respect each other’s identity. More importantly, the Myanmar government must be ready to embrace the Rohingyas if any genuine reconciliation is to be realised.

Myanmar has adequate resources and experience in managing ethnic violence. It is largely because of successive central governments’ indifference and lack of commitment toward minority problems that ethnic conflicts remain unresolved.

The conflict in Rakhine state needs to be addressed simultaneously with conflicts in other parts of the country. While the international community is rallying behind its reform processes, Myanmar should seize the opportunity to address the inherent problems of minority groups, including the Rakhine and Rohingya in Rakhine State.

(Nehginpao Kipgen is general secretary of the United States-based Kuki International Forum. His research interests include political transition, democratization, human rights, ethnic conflict and identity politics and he has written many peer-reviewed and non-academic articles on the politics of Myanmar and Asia.)
US policy continuity will strengthen reform: analysts

By Kyaw Hsu Mon and Tim McLaughlin

THE re-election of US President Barack Obama and continuation of US policy is likely to strengthen the reform process in Myanmar, analysts and politicians said last week.

After imposing sanctions and attempting to isolate Myanmar, the US began reconfiguring its policy in 2009 and has been a key international player since then. President U Thein Sein initiated the reform process after taking office in March 2011.

President Obama was re-elected comfortably on November 6, defeating Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

“President Obama’s re-election won’t have a significant direct impact on Myanmar, but he will be able to help a lot to ensure the country does not turn back,” said U Win Tin of the National League for Democracy.

U Win Tin’s comment echoed that of US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell, who repeatedly reassured attendees at a November 7 US election event in Yangon that the US policy towards Myanmar would follow the course set by President Obama in his 2009 review.

US President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden delivered his acceptance speech on November 7 in Chicago. Pic: AFP

US President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden celebrate on stage after Obama delivered his acceptance speech on November 7 in Chicago. Pic: AFP

“Democratic Party has different kinds of people … [whereas] in the Republican Party most are white and conservative. So, we can say that it is better for Myanmar that Obama won,” U Win Tin said.

“If Mitt Romney won the election, Asian countries couldn’t depend on him,” he said.

THE US remains the world’s largest military and economic power and the possibility of a change in leader ensures that every four years billions of people around the world turn their attention to the US election.

While trade and investment between the US and Myanmar remains almost non-existent, the recent lifting of some sanctions, including a ban on investment in Myanmar, has generated hopes of a sharp increase in bilateral business ties.

“I think Myanmar’s economy will benefit from Obama’s win in the election. He supported Myanmar’s democratic reforms and removed some economic sanctions on Myanmar. [When] he comes to Myanmar, businesspeople will come with him so we can expect a good result from US,” said U Myint Thin Aung, a well-known businessman.

Myanmar recently enacted long-awaited amendments to its Foreign Investment Law that are designed to attract more foreign investment, particularly in manufacturing.

“For example, US companies like Apple, which produces iPhones and iPads, is now making its products in China because wages are cheap. If they open a factory in Myanmar, their export goods can be exempt from tax and if wages are low companies like that will come and invest in Myanmar,” U Myint Thin Aung said.

He said the level of bipolarism on Myanmar has been “politics of the deeply divided state of the US”, which is set to continue after next week’s election, in which the Democrats is held into control of the senate and Republicans the house.

By Soe Than Lynn

SUPREME Court Judge U Soe Nyunt last week rejected suggestions from hliautaw representatives that journalists are being unfairly barred from entering courtrooms, dismissing the reports as “hearsay”.

U Soe Nyunt said there are no laws or rules that journalists from entering courts and that some judges have discretion to disturb court hearings and must abide by court rules. If a judge feels that details of a court case should be controlled, they can restrict publication of news about the case but until now there has been “no problems” between judges and the media, U Soe Nyunt told the Pyithu Hluttaw last week.

“According to section 1(b) of the constitution and section 3(b) of the Union Judiciary Law … anybody can come and study court hearings except cases which are heard in special courts to maintain law and order or which need to be administered behind closed doors, for example to protect juvenile offenders or rape victims. There are no laws, bylaws, procedures, orders or directives to block the media presence in law courts in Myanmar.”

“But while anyone can watch court hearings they are laws or rules that ban not to disturb court hearings with [and] a judge can ban admissent, photo taking and news collecting by anyone if he thinks fit. But no problems have arisen between the courts and the media,” he said.

U Soe Nyunt was responding to a question from Pyithu Hluttaw member U Than Tun, who said there were reports of journalists who are allowed to enter the court or take photos and videos during the court. “Prohibiting rights of admission and recording by the media may lead to the impression that something stands to hide corruption, hurt transparency and facilitate false judgements by means of a news cover-up. In countries where media is thriving, law courts have engaged journalists to prove their transparency,” he said.

He asked whether there were any plans to “ban admissent into and recording of court hearings by the media and if so are there any plans to amend, how ever or if at all Guttaw representatives for Than”.

But while rejecting the premise that journalists had been banned from entering courthouses, U Soe Nyunt said that journalists do not allow photo taking and video recording because “in the eyes of law an accused person is innocent until he or she is convicted by a court”.

“If we allow photo or videos to be taken of defendants and litigants, it will hurt the dignity and human rights of citizens. So the criticism that there are assumptions that corruption and false rulings may happen because a judge does not allow media in is not appropriate because it assumes journalists to prove their courts of corruption and marring their reputation admissent,” he said.

However, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Than U Pyi Thaw said reporters do not allow photo or video recording in court because “in the eyes of law an accused person is innocent until he or she is convicted by a court”.

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U Soe Nyunt said he had “experienced some incidents … as recently as last month” where journalists had come into conflict with the judicial system over court access.

“There are often problems between courts and the media. In Dagon township court in Yangon, there were incidents where th media was refused admissent, he said. ‘I can accept their [judges] action and cooperation but I don’t accept it is cases that are shifted and heard in Insein Prison on secure or grounds. Not only the media but also family members are refused admissent.”
Entrepreneurship week kicks off

By Oliver Slow

A SERIES of free events will be held in Yangon this week as part of a drive to encourage entrepreneurship.

Global Entrepreneurship Week, which sees 35,000 events held across 140 countries, is being held in Myanmar for the first time and will begin with the Start-Up Cup at Grand Moe Ya Ha Executive Residences on November 11. The cup, which includes a series of workshops and opportunities for contestants to receive mentoring from established businesspeople, will culminate with a Pitch Contest on November 18, where contestants will present their ideas to potential investors.

About 80 contestants have signed up for the Start-Up Cup and the winner will receive US$200, said Mr Peter Silverstev of Project Hub Yangon, which is hosting the event.

The week will also include a Social Enterprise Expo on November 11 at a Yangon Women’s Entrepreneurship Night at the British Club on November 13.

“Lots of people are interested in starting their own businesses, but really don’t how to go about it, or don’t have the confidence,” Mr Silverstev said. “Events like this can help people to put their ideas into action.

“This isn’t just about writing a 10-page business plan but about being interactive and building concepts for actually starting the business. We hope that the event will be a catalyst for new businesses to start up,” he said.

The Social Enterprise Expo feature about a dozen stands from businesses that are involved in social enterprise, which Mr Silverstev describes as “a business which not only makes an impact, but also a financial model”.

“In its simplest form, it is a business with a social mission that has the benefits of making profit and contributing to society,” he said.

The Women’s Entrepreneurship Night is co-sponsored by the EU and British Council and is aimed at encouraging women entrepreneurs to share the secrets of their success with other women considering starting a business.

“The event is being organised to give momentum to a push to establish Yangon’s first ‘hub’ early next year, said Ms Allison Morris of Project Hub Yangon.

“A project hub is basically a co-working space for entrepreneurs,” she said. “[A] place where like-minded people come together to share ideas, and the winner of the Hub of the Year Award, which includes a series of

From page 1
Obama visit

In Thailand, President Obama will meet Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to celebrate 180 years of relations between the two nations. Thailand has been a long-time ally in terms of military cooperation.

President Obama will also attend the US-ASEAN Leaders Meeting and East Asia Summit in Phnom Penh. This summit will take place less than two weeks after President Obama was elected to serve a second term, defeating Republican challenger Mitt Romney. It will also represent a milestone in the rebalancing of ties between the US and Myanmar, which were minimal for much of the two decades preceding the military government’s handover to U Thein Sein in March 2011.

The re-engagement process began when Myanmar sent signals that it was keen to work with Washington in March 2009, when then-Minister for Foreign Affairs U Nyan Win met a mid-level US State Department official – an unusual move by protocol standards.

Since then, a steady stream of US officials have visited Myanmar, the most high-profile being Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in December 2011. Just last month Deputy Secretary of State William Burns paid a more low-key visit, as did Deputy Secretary of Treasury Neel S. Kashkari.

Meanwhile, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was welcomed at the White House in September and while in Washington she was presented the Congressional Gold Medal, but under house arrest.

The US also lifted a travel ban on Myanmar this week.

As a result of reforms in Myanmar, the US has relaxed its travel ban, which will take place as part of “normalisation of (military-military) and other ties; there are high hopes for Myanmar as a key player in the US’ foreign policy,” said Myanmar-American Kurlantzick, a fellow Southeast Asia expert at the Washington-based think tank.

However, the announcement has prompted concerns in rights and advocacy groups, who said last week US sanctions were still in place.

U Aung Din, executive director of the US Campaign for Burma, sent a letter to President Obama on November 7, prior to the trip’s confirmation, urging him not to engage with the military government.

U Aung Din cited concerns over press freedom, the continued detention of political prisoners and unresolved conflict in minority-dominated Kachin and Rakhine states.

“I believe your visit to the country at this time is regrettable because the USDP party and President Thein Sein’s government, and undermine the democracy activists and freedom fighters, as well as remaining political prisoners and ever-suffering people” Mr U Aung Din.

On November 9, the US embassy joined 10 other embassies in Yangon in signing a joint statement pushing for a resolution to the communal violence in Rakhine State.

“We urge all parties to work together to bring an immediate end to the violence and ensuing human rights abuses,” the statement said. “We further encourage the government to ensure safe, timely, and unhindered humanitarian access across Rakhine State to all persons in need. We strongly condemn those responsible for the violence, and those who commit or incite violence, to join.”

Richard Nixon made two visits to Myanmar, the first in 1950 while vice president under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He returned in September 1965, 11 years after becoming President, in the wake of the Watergate scandal.
Rakhine State visit ‘sobering’, says US ambassador Mitchell

By Tim McLaughlin

UNITED States ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell last week described a recent visit to areas of Rakhine State affected by an outbreak of violence as “sobering.”

Mr Mitchell visited Rakhine State from November 13 to 15 with British ambassador Andrew Heyn and Australian ambassador Bruno Moulies, following communal unrest that left at least 89 dead, according to official estimates.

“It is very sobering, it was very sad, I think the results of the recent violence have caused tremendous hardship to many people on the ground, particularly the Muslim communities,” Mr Mitchell told journalists at US presidential election event in Yangon on November 7.

He said members of the Rakhine community were also suffering as a result of the violence, which broke out on October 21 in rural Maungdaw and Mrauk-U

The ambassador’s comments came just a day after Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and British Foreign Secretary William Hague pressed Myanmar government to take decisive action to end violence while attending the Asia-Europe Meeting in Vientiane, Laos.

On November 3, European Union Commissioner for Human Rights and Immigration Viviane Reding and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres called for an end to all acts of violence.

The conflict, Mr Mitchell said, is “affecting the reputation, not just of the Rakhine State, but the people of Rakhine State.”

“The international community is very concerned. It’s getting a lot of international attention. The world is watching,” he said.

Many of those who have been displaced are living in overcrowded camps that lack basic necessities. UNCHR said on November 5 its staff had visited affected villages and found those displaced in “urgent need of food and shelter.”

Mr Mitchell said additional humanitarian assistance is needed to address the situation.

“We need to get open and fair access to humanitarian aid. It is a very urgent situation; they are getting some aid in but not enough.”

Mr Mitchell did not outline any new US aid plans for the region but did say that he expected the US to provide more assistance in the future. On October 18, he announced the US would provide US$27.3 million to two UN agencies operating in Rakhine State, with UNHCR receiving $2 million and the rest going to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“We are doing assessments of the need so I don’t think that will be the last of what we provide but I can’t give you any sense of exactly what we will do,” Mr Mitchell said.

The ambassador’s comments came just a day after Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and British Foreign Secretary William Hague pressed Myanmar’s response to the violence while attending the Asia-Europe Meeting in Vientiane, Laos.

In a statement released on November 7 following renewed violence last month, they also said the government should take legal action “against individuals and organisations that control or abet” those carrying out acts of violence.

The statement also urged the government to promptly increase security forces in areas prone to conflict and to recognise the worries and anxiety the conflict has caused Rakhine people.

The clear-cut policies of the government in respect of the 1992 Myanmar Citizenship Law ... and the

Ethnic leaders, Daw Suu call for transparency on conflict

By Soe Than Lynn

ETHNIC politicians and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have urged the government to be more transparent over its handling of the Rakhine conflict and for humanitarian aid to be made available to both the Rakhine and Rohingya communities.

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“The clear-cut policies of the government in respect of the 1992 Myanmar Citizenship Law ... and the
SENIOR officials from Myanmar and Europe last week came together in support of peace in the country.

At a ceremony in Yangon on November 3, European Union President José Manuel Barroso and U Aung Min, a minister in the office of President U Thein Sein who leads the government’s peace team, signed a joint declaration at the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) to promote dialogue between all those concerned in Myanmar’s ethnic peace processes.

“EU support for the MPC is vital. Without the MPC, the peace processes underway couldn’t move ahead. The centre will serve as the main secretariat for the peace process,” said U Aung Min.

“I encourage the EU to support us over the long term. The challenges Myanmar faces are complex,” said U Aung Min, who added that Myanmar wants to resolve the problem itself without being dependent on foreign aid.

The EU statement said the Myanmar government and the EU agreed that there was a historic opportunity for lasting peace and for bringing prosperity to ethnic areas after decades of conflict had come to an end.

“Visiting this peace centre now and after my meetings with President U Thein Sein, with [Pyithu Hluttaw] Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi earlier today, I can say that peace and reconciliation are within reach,” said Mr Barroso.

“My visit here today is a testimony of the EU’s support to the momentous changes underway, a sign of encouragement to continue these reforms and a concrete expression of our wish to support you in this process. Much has been achieved already but ... [important tasks are still ahead. Making Myanmar a home to its entire population is probably the biggest one.]

“In this sense I have encouraged the country’s authorities to continue with political and legislative reforms and with the release of the remaining political detainees. No one should be held in prison for expressing his or her views.”

He said he also discussed recent communal violence in Rakhine State.

“We are deeply concerned by these events and by the consequences for the reforms and democratisation of the country. We hope that all religious leaders will call for restraint. Violence needs to stop and urgent humanitarian needs have to be addressed,” he added.

Mr Barroso said the EU was ready to mobilise 4 million euros (US$5.1 million) for immediate humanitarian needs, provided access to affected areas was guaranteed.

“Myanmar has suffered from decades of violent conflict and internal divisions. It is now time to turn the page and fully embrace the formidable opportunity of peace. I am convinced that today the new political environment offers a historic chance to achieve lasting peace amongst the country’s different ethnic communities. Shaping a common national Myanmar identity, respectful of ethnic and religious heritage, will be a challenge. But, it can be achieved.”

He said the peace centre would be an autonomous centre of excellence displaying the highest standards in transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

“It shall be widely open and impartial in its outreach to all groups willing to join this platform for dialogue. And it shall be non-partisan in its activities. No single group or entity shall monopolise its agenda.”

U Aung Min said the establishment of the centre confirmed President U Thein Sein’s desire for inclusive and enduring peace and willingness to work with all stakeholders.

“Today, we have concluded initial ceasefires with 10 out of 11 ethnic armed groups. The president stated clearly in his speech at the United Nations that this is not enough. Genuine peace will satisfy political aspirations and address the grievances of ethnic communities in Myanmar. This can only happen with a non-partisan platform for comprehensive dialogue,” said U Aung Min.
Norway, Denmark open diplomatic office in Yangon

By Zaw Win Than

THE prime ministers of Denmark and Norway opened a joint diplomatic office in Yangon on November 4 to strengthen their diplomatic presence in Myanmar.

The Nordic countries are preparing to welcome Sweden and possibly Finland into the premières, making it a truly Nordic diplomatic compound.

Ms Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Mr. Jørn Stoltenberg, heads of government of Denmark and Norway respectively, spoke at the event and at a joint press conference on the strengthening of relations between Myanmar and their two countries.

"This is an excellent day and it marks a new chapter in the relationship between Norway and Myanmar and Denmark and Myanmar," said Ms Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

This year Denmark doubled its development assistance to Myanmar to about US$18 million and is planning a further increase in 2013.

Mr Thorning-Schmidt also said economic cooperation was on the rise, and several Danish companies were interested in responsible trade and investment in Myanmar if and when the conditions are right.

"We are very keen to look into investments. Our trade and investment minister is coming very soon, bringing a business delegation, and I think it goes for both countries that we have excellent companies that in visit the region, we wish responsible and sustainable way," he said.

The Danish prime minister began her visit in Yangon, where she met ministers U Aung Min, U Soe Thein and U Ohn Myint, as well as with democracy activists and former political prisoners.

Mr Stoltenberg also met President U Thein Sein on November 3 in Nay Pyi Taw.

"Soon I hope to receive President U Thein Sein in Norway. The president has already kindly accepted my invitation."

"We know the road ahead will not be easy. It will take time to recover from decades of isolation, economic stagnation and conflict. It will require strong political leadership. It will require patience and hard work from all the people of Myanmar. And it will require solid friendships in the international community. Norway is a friend of Myanmar. We will continue to be so. We will share experience that can be of relevance to your country."

"We will support the peace efforts and political dialogue that are necessary to secure a just and lasting peace for everyone living in Myanmar. The opening of this embassy office is of great symbolic importance."

The opening of the embassy office reflects the close cooperation between Norway and Myanmar, which are in open conflict with some of Myanmar’s ethnic minorities, some of whom are in open conflict with the government.

In Nay Pyi Taw, she met opposition leader and Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the National League for Democracy.

"The peace process has to be something that the people of Myanmar are responsible for. What we can do is to support and facilitate, but the solutions have to be found in Myanmar by the people of Myanmar."

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"The fact that we are..."
Shan peace seminar slated for Nov 26-28

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

SHAN politicians, peace activists and civil society leaders will hold a seminar in Yangon later this month to discuss a range of issues crucial to Shan State.

The seminar, which will be conducted in the Shan language, will take place from November 26 to 28 at Yangon’s Royal Rose Restaurant, and Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Khan, and U Aung Min and U Soe Thein, both ministers in the President’s Office, are expected to attend, said U Khun Htun Oo, the chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD).

Also present will be representatives of the Shan State Army, Shan State Progress Party, and the Restoration Council of Shan State, as well as Shan-based NGOs, the Shan Women’s Action Network from Chiang Mai, Thailand, and the Shan Literature and Culture Group. The SNLD will be the main organiser.

“We are going to read nine presentations at the seminar,” said U Khan Htun Oo, who is a former political prisoner.

“The major issues will be peace, military affairs, a planned census, narcotics, health, education and social issues, as well as updates on the Shan political parties,” said U Khun Htun Oo.

“We’ve been wanting to hold this kind of seminar for some time to hear the voices of our Shan nationalities. That’s why the seminar will be conducted in the Shan language,” he said.

Norway provides grant to ADB for power law update

By Yu Yu Maw

NORWAY is to contribute a US$850,000 technical assistance grant in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank to help update Myanmar’s 30-year old electricity law.

The drafting of the legislation and related rules and regulations will be carried out by the Ministry of Electric Power in conjunction with other government departments, the private sector, civil society, parliamentarians, and development partners, with completion targeted for June 2014.

“As the country opens up and economic sanctions are removed, huge numbers of visitors are pouring into the country. The local population can now more readily buy household electrical appliances, and local businesses are expanding rapidly. All this has placed an enormous strain on the power supply network, which is often unstable in urban centres and barely extends to Myanmar’s rural areas,” he said.

According to the ADB, the Norwegian grant will be used to help update Myanmar’s 1984 electricity law.

Nagani Book Club set for revival

By Aye Sapay Phyu

AN HISTORIC publishing house credited with fostering young independence leaders is set to be re-established, more than 70 years after it closed.

Nagani Book Club was founded in Yangon on November 4, 1937, by a group of patriots intent on ousting the British from Myanmar.

The club shut down in 1941 after publishing about 70 books.

Founder U Khin Hlaing of Zawtika International Company said the New Generation of Nagani Book Club would channel the spirit of the original, which was famous for its role in Myanmar’s struggle for independence.

He said the new club was being founded to strengthen publishing in the country and elevate the importance of literature.

“We also intend to give opportunities to a new generation of writers who can give a fresh and meaningful voice for the public. We will publish the club’s original books, whether it makes a profit or not,” he said at an event at Yangon’s National Theatre on November 4 held to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the original book club.

“Young people aged 20 to 30 got involved in Nagani’s literary activities so that they could help combat poverty, unhealthiness and the lack of education. That is why young men became important people in an electric field,” writer Danubyu Maung Khin Min said at the ceremony.

Anyone interested in joining the New Generation of Nagani Book Club can call (01) 380-581 or 380-578.
Centenary of birth of U Raschid marked at Yangon ceremony

By Aye Sapay Phyu

HUMAN activity has devastated the coastal and marine ecosystems of Myanmar over the past three decades, conservation experts said at a meeting last week.

Dr Kyaw Tint, chairman of the Mangrove and Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation Network (MERN), said mangrove forests in the coastal areas of Rakhine State, and Ayeyarwady and Tanintharyi regions had depleted and degraded considerably since 1980.

Total mangrove forest cover in Myanmar in 1980 amounted to 531,000 hectares but by 2010 only 312,000ha were left, according to Forest Department statistics. Total mangrove coverage in 2010 had been estimated at 659,033ha.

But encroachments by agriculture, fisheries and others in the mangrove forests have occupied 346,590ha, leaving only about 312,443ha for mangroves,” he said.

The discussions took place at the National Consultative Workshop on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems. The workshop was held at the Sedona Hotel on November 5 and 6, and was organised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), MERN and Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem.

Dr Kyaw Tint said excessive wood cutting for fuel, agricultural expansion and the building of fish and shrimp ponds were the main reasons for loss of mangroves. He added that natural mangrove forests in Ayeyarwady Region had suffered about 80 percent destruction due to Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 and the intrusion of agricultural land and fish and shrimp ponds, a survey conducted by the Forestry Department after Nargis found.

He said the extent of mangrove forests in Ayeyarwady had declined by about 10 percent by 2009.

U Maung Maung Pyone, secretary of the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association, said the consumption of firewood for commercial reasons threatens the future of coastal forest conservation efforts in the area.

“We saw huge piles of firewood, sometimes larger than houses, for use in the dried prawn business when we visited Pyapon township, Rakhine State,” he said.

He added that Myanmar’s rich coral species were also affected by human activities and climate change.

Coral is sold at 96.12 kg per hour, down from 96.12 kg in 1998,” Dr Kyaw Tint said.

Dr Kyaw Tint said the forestry department survey had recommended the reforestation and protection of a five-mile strip along the coast, and the planting of trees for 100 metres on either side of big streams to help protect against bank erosion and to protect coastal dwellers from strong winds and sea waves.

He added that Myanmar’s rich coral species were also affected by human activities and climate change. Coral is sold at some beaches and fishing on coral reefs is increasing. Illegal dynamite fishing is widespread in coastal areas and is also a major threat to coral systems.

Coral bleaching as a result of climate change has also been observed in Myanmar waters, he said. Another issue discussed at the workshop was overfishing.

“A survey conducted in 17 fishing blocks near the Ayeyarwady delta coastline and in coastal and deep-sea areas off Tanintharyi Region in 2007 found that the catch was 87.94 kilograms an hour, down from 89.14 kg recorded by government surveys conducted in 1994 and 1998,” Dr Kyaw Tint said.

U Mya Than Tun, assistant director of Environment and Endangered Aquatic Animal Conservation Unit, Department of Fisheries, said that fish resources such as hilsa were significantly down because of the use of unsustainable fishing techniques.

The workshop recommended the development and implementation of integrated ecosystem management, the formulation and implementation of integrated coastal management plans involving stakeholders, mainstream biodiversity conservation and climate change initiatives.
Inle report highlights tourism impact

By Geoffrey Goddard

A CONSERVATION plan for the lake has been given new urgency by the sharp increase in foreign tourists to Myanmar, a leading member of the project team said last week.

Mr Joern Kristensen was commenting on one of the key issues covered in a 118-page report, Inlay Lake Conservation Project: A Plan for the Future, which was released last week after more than six months' work by a 20-member team, 11 members of which are Myanmar.

The project's recommendations include the establishment of a Lake Conservation Authority, which would coordinate all conservation activities as well as managing a conservation fund.

The Norwegian government-funded project was coordinated by an Australian-based experts' network, the Institute for International Development, through IID-Myanmar.

The recommendations in the report are aimed at assisting the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry to develop its Action Plan for Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development, due in 2010-2025.

Mr Kristensen, the Institute for International Development's Myanmar director, said that while the report was "certainly" a recommendation to develop its Action Plan for Environmental Conservation, it also highlighted the need for a permanent Inle Lake governance structure to be established. It also requires assistance to enable local youth from the lake region to shift from unsustainable farming to employment in the rapidly growing tourism industry, it says.

"However, there is an equal potential for positive outcomes by making new investment in maintenance of the health of the lake. This requires a permanent Inle Lake governance structure to be established. It also requires assistance to enable local youth from the lake region to shift from unsustainable farming to employment in the rapidly growing tourism industry," it says.

Among the findings to date, IID-Myanmar identified three key factors of the ministry's plan had not considered the impact of tourism on the lake and surrounding environment, probably because in 2010 the number of visitors was still very limited.

"Currently, the lake can accommodate many more tourists; it is very obvious that unlimited numbers of visitors can damage the lake; it is certainly something we are aware of for the future," said Mr Kristensen, referring to the number of travellers who visit Inle Lake, one of Myanmar's premier tourist destinations.

A letter accompanying the report said that while the increase in tourism would generate new income, there was a serious threat that the benefits for the region and communities may be offset by environmental costs to the lake, which is already under stress.

"This would have a negative impact on the livelihoods of ethnic communities making up the population of the lake region, endanger the health of the lake ecosystem and degrade the natural and cultural resources which form the attraction to tourists," the letter says.

"But there is a lack of: sufficient cooperation between agencies where responsibilities intersect, with action often undertaken in isolation, with unintended results; secure ongoing funding at sufficient scale to implement recommendations effectively and continuously, and; evaluation of the results of actions, particularly where they interacted with other actions.

The report noted that at a meeting with the area's residents, one had observed that there had been hundreds of projects and millions of dollars already spent to address the lake's problems, without visible results. Among the findings to emerge from the evaluation of the ministry's plan was that while there was insufficient appreciation of the contents and objectives of the ministry's plan, there was widespread support for an integrated development plan for the lake's watersheds.

Other findings by IID identified an urgent need for water, sanitation and electricity services for communities living in and around the lake and for the rapidly expanding tourist industry; widespread support for more applied research into the environmental and livelihood issues affecting the lake and its community; and, if any, coordination of activities by different donors, agencies, institutions and NGOs under the ministry's action plan; and insufficient resources or incentives for stakeholders to implement the plan.

The report says management issues for the lake are many, complex and interactive, with nine being assessed as top priority for immediate action.

They are: the reduced surface area of open water, loss of diversity and abundance in aquatic plant communities, declining water quality, sedimentation of in-shore zones, soil erosion in waterbodies, disturbance and insufficient productivity of the lake's famous floating gardens, threats to human health due to inadequate sanitation, predicted large and rapid increases in visitor numbers, and a lack of effective engagement and capacity building among lake communities.

Norway funded the IID project, because of the emphasis it gave to preserving the environment, said Mr Kristensen, a Danish-Norwegian who has been involved in Myanmar and Southeast Asia in various roles since 1991.

Mr Kristensen, a socio-economist, served in Myanmmar with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime from 1991 to 1994 and was director-general of the Mekong River Commission from 1995 to 2000. He returned to Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008 to serve as manager for the Tripartite Core Group, which helped to coordinate the international effort for those affected by the disaster.

It is very obvious that unlimited numbers of visitors can damage the lake.'
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Govt plans more DRR investment

By Aye Sapay Phyu

MYANMAR will invest more in disaster risk reduction (DRR) at both national and local levels to enhance primary response and relief, a government official said. Speaking at the fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from October 22-25, U Phone Swe, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, said that in improving its efforts to protect citizens from disaster, the Myanmar government had learned from the experience of Cyclone Nargis.

“National development and disaster risk reduction (DRR) are interdependent. National, state and regional governments are closely cooperating to explore the best ways to integrate disaster reduction programs with national development projects,” he told the conference.

“Some damage is unavoidable in a natural disaster. The most important thing is to avoid loss of life. After Nargis, we built infrastructures such as road networks, but also villages, hills and cyclone shelters. We also seek to promote individual awareness and experience at the management level, so we’re planning to open a training school for in disaster management,” he said. The deputy minister said a disaster management bill would soon be enacted in parliament.

Other DRR efforts included establishing the Myanmar Disaster Preparedness Agency in 2011, chaired by the Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, which operates down to the township level. Disaster preparedness committees have been established to implement the agency’s strategies, especially in engaging local communities.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono highlighted the importance of the strengthening of local DRR capacity in the opening speech of the conference, which was attended by 2600 participants, including delegations from 72 countries.

“Before the central government can lend a hand, it is the local governments that must respond first. Therefore it is important to strengthen their capacity for DRR,” Mr Yudhoyono said.

Civil society groups, academia, professionals, parliamentarians, religious leaders, and the business community all had their roles to play.

“DRR is a collective responsibility of governments and the people, both at national and local levels,” he said.

Letkokkon Hotel reopens as nature resort

By Yu Yu Maw

ALMOST four-and-a-half years after it was destroyed by Cyclone Nargis, Letkokkon Hotel in Yangon has reopened under new management.

The hotel was transferred from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism to National Travels and Tours in October under a five-year build, operate and transfer contract and has been rebranded as Orchid Adventure Shore Resort. The hotel site covers 28 acres and is being haled as an ecotourism destination within easy reach of Yangon and the first five rooms reopened on October 30, with another 13 to be ready by the end of November.

“We have challenges to renovate the hotel and promote the area but ... we believe it will become a very attractive destination and travellers will be excited to come here,” said U Htay Aung, managing director of National Travels and Tours.

Letkokkon beach is 48 kilometres (30 miles) south of Yangon near Letkokkon village at the eastern edge of the Ayeyarwady delta. The beach is about 15km long and can be reached by car in about 2.5 hours on a bumpy road.

National Travels and Tours, which also owns Orchid Hotel in Yangon, plans to build another 90 to 100 rooms and a swimming pool in 18 months. Room rates are likely to be from US$60 to $120.

However, the owners of the resort acknowledged Letkokkon lacks the white sand of other beach destinations; the water is often shallow and muddy, particularly during monsoon and high tide.

Instead, the company plans to promote the area’s ecotourism potential and is waiting for permission to build a bridge to Princess Island, opposite the beach, which is a haven of bird and plant life.

“Right in front of the beach there is an island that is very suitable for eco tours and adventure tours. After walking 15 minutes across the island you can see the blue sea water,” U Htay Aung said.

Myanmar Travels and Tours managing director U Hla Htay said the nearby village would also be an attraction for visitors.

Residents said they hoped the hotel would support economic development in the Letkokkon area.

“The beach was crowded in 1992 but lost its popularity in 2000 when Chaungtha and Ngwe Saung beaches were developed. Compared to those beaches it doesn’t have good enough facilities to attract people but if the beach becomes popular again our lives will hopefully improve with better job and training opportunities,” said U Kyin Saw from Letkokkon.

Rooms at Letkokkon Hotel, which reopened as Orchid Adventure Shore Resort in late October, Pic: Ko Taik
A MAJOR study of people in Myanmar living with HIV/AIDS has found the disease is associated with a wide range of social problems, including poverty, joblessness and social stigma.

The study, which focused on 395 households with at least one HIV-positive person, was a community-based, cross-sectional descriptive survey carried out by the government and non-government organisations in 25 townships in six states and regions from January to October.

It found that while 64.5 percent of people living with HIV work, 70 percent of surveyed households spent more than they earned, with 67.3 percent reporting that they had borrowed money in the previous 12 months, mostly for daily living costs and healthcare. More than 63 percent of households had sold assets to cover the cost of treatment for the HIV-positive person in their family.

The study was conducted by the Burnet Institute Myanmar, the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar), Myanmar Positive Group and the National AIDS program, with funding from UNDP/UNAIDS between January and October.

HIV/AIDS is the third most challenging health problem after malaria and TB. With the introduction of anti-retroviral treatment programs the survival rate has markedly increased.

On the other hand, poverty not only adds to the vulnerability of people with HIV, but also lack of access to healthcare," said Dr Myo Thant, director of the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar).

He said the study of the socioeconomic conditions of people with HIV/AIDS would inform the development of a planned AIDS Impact Mitigation Strategy.

The organisations involved in the survey made five recommendations, including conducting a national study on the socioeconomic impact of the effect of HIV on households that could then be used to develop the impact mitigation strategy.

They also said the government should develop a HIV workplace policy and encourage the promotion of job opportunities for people with HIV, while greater efforts should be made to ensure HIV-positive children and children from HIV-affected households remain in school.

More than 60 percent of households surveyed had one person living with HIV, while 31.1 percent had two, 6.3 percent had three and 2 percent had four.

Dr Kyu Kyu Than, technical coordinator at the Burnet Institute, presented the results of the study at a workshop in Yangon on October 29. She said the average monthly income of people with HIV was Kyats 100,000, 40 percent of which goes towards medication.

She said people living with HIV also have to cope with significant workplace discrimination, adding that many employers sacked workers known to be HIV positive.

Almost 40 percent of people living with HIV reported experiencing discrimination, while 22.5 percent said they had been denied employment due to their condition.

"Most good and stable jobs require an HIV blood test result, and if you are positive, they don't hire you," an unnamed health worker from Mandalay was quoted as saying in the survey.

Discussing discrimination in the workplace, she said people with HIV were even barred from working as labourers and street vendors. Some changed their workplace because of hostility from co-workers.

The study showed that access to ART medication was also a factor in migration.

"I was in downtown Yangon, but I moved to Hlaing Tharyar township about two years without my family to get ART treatment," said a member of Myanmar Positive Group, adding that families of those affected faced difficulties in transporting them after death.

However, 32.7 percent of those who relocated, which was about three in 10 of households surveyed, said it was because of financial problems. Another 16.9 percent said they had been evicted by the house owner, while 19.9 percent said they moved because of social discrimination.

U Maung Maung Kyaw of UNDP said the survey’s backers plan to show the results to the Ministry of Health and other government departments in Nay Pyi Taw.

"This is the first survey of HIV households, and we need to encourage the community to work in partnership with government departments, non-governmental organisations and self-help groups," said U Maung Maung Kyaw.

Survey links HIV and poverty, joblessness

The study showed that access to ART medication was also a factor in migration.
Pyin Oo Lwin ready for fire balloon festival

By Phyo Wai Kyaw and Sithu Lwin

The 8th Fire Balloon Festival in Pyin Oo Lwin will be held from November 25 to 29 at an open field near Maha Aung Bin San Thar Pagoda, a member of festival committee said last week.

The festival committee will offer prizes for the most attractive fire balloons in a range of categories and will also hold a photo competition, he said.

“We will give 50 prizes over the course of the festival and will increase the amount of prize money. We also hope that the numbers of competitors will be higher than last year,” festival committee member U Kyaw Htay Ko said on November 6.

The winner of the night category for most beautiful balloon will get K3.5 million, up from K2.5 million last year.

“The number of competitors will be higher than last year,” he said.

“Many balloon fairs have been held this year in India, Thailand and Vietnam. So we hope that this festival can receive attention from the media,” he added.

The festival committee also plans to set a fire balloon at the entrance of Mandalay Hill, a member of the festival committee said.

Tourists board a boat at Mandalay’s Mayanchan Jetty.
Pics: Phyo Wai Kyaw

In Depth

THE influx of foreign tourists to Mandalay has prompted more people to consider a career as a tour guide, but many say they find themselves stymied by the government’s onerous rules on licensing.

The course fee and expenses associated with the 2.5-month program in Yangon that must be completed to earn a license are prohibitive barriers for many new guides. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism says the initial training course is K40,000-50,000, while biennial, three-day refresher courses are free. Voluntary specialist classes, such as history or folk tales, cost about K20,000 each.

Tour guides have to renew their licence every two years and this costs at least K30,000. At the same time, guides also have to pay a biennial tax to the Ministry of Finance and Revenue. The tax is negotiated and varies according to where guides work and whether they are employed by a travel company or are freelance.

Instead, many aspiring guides work unofficially and wait outside attractions in the city and surrounding tourist sites like Mingun for foreign customers. All guides who work for registered travel companies are required to have a licence.

“To get the licence is a lot of money; I am only a trishaw driver,” said Ku Chit Ko, a part-time guide who waits at the southern entrance of Mandalay Hill for clients.

U Zaw Win, a spokesperson for the Mandalay branch of the Myanmar Tourist Guide Association (MTGA), agreed that many tour guides are common in Mandalay but said they lack the professionalism and knowledge of licensed guides.

“They do not tell the truth, they don’t know to explain the history,” he said.

U Zaw Win said graduates finish centre in Mandalay but with no success.

“In 1998 when I attended [the training]... it was a big challenge for me,” said U Zaw Win. “When I came I had no friends in Yangon. I lived in a monastery and only ate one meal a day. It was difficult.”

U Zaw Win said he believes only had the funding to operate one centre but did not rule out the possibility of opening training schools outside Yangon in future.

For its part, the MTGA has attempted to fill the gap by offering a free, two-month informal training course for aspiring tour guides.

Official training only offered in Yangon, making it prohibitively expensive

U Zaw Win said graduates finish the class having all the skills and knowledge they would acquire at the training in Yangon but still have no licence.

One such graduate is Ko Kyaw Min, a young freelance guide who speaks perfect English with a distinct Australian accent.

He plans to go to Yangon to get his official licence sometime next year. “I don’t mind the exams, the problem is I’m not from Yangon,” he said, adding that he was unsure where he would live or how he would cover his costs.

“Myanmar tourism is growing really fast,” he said. “It’s necessary to have different centres in Mandalay, Bagan and Inle [Lake] so that all the people can benefit.”

What is not in doubt is the sharp rise in visitors to Mandalay, famed for its palace walls and thriving handicrafts industry.

U Aung Aung Zaw, general manager of the Mandalay branch of Tour Mandalay, estimates that about 100,000 tourists have already visited Mandalay this year, with many more to come in November and December. “Our company has British, American, and Australian clients like never before,” he said. —Additional reporting by Yu Yu Maw
Hundreds suffer food poisoning after wedding

By Win Ko Ko Latt and Pyae Thet Phyo

HEALTH officials in Pyinmana have sprung into action after two-thirds of the inhabitants of a village suffered food poisoning.

The outbreak, which has so far affected 235 people but was under control late last week, occurred after a wedding breakfast of mohinga on November 6 in the village of Kinpontan, said medical staff.

Residents began to complain of vomiting, dizziness and diarrhoea by mid-afternoon.

“We don’t know how many people have gone to hospital. We’re sending them four to eight at a time,” said Daw Mar Lar Aung, an official with the Nay Pyi Taw branch of the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS).

Pending lab test results, the cause seemed to be food poisoning, she said, adding: “We’ve given preventive medicine to the entire village.”

In Kinpontan, more than 530 people have been given the medication, said an official from the township health department.

“Residents of more than 200 houses out of up to 300 are showing symptoms, sometimes two or three from the same house,” said Daw San Myint, 66.

“My daughter recovered from bouts of diarrhoea, but she is still suffering from dizziness,” said U Kyaw Soe, a village resident.

Meanwhile, eight wedding guests suffered food poisoning in Sintathy village and five were sent to the 1000-bed Nay Pyi Taw hospital, said U Kyaw San Win, a disaster manager at MRCS.

Members of Nay Pyi Taw Council, the head of Pyinmana hospital, MRCS members and officials from the general administrative department have helped manage the outbreak by distributing medicines to prevent cholera and treating wells, ponds, drains and refuse piles with chlorine to prevent the spread of disease, said U Kyaw San Win.

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

NATIONAL League for Democracy officials from Mandalay Region’s Pyigyitagan township have banned a grassroots campaign to provide information to members on the party’s upcoming national assembly.

The party’s township-level commission, which was formed to handle preparations for the national assembly, sent a declaration to ward-level commissions in Pyigyitagan township on November 3 saying that the campaign was organised by “some irresponsible persons” and could cause divisions among party members.

The declaration said ward commission officials should not cooperate with the activists, who launched the campaign with a visit to Htain Kone ward on October 23 and have since visited two more of the township’s 16 wards.

One of the leaders of the information campaign, U Ko Ko Aung, denied the accusation that their campaign would cause conflict between party members and said he would continue to meet Pyigyitagan residents to discuss the national assembly.

“On the contrary, I think the letter from the township commission could cause dissatisfaction among party members. I want to know whether the top leaders know about these issues. The officials from the township commission have not attended any public events for the assembly until now; all they’ve done is write that letter,” U Ko Ko Aung said.

U Ko Ko Aung said some township commission members complained his group had criticised them in the media. However, he said they had only spoken to the media about the issue after not being allowed to discuss their grievances at township, district and regional meetings.

“They did not allow us to talk or to attend the meetings. We have been unhappy about it for a long time but nobody knew about it. I want Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to know about how the [members of the township commission] are acting like dictators,” he said.

Another member, U Win Hlaing, said the district commission had told the group it had not yet received the letter. U Ko Ko Aung and U Win Hlaing also said the regional commission issued instructions to each township commission that there should be at least two members from the district and township commissions at each ward assembly to “watch and guard” activities.

“That letter was not an instruction from the party headquarters and not included in the instructions for the assembly process. We think the expression ‘watch and guard’ suggests a level of interference in the ward assembly,” U Win Hlaing said.
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Norway-backed tourism master plan to be finalised by March

By Yu Yu Maw

NORWAY will give US$225,000 to help the government draw up a tourism master plan, which is expected to be finalised by the end of March.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide made the announcement at a consultation meeting on the plan on November 5.

Norway was one of the first countries to withdraw advice to its nationals not to visit Myanmar, said the minister, who has visited this country three times. This was done “in the belief that greater contact with the rest of the world would have a positive effect on a country that had been closed for a long time”, he said.

The tourism master plan, which will guide the environmentally and socially sustainable development of the sector, will be drawn up by a six-member team from Thammasat University’s Centre of Innovation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and the Asian Development Bank.

Team leader Dr Paul Rogers said on November 5 the team will submit the draft tourism master plan on January 31, 2013 and finalise it by the end of March.

The announcement follows a four-week fact finding trip in which the team consulted more than 150 people in Nay Pyi Taw, Inle Lake, Tachileik, Kengtung, Kawthoung, Yangon and Kyaikhtiyo.

Mr Eide said Norway is also supporting conservation work at Inle Lake that is being carried out by UNDP, the Institute of International Development, and UN-HABITAT. (See related story page 10.)

In the first half of 2012, international tourist arrivals increased by more than 30 percent compared to the same period last year, making Myanmar one of the world’s fastest-growing tourist destinations.

“Rapid tourism growth presents the country with many opportunities and challenges,” Mr Eide said. “Tourism is a labour-intensive industry that can quickly create jobs across all levels of society, help to strengthen economic ties across borders, promote international friendship, and foster greater appreciation of Myanmar’s rich cultural and natural heritage.”

At the same time, damage to the environment and negative social impacts can occur if tourism development takes place in an unplanned and uncoordinated manner.

A sustainable tourism policy would rely on less energy-intensive forms of transport with fewer emissions, Mr Eide said, adding that the tourism industry also had a responsibility to help conserve the country’s cultural heritage.

Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung stressed the need to manage tourism responsibly and to avoid “killing the golden goose”.

“There’s very conscious of the challenges of long-term sustainable tourism development,” he added.

A SCHOOL in Yangon Region has beaten nearly 70 competitors from across Southeast Asia to win a major international prize for disaster preparedness.

Basic Education High School 1 in Kungyangon township won the US$1500 “Education for Disaster Risk Reduction” prize, and four to six members of the school will have the chance to go for a four-day study tour to Japan. School representatives will be travelling to Bangkok this week to collect the prize.

The competition, in education for sustainable development, was organised by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) and the Japanese government in cooperation with UNESCO and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ. The award will be held every year from 2012 to 2014 to promote and share best practices in schools across Southeast Asia.

The SEAMEO website said schools in Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated this year.

School principal Daw Saw Phone Kyi said the school disaster management plan had been prepared on the basis of an analysis of the disaster risks facing the school.

“We suffered badly from Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and learned to be resilient in case of future hazards,” said one teacher. “We’ve organised a school disaster management committee and carry out disaster risk reduction activities.”
Pipeline trainees angry over pay

By Sandar Lwin

MYANMAR engineers taking part in training in China before working on a pipeline project have expressed frustration over what they say are unfair differences in pay between Myanmar and Chinese workers.

The 58 trainees are attending a three-month course on pipeline operation at the Southwest Petroleum University in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. Upon completion they will work on the Myanmar-China pipeline project, which will see oil and gas pipelines link Rakhine State with Yunnan Province.

During a media trip to Chengdu between October 31 and November 4 arranged by the Friendship Association for Myanmar-China Pipeline, the workers told The Myanmar Times they were unhappy at the higher pay that Chinese trainees at the university will receive when they begin working on the same project.

The friendship association, a public relations vehicle for the project’s backers, says the different salaries are because the Chinese workers are employed directly by state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), while the Myanmar workers are employed by its subsidiaries, South-East Asia Gas Pipeline Company Limited (SEAOP) and South-East Asia Crude Oil Pipeline Company Limited (SEACOP). But the Myanmar engineers say they were not made aware of this before they applied for the job.

Trainee salaries are far less than those of the subsidiary companies rather than CNPC.

“The job call letter clearly said that the SEAOP/GP will recruit the new employees,” he told The Myanmar Times on November 9. The friendship association said the advertisement for the positions from CDC said “the recruitment is for Myanmar-China pipeline project and made no mention of CNPC.

But a trainee said they had not seen a “job call letter” and the employment agency had told them they would be working for CNPC.

An employee at CDC said the agency had been told that CNPC was the company calling for applications for engineer positions.

Currently, CNPC is still calling for [applications from] more engineers. Engineers can apply for it,” the spokesperson said.

The trainees said Mr Zhao Hong Bo, who interviewed them before they were recruited, discussed the issue with them in Chengdu and said the difference in pay was because of the “different background” of the Chinese engineers.

Mr Zhao Hong Bo said we are working for SEAOP, not for CNPC, and the salary range is different between these two companies. And the salary difference between the staff for the same position of the same pipeline is because we have different backgrounds. We do not understand what it means by different backgrounds,” one trainee said.

Mr Zhongtang, a spokesperson from the friendship association, said it was clearly expressed in the “job call letter” that the new employees were recruited by the subsidiary companies rather than CNPC.

The association said by email on November 10 that “the different background” referred to the fact that “all the Chinese trainees of 2011 now in Chengdu major in science-related subjects and quite a number of them hold master and even doctoral degrees. Moreover, all of them hold an operation certificate of the pipeline project.”

Mr Zhongtang confirmed the Chinese trainees are already CNPC employees, while Myanmar trainees are working for SEAOP/GP and will start their probation period when they have finished the training.

“Chinese students in the training at SWPU are for pipeline projects all over the world, including the Myanmar-China ones. They are already CNPC employees. If the staff has signed the job contract with CNPC, he will have the CNPC salary rate,” he said.

“We have given the salary rate as [the Myanmar workers] asked for. We have fulfilled their salary expectation as they asked for. They agreed with that. And the Myanmar trainees now have signed the job contract (yet),” the spokesperson said.

One of the trainees said they had asked for initial pay of US$300 when they joined the training program. “Currently, CNPC is still calling for [applications from] more engineers. Engineers can apply for it,” the spokesperson said.

“We believe that if we expect a basic initial salary of $300 then later we could get an attractive salary [from] CNPC … but now we have found out we are not working for CNPC and the Chinese staff for the same pipeline project and for the same pipeline operator position will get five times higher salary than we will do. It is not satisfactory for us,” he said.

Train fire in Sagaing leaves 25 dead, 100 injured

YANGON – Investigators searched for clues last week to the cause of a train derailment and ensuing blaze that killed 25 people and injured nearly 100 more in Sagaing Region.

Two petrol tankers loaded onto the train overturned in the November 9 accident and local villagers collecting the fuel were burned to death as flames tore across the crash site.

While the death toll did not rise overnight, police said 93 injured people were undergoing treatment, most of them in local hospitals in the town of Kanbalu in Sagaing Region.

“I don’t think the death toll will rise. The people who died perished on the spot when they were burned,” a police officer in Kanbalu said by telephone, asking not to be named.

The officer added that the cause of the accident is still unknown.

Photographs posted on a government website on December 9 showed the charred remains of victims and debris scattered around the wreck site.

Residents in the remote area rely on rail as the roads are poor, but the rail system is in desperate need of renewal after years of underinvestment. – AFP
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Let's Party
Business community ponders the future as investment law enacted

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

DOMESTIC reaction to President U Thein Sein’s enactment of the Foreign Investment Law on November 2 was mostly positive last week, although businesspeople said more needs to be done to give local firms a chance to compete.

The law, which was published in Myanmar in state-run newspapers last week, is yet to be officially translated into English and many grey areas still exist for foreign investors but Myanmar businesspeople say further reforms to the country’s banking sector and labour laws must be completed if Myanmar is to benefit from incoming investment.

Key recommendations from U Thein Tun adopted by parliament include the dropping of minimum capital requirements for joint ventures and caps on foreign share ownership.

“Domestic businesses are generally financially weaker than foreign companies so we have to encourage banks to offer more loans or perhaps invest in companies. Most governments encourage their citizens in this way, and I hope that will happen in Myanmar too,” he said.

A man displays copies of the Foreign Investment Law, enacted in early November, for sale in Yangon. Pic: Kaung Htet

A Ministry of Energy official said that the law to be accountable and will make sense for companies to try and partner with international businesses in some sectors.

“We don’t have to think that we will lose out in competition with international companies but should cooperate because our businesses need technology, international experience and management, all of which we can get through cooperation,” he said.

U Tin Win Aung said the government needs to encourage further development of the economy and avoid excessive regulations that might stifle growth.

Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association chairman U Myint Soe said even though the United States and the European Union have lifted nearly all economic sanctions on Myanmar, significant Western investment has so far failed to materialise.

I hope the investment law is more foreign investor-friendly than previous drafts but at the same time local investors need to be given a chance to compete too,” a spokesperson for the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry said.

A Ministry of Energy official said that most investment in the sector has been made by Asian companies and it would benefit from increased involvement by Western companies, which he hoped would lead to technology sharing and stronger competition.

Former Central Bank governor and current vice chairman of Kanbawza Bank U Than Win said granting the bank independence was a positive move.

“This is the government promoting the role of the Central Bank, which will be able to implement its monetary measures faster and boost the trust of international bankers in its abilities,” he said.

When the Central Bank has been promoted to a union-level body, the bank’s chairman will effectively operate as a minister, which will make the bank much faster to act,” he said.

The Central Bank will then have the authority to manage monetary policy and send proposals directly to the president. However, it will also need to organise a board of directors and consultants,” he said.

“The Central Bank of Myanmar will likely be independent and endorsed as a ministry-level body before 2013, a bank official said last week.

A draft law that would see the Central Bank be made independent was submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in the latest sitting, which started on October 18 and bank officials were confident it would be enacted soon, most likely this month.

Central Bank deputy director general U Win Thaw told The Myanmar Times that he expected the bank to be granted independence by the start of 2013.

At present, all of the Central Bank’s actions must be approved by the Ministry of Finance and Revenue. However, if it is granted independence it will be able to act as a ministry-level body and perform duties such as intervening in the currency market, for instance, U Win Thaw said.

More page 22
CLOTHING FACTORY OPENED AT HPA-AN’S FIRST INDUSTRIAL ZONE

The opening of a new garment factory in a recently established industrial zone in Kayin State could relieve pressure on Yangon’s industrial zones, while providing jobs to local people who might otherwise migrate, industry experts say.

Factory UMH-3, named after U Myint Htay, owner of U MH Garment Industries – opened in Hpa-an township on November 6. “Many people in Kayin State, Yangon, which has led to the concentration of the work force there. This could lead to social problems. So U Myint Htay agreed to set up a factory here,” said U Myint Soe, chairman of the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA).

“The factory can provide thousands of job opportunities. Myanmar has to prepare for entry into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015,” he said.

“We anticipate that garment factories operating near the border would then move to the industrial areas of Yangon because we have good labour sources. If people can get the same wages in their home town, they don’t want to emigrate. And the government will benefit from their taxes,” he added.

UMH already has two factories in Yangon: UMH-1 in Pin Kyin Industrial Zone in Yangon Region. UMH-3 will be the first in Hpa-an. It will employ 150 workers, who have been undergoing training at the Myanmar Material and Child Welfare Association building in the township since February. The UMH-3 factory will occupy about 20 acres, and another building, covering 50 acres, is under construction.

“I will set up factories here from UMH-3 to UMH-6,” said U Myint Htay at the opening ceremony for UMH-3.

U Zaw Min, Chief Minister for Kayin State, said: “The main source of jobs here is agriculture, which doesn’t pay enough. Most young people go elsewhere for food work. Setting up industry in Kayin State provides a great opportunity for local people, who will no longer have to leave home to make a living.”

Foundations for the Hpa-an Industrial Zone were laid in December last year, in a ceremony attended by U Zaw Min.

“The zone is close to the city and near the airport, the Thanlwin River and the general vicinity of the proposed East-West Economic Corridor road linking Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India,” he told The Myanmar Times on December 7.

“This industrial zone will not only be connected to East and Southeast Asia but South Asia as well,” he said.

The zone is 7 miles (11.2 kilometres) outside Hpa-an and close to the recently reopened Myawaddy-Mae Sot border trading area with Thailand.

Environmentalists and economists from Europe, the United States and Asia will be gathering in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon this month for the Second Forum for Green Economy and Growth (GREG).

Formed in April last year, GREG holds its first forum last November, said executive director U Kyaw Lwin Hla. It is a non-profit association for managing the environmental impact of economic development.

“We must think about environmental issues and sustainable social development when we promote economic growth. Because we are so far behind other countries, we can learn lessons from them about environmental impact,” he said.

The forum will help match up local non-government organisations and international institutions.

Up to 100 academics, environmental experts and economists from the United States, Austria, Norway, Australia, Japan and Singapore, and about 20 from Myanmar, will speak before audiences of 200-250 participants.

The meetings will take place in Nay Pyi Taw’s Myanmar International Convention Centre on November 13-14, and in Yangon at the Myanmar Banks Association Hall on November 16.

GREEN FORUM PLANNED FOR NOVEMBER 13-14

By Aye Thin Kyaw

ENVIRONMENTалиСТS and economists from Europe, the United States and Asia will be gathering in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon this month for the Second Forum for Green Economy and Growth (GREG).

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HONG KONG – The world's top insurers are setting their sights on Myanmar, steering themselves for a fight with corruption and ghosts from the nation's political past.

The opportunities are many. A large population, economic reforms and a natural resources industry could combine to create rising wealth among Myanmar's people. There is also money to be made by general insurers providing cover for the impending boom in construction projects.

"A few years ago everybody needed to have a China story and India as well," said Michael Daly, a director and consulting actuary for the China and Southeast Asia life insurance practice at Milliman Inc. "Now the attention has shifted to Southeast Asia."

Myanmar could produce US$1.6 billion in annual premium revenues, according to Reuters calculations based on economic data and comparisons with neighbouring markets. That would be less than 10 percent of what Singapore produces, but in line with Vietnam's insurance market.

With the opportunities come obstacles, including new rules governing foreign insurers that are yet to be tested.

In addition, the country's sole established insurer – state-backed Myanma Insurance – is guaranteed certain contracts, effectively closing off portions of the market.

Other challenges include competition from a handful of regional players and corruption.

The country's political history may also pose problems for insurers looking to sell products to high net worth individuals who may have ties to the former junta or be on blacklists.

And yet the early enthusiasm among global insurers shows how tough things have become in their home markets and how crucial they see their position in Southeast Asia's growth story.

Global insurers have had their eyes on Southeast Asia, buying up assets and opening offices in Indonesia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand as the developing world far-outpaces developed markets.

Premiums in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam are expected to rise an average of 7.9 percent next year, according to a report by Swiss Re, more than double the global life insurance average.

Myanmar is attractive to insurance executives as its population of nearly 60 million makes it one of the largest in Southeast Asia. Per capita gross domestic product is also over $500, near the $1,000 mark that insurers say is the threshold where individuals begin buying insurance.

Tokio Marine Holdings Inc, a Japan-based insurer, and its South Korea rival Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Co Ltd have already established representative offices in Myanmar.

Before nationalisation in 1963, there were more than 70 local and foreign private insurance companies in Myanmar. "Myanmar is an economic rising star," said David Wong, who runs Manulife's Southeast Asian operations and who travelled to Myanmar recently as part of a Canadian delegation. "It's not far behind Vietnam."

Analysts and executives interviewed by Reuters struggled to put an exact dollar figure on Myanmar's insurance market.

Using Vietnam as a model, Myanmar may eventually generate between $1 billion and $2 billion in premiums a year, according to a Reuters analysis, based on sources and economic data.

Vietnam last year had gross domestic product (GDP) of $120 billion and generated just over $1.8 billion worth of premiums. That meant an insurance penetration of 1.5pc of GDP.

If Myanmar's economy grows 7pc annually in the next decade – the lower end of the rate estimated by the Asian Development Bank – it would double in size in 10 years' time to more than $100 billion. If its insurance penetration matches or comes close to that of Vietnam, Myanmar could generate around $1.6 billion in premiums.

Singapore brings in around $18.5 billion in premiums, the highest in Southeast Asia.

The clearest obstacle for a foreign insurer in Myanmar is corruption.

Transparency International ranks Myanmar as one of the four most-corrupt nations, on par with Afghanistan and only half a point better than North Korea and Somalia.

Rampant corruption would make it nearly impossible for global insurers to run proper background and business checks on policies for individuals and corporations.

Even worse, corruption could get an insurer in trouble if the company backs a person or entity that later becomes a criminal liability, a not-too-distant possibility in a country such as Myanmar.

"Many businessmen with close links to the military are now keen to repose themselves as business friendly and compliant," said Richard Dailly, managing director at consulting firm Kroll Inc. "However, many of them still appear on blacklists either because of their close link to the regime or their proximity to narcotics production."

Detailed market information is very hard to come by, with debt and equity analysts and ratings agencies yet to begin covering Myanmar's insurance sector.

Performing due diligence is difficult, Dailly adds. The laws governing Myanmar's insurance sector are loosely-worded and do not apply to the state's monopoly, though some parts of the law could be attractive to foreign insurers.

Insurers can get licenses from the Central Bank of Myanmar that allow them to write policies in foreign currencies. Other parts of existing laws could prove worrisome.

So far, government officials are saying foreign insurers will be kept at arms-length until around 2015. That is when they will be granted licenses and allowed to do business, the deputy minister of finance and revenue told Reuters in September.

"For those who invest the time and energy and know-how to actually help to develop it, and people are going to get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Iain Anderson, an industry lawyer who recently travelled to Myanmar.

-- Reuters
Myanmar's corn farmers could gain from US drought

By Kyaw Myint

THE worst drought in more than 50 years that is affecting large parts of the United States is expected to reduce the nation's corn output by about US$40 billion, according to the government and analysts. At its height in July, which is also peak corn season, more than 80 percent of prime US farmland was in drought and corn production this year is expected to fall by 10pc to 272 million tonnes, the US Department of Agriculture said. If the predictions prove to be accurate, the crop would be the smallest in nearly 10 years.

Dire crop forecasts have circulated for much of the summer and have been responsible for driving corn prices to record highs of $8.4375 a bushel (equal to 56 or 72 pounds or 25.4/32.7 kilograms depending on condition) on August 10, Dow Jones Newswires reported on October 23.

The reduced output is already putting pressure on exporters, ethanol makers and livestock owners by increasing the cost of doing business.

“We don’t have buffer stock and if we have another weather problem next year corn prices could explode again,” said Dan Boone, president US Commodities, Des Moines, Iowa.

“We kept saying last year that we couldn’t afford a weather problem this year and look what happened, I kept telling people the weather is 90 percent of the market,” he said.

According to global food price monitor report, FAO price index of corn in August remained close to the level of August 2011. The benchmark US corn averaged $328 a tonne, about 5pc higher than in August 2011. Deteriorating crop prospects for corn in the United States initially underpinned export quotations, but prices eased towards the end of the month following heavy rains in areas hardest hit by drought.

After the US, China is the world’s second largest corn producer. Corn production in 2011 in China was forecast at 67 million tonnes and 8.1 million tonnes were imported. Average export of corn from China was forecast at 110,000 tonnes based on FAO statistics. Corn production in 2012 was forecast at 190 million tonnes, with a further 10 million tonnes slated to be imported, based on the forecast for 2012-13.

The Chinese government in this climate that Myanmar could benefit by feeding China’s need for corn. Myanmar’s corn crop is mainly sown during the monsoon months, which typically stretch from May through September. The country’s corn sown area in 2011-12 was estimated at 1.07 million acres by the Department of Agriculture, formerly Myanmar Agriculture Service; of this, 88pc was sown during monsoon.

Total production was estimated at 1.46 million tonnes, with an average yield of 1,435 tonnes an acre. Prices are comparatively high because many farmers use hybrid corn varieties, mainly CP company in their production because of abnormal weather.

Average yields of hybrid corn are 60-70 baskets (1.47-1.71 tonnes) an acre, compared with 30-40 baskets an acre (700-900 kilograms) for non-hybrid corn. However, hybrid variety also needs more fertiliser than non-hybrid strains.

CP company is involved in many aspects of the trade – it sells hybrid corn to farmers and then buys the milled feed, which is then used as nutrition for its chickens.

However, Myanmar’s corn is also sought after by Chinese traders, who buy up to 91pc of total exports.

Corn sown in northern Shan state is sent straight to the town of Muse on the Myanmar-China border, and then traded to Shwekho (Ruili) in China. CP corn in Myingyan (Mandalay Region), Monywa (Saguing Region), and Taunggyi (Shan State) is shipped to Mandalay, where it is bought by traders to sell to China.

In Muse, the Ministry of Commerce established a trading zone at the 105-mile mark to facilitate Chinese trade. Commerce Journal, which is run by the Ministry of Commerce, maintains a regular corn price record based on free on board price in Yangon. E-Trade Myanmar also keeps records of corn prices.

These show that corn price have been generally rising this year and have hit a high of about $414 a tonne in early September but have since fallen to about $316. By contrast, the average export price of corn ranged from 80-250 a tonne during the 2010-11.

Myanmar’s corn exports have varied from 90,800-465,000 tonnes between 2001-02 and 2010-11. The 2010-11 fiscal year was the highest on record at nearly 465,000 tonnes, with 90.5pc exported to China.

However, with the shortfall in production in the US, prices are tipped to increase in China, India, Japan and Malaysia, which could be good news for Myanmar’s corn farmers. However, the higher prices might affect poultry farmers by increasing the cost of feed, which is in higher egg and chicken meat prices for consumers.

U Kyaw Myint is a former civil servant, and consultant with the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation’s Market Information Project, the Agriculture Market Information Service (AMIS) and E-Trade Myanmar.

Rice federation to spend K14.5b on buffer stock

By Myat May Zin

MYANMAR Rice Federation is planning to spend K14.5b (about US$17.2 million) to buy buffer stock from the November crop, starting from November 20. The federation will accept only 25pc broken rice and will only consider applicants who make bids, he said.

MRF will invite bids in private sector and state-owned media this month, he said.

“The funding for the buffer stock comprises K10 billion from the government, K1 billion from cooperative departments, and K3.5 billion from MRF,” he added.

He said restrictions would apply, and each bidder might be allowed to sell a maximum of 1,000 tonnes, but the amount had not yet been decided.

“We will buy directly from the farmers because some people can’t send stock to the buffer stock due to transportation difficulties. Some people are still trying to sell their deliveries from the last crop, so we will buy only in Yangon this year,” he said.

In the recent monsoon season, the major rice production areas of Yangon, Bago and Ayeyarwady regions were flooded for several days. As a result, some fields were destroyed and in others replanting was delayed.

“There was some impact on rice production because of abnormal weather. But the amount of rice will not decrease significantly, and the price will not increase,” said Dr Soe Tun.

Total rice production annually amounts to more than 12 million tonnes. More than 10 million tonnes are used domestically, and less than 2 million tonnes are exported. MRF plans to export about 50,000 tonnes (250pc broken rice) to Africa in late November, of which more than 10,000 tonnes is left over from last year’s harvest.

MRF is from Myanmar Agricultural Public Corporation.
EU urges action on illegal fisheries drugs

He added that the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries needed to take a strong stand in helping to announce which medicines were considered safe for use. U Tint Wai said EU food safety tests would detect the presence of illegal medicines and the shipment would be sent back.

“The veterinary medicine market needs to be controlled just as carefully as products intended for humans,” he added.

U Tint Wai said businesspeople could apply to legally import veterinary medicines through the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

“The most important thing is that farmers must know what medicines they can use because this is not the case at present,” he said.

U Tint Wai said EU officials had warned the department that it would closely inspect fish imported from Myanmar.

Ms Marie Andersen, senior food quality and safety advisor of the EU Quality, Conformity Assessment and Safety Department said: “Myanmar does not have good regulations for controlling the market of veterinary medicines. If it continues in this manner, the EU will not accept fish farmed in Myanmar.”

“The EU and the rest of the world are worried about the chemical residue inside fish tissue following the use of illegal medicines,” Ms Andersen said.

“If someone eats that fish, the remaining chemical can lead to strong resistance in humans, meaning that medicine might not work in future,” she added.

Ms Andersen said the government and private sector – including industry associations – needed to cooperate to combat the problem.

“Efforts to stop the influx of illegal veterinary medicines have started in Myanmar but they must be kept up for the long term good of the people and market,” she said.

Ms Andersen said up to 60 percent of the EU’s fish was imported, with South Africa and Malaysia the major suppliers. Myanmar has a good opportunity to contribute to the market, too, if it could meet the safety requirements.

U Tint Wai said that companies that import veterinary medicines should take steps to ensure that those products are shipped to farmers and not switched with cheaper Chinese variants along the way.

There have been allegations in the past that companies provide legitimate products to the department for testing purposes but then import and sell illegally imported fakes from China.

U Tint Wai said farmers must also avoid using hormones to accelerate the growth of fish, adding that such products should only be used during the hatching process.

“This is not only important in the fish farming sector but also in the rearing of pigs and poultry because the EU never allows imported fish or meat with traces of hormones,” he said.

However, the EU is assisting the Department of Fisheries in implementing a project that encourages farmed fish exports. Part of this assistance has been providing information on what products and medicines are acceptable.

Myanmar exports about US$15 million worth of seafood to the EU a year, U Tint Wai said.

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IWT to start river ferry services

By Myat May Zin and Yu Yu Maw

INLAND Water Transport will begin river ferry services between ports in Hlaing Tharyar township and the Sin Oh Tan port in Latha township from November 12 to provide an alternate means of transport for workers, an official said last week.

U Kyin Nar, IWT manager, said it sometimes took two hours for commuters in Hlaing Tharyar to travel to their offices in downtown by road, and the ferry service aimed to reduce travel times.

“The number of vehicles on Yangon’s roads is much higher than in recent years and increasing,” he said. “The result is worsening traffic congestion and longer commutes, especially for people living in outer townships such as Hlaing Tharyar. It sometimes takes more than two hours for people living in Hlaing Tharyar to travel to their offices in downtown.

“Representatives have raised this issue in the blottaws and we think this is a solution to some of the problems,” he told The Myanmar Times on November 8.

He said there will be two ferries a day – departing Hlaing Tharyar at 7am and arriving at Sin Oh Tan port at about 8am. The afternoon service will leave Sin Oh Tan at 5pm and is expected to arrive in Hlaing Tharyar at 6pm. The vessel has a maximum capacity of 300 and said IWT has a spare vessel that can also carry 300 passengers.

Another IWT official said the ferries will be two-deck vessels and the fare will be Ky 250. A rate for foreign commuters has not been fixed, he said.

“At first we will only offer services between Hlaing Tharyar and Latha township but if the public requests we will add stops along the route we will make the necessary arrangements,” U Kyin Nar said.

However, several commuters have already questioned the operating times of the ferries.

“This service will not be convenient for me because I start work at 9:30am and finish at 5:30pm,” said Ma Myit Nyen Aye, a Munmun Times reporter. “If I use this ferry, I will arrive far too early for work and I think there will be lots of other workers who feel the same. And even though our office hours finish at 5:30pm, we usually leave at about 6pm,” she said.

“I think the bus will work better for me,” she said. U Kyin Nar said IWT is aware the initial service is not perfect.

“I know that a 7am ferry is not convenient for office employees and construction workers who start work after than but we know there are many students and fruit and vegetable traders who need to arrive early in the morning,” he said.

“Through people complain about the inconvenience of this service we will arrange another service that will depart at 8am and 6pm,” he said.

Vehicles pass through Bayintnaung Junction recently. Pic: Boothee

Expat basics: offshore investments and tax

By Andrew Wood

EXPATS generally enjoy a wider range of lifestyles and jobs compared to those back home. The rewards are a combination of new adventures, personal growth and higher financial spoils. But there are also challenges in investing accumulated wealth and dealing with unfamiliar tax regimes.

Being a modern expatriate is not always straightforward. Back then it was common to work for one company in one country for your entire expat career. You were likely a top man in a corporation with few, if any, expat colleagues.

But times have changed. If you have a substantial home there would have been an extraordinary amount of travel, probably spending a substantial amount of time in a country where the operation of the country wasn’t perfect.

Today is different with the world being so small and communications and travel, which is why the world is apparently shrinking. By contrast there now seems to be three basic types of expat. The first is a professional traveller. This type works for a multi-national corporation and is shifted from location to location every three to five years. This type is professional, adaptable and happy to work anywhere.

The second type of expat is one who has decided to put down roots in one favourable location. This type is the retiree who has been working abroad a long time or spend large stretches of time travelling overseas and decides to spend their twilight years away from home.

Most expats enjoy access to a higher disposable income than their counterparts back home, which allows them to accumulate more assets and a larger net egg faster. They also probably have access to more investment options than at home.

With higher asset values there are a number of different types of investment vehicles specifically designed to help protect your wealth, as well as taking advantage of offshore tax havens to ensure you make good use of the power of your assets.

These range from equities in almost any market in the world, to convertible bonds, funds available worldwide, managed or index almost is almost a problem. Exchange Traded Funds (ETF’s) are also becoming popular with the number and variety growing daily.

Some funds have a minimum investment of US$50,000, with others more than US$1 million, which could limit choices available. You will also suffer bid/offer spread charges ranging from 3-7 percent. This charge is the price difference between buying and selling and is rather like changing money at the bank.

There are sophisticated investment vehicles available for investments too, which are run by substantial investment institutions in tax havens. Minimum investments are relatively small and once started you have the choice of buying and selling a multitude of holdings with low limits. You will also be afforded investor protection laws in the tax haven.

These investments have a great deal of flexibility on where and how much you can input. They have the option to buy and sell shares, make additions or a mixture of regular contributions and investments and take distributions. The rewards are a mixture of capital gains to the IRS. They have the option to report all their assets and investments Americans must report all their assets and gains to the IRS.

Americans are normally exempt from tax on income generated abroad. However, the ATO is carefully scrutinising expats who return home and have accumulated assets offshore. The ATO is also implementing new rules, which will change things in the future.

No matter what your nationality there are legitimate ways to manage your affairs to your advantage. The ATO will continue to monitor your investments and take action against those who try to bypass the rules.

Questions to the author can be directed to expatriates@myanmartimes.com. Andrew Wood has been an expat in Asia for 33 years and is executive director with PFS International, covering clients throughout Southeast Asia.
Developers plan mile-high Ecuador skyscraper

QUITO – Not far from Ecuador’s capital, tourists flock to a line etched in the ground and straddle it so they’ve got one foot on either side of the equator. A 90-metre (100 foot) obelisk marks the spot. Now, the provincial governor, thinking much bigger and grander, wants to build a mile-high (1.6-kilometre) skyscraper there.

Besides drawing more visitors to what would be the world’s tallest building, the structure would honor the Quitu-Cara, an indigenous culture credited with being the first to define the line marking the planet’s waistband, said deputy governor Marcela Costales.

Promoters say the building would cost US$200 million. Its main backer is Gustavo Baroja, governor of Pichincha province, which includes Quito.

Contacts have been established with potential investors in the United States and Europe, and a delegation from Qatar that is interested in the tower has visited Ecuador, Costales said.

The obelisk stands at a site called Ciudad Mitad del Mundo, or Half-the-World City, about 13 kilometres (8 miles) from Quito. The spot draws about 900,000 visitors a year.

The mile-high structure would be called the Tower of the Sun and could draw three times that number, Baroja said.

The obelisk was built in 1979 to honour French expeditions dating to 1736 and late in that century to study the size and shape of the Earth.

That monument was a product of its time “but in the new millennium, with mankind’s awakening, this zeal to find new energies, Half-the-World City has a greater value,” Costales said.

“We want it to be a global icon reflecting what we are,” said Baroja.

The world’s tallest building is Burj Khalifa in Dubai, which is 828 metres (2716.5 feet) high.

A first draft model of the proposed new building more than twice that height has been completed by Uruguayan architect Rafael Vinoly.

BY HB

Race to the sky hots up in YGN

MYANMAR’S commercial capital appears to be witnessing a race to the sky following the announcement of a planned 38-storey office tower on Merchant Street, just weeks after a 34-storey development in Mayangone township was unveiled.

The 555 Merchant Street Office Tower will be built on a 23,000-square-foot block at the corner of Merchant and 36th streets in Kyauktada township, said Mr Khalilrudin Bin Shehabuddeen, executive director of Singapore-based Kawa Oil Co, which is developing the project.

He said the tower will offer 720,000 square feet of office space. And in a city increasing head by parking problems, the tower will have four basement levels for parking, he said.

He added that the total cost of the project is estimated at more than US$100 million.

“The first six floors will be used for retail and banking but the remaining 32 storeys will be dedicated to offices,” he said. “The banking spaces will be available to both domestic and international banks because we expect international banks will be able to operate in Myanmar in future – and they are surely interested in working here,” said Mr Khalilrudin.

“We hope to develop the tower as a centre for excellence and we invite local and foreign companies to come and open offices, where we will provide international standard facilities,” he said.

Mr Khalilrudin said the timeline for the project was 30 months, with completion scheduled for October or November 2015.

“The project is designed by Irie Miyake Architects and Engineers from Japan, which has designed more than 100 skyscrapers worldwide. And the firm will also provide technical assistance, engineering and other services. The project design is at the final stage and will be made available within two weeks,” Mr Khalilrudin said.

“ Myanmar has now become a distinct choice for international investors, including those from Japan. This project is particularly meant as multinational investment project that bring together investors from Japan, Singapore and other countries as well,” he added.

He said one of the main aims of the development was to meet the demand for office space in the city.

“The first aim is to fulfil the office space requirements in Yangon because there is only a limited supply of premium office space,” he said.

“Another aim is to create a centre for business incubation: We want to allow our future users the best environment to harness their innovative and creative ideas so they can produce world beating products and services,” he said.

The building will include between eight and 12 elevators with backup electricity generators.

“We want this building to be a long lasting landmark that will remain close to the hearts of the beautiful people of Myanmar. Through coincidence and luck, the signing ceremony for this project took place just after the enactment of Myanmar’s amended Foreign Investment Law,” he said.

The signing ceremony was held at Sayasan Plaza in Bahan township on November 3 between Kawa Oil and the two-owners of the property – U Shin Maung Aye, chairman of Co-operative Bank and owner of Orchid hotel. Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lwin also attended the signing.

On that same day, Kawa Oil also signed an agreement with Irie Miyake Architects and Engineers to provide technical assistance for the project.
Social media played key role in Obama's campaign and victory

WASHINGTON – Barack Obama brought his sophisticated social media campaign to an emotional climax on November 6 by proclaiming his victory on Twitter and Facebook just as TV networks called his re-election as US president.

Obama's victory was defined as the outcome of a slow economic recovery and high unemployment, but Republican Mitt Romney's ability to connect with voters on social media platforms was seen as a key factor in his defeat.

“Thank you,” he tweeted to 22 million followers just minutes after the first US networks called for Obama's victory, saying “I’m checking in because you. Thank you,” he tweeted.

Romney, by comparison, sent a tweet out early evening to his 1.8 million followers asking them to vote, but stayed silent thereafter.

“With your help, we will turn our country around and make America back the path to prosperity. Please vote today,” he tweeted.

Social networks emerged as key tools in the months-long US presidential campaign, with both Obama and Romney staging major efforts to mobilize voters on social media platforms.

“Obama's campaign team continued to send messages directed at those Twitter followers in states that were still voting, reminding them to stay in line even if polling stations had officially closed,” he said.

“Romney, by comparison, sent a tweet out early evening to his 1.8 million followers asking them to vote, but stayed silent thereafter,” he tweeted.

“The evening progressed, the Democratic incumbent continued to push Americans to vote on social media, even as polls shut in one state after the other,” he added.

Obama's campaign team continued to send messages directed at those Twitter followers in states that were still voting, reminding them to stay in line even if polling stations had officially closed.

At midnight, he tweeted, “I'm checking in because you. Thank you,” he tweeted.

Facebook and Twitter, as well as other social media platforms, “functioned as key tools in the months-long US presidential campaign,” he said.

“Social networks emerged as the platform of choice for candidates, with both Obama and Romney placing heavy emphasis on social media platforms,” he added.

“While Romney's campaign may have had an advantage in traditional media, Obama's campaign team continued to send messages directed at those Twitter followers in states that were still voting,” he said.

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BEIJING – China’s outgoing president warned the Communist Party last week that it faces “collapse” if it fails to clean up corruption and called for an economic revamp as he opened a congress to inaugurate new leaders.

The week-long party congress will end with a transition of power to Vice President Xi Jinping, who will govern for the coming decade amid growing pressure for reform of the communist regime’s iron-clad grip on power.

The party’s outgoing general-secretary, President Hu Jintao, delivered his starkest warning yet about fighting rampant corruption following a top-level murder and graft scandal involving former regional boss Bo Xilai.

“If we fail to handle this issue well, it could prove fatal to the party and even cause the collapse of the party and the fall of the state,” Hu told more than 2200 delegates inside Beijing’s vast Great Hall of the People on November 8.

At the congress, held every five years, Hu also positioned the world’s second-largest economy for a more assertive role as he insisted China should be a “maritime power” that “resolutely” protects its interests.

Heading into the 18th party congress, China has been skirmishing with Japan and other Asian neighbours over territorial disputes and flexing its growing military muscles to the disquiet of the United States.

“We must continue to make both active and prudent efforts to carry out reform of the political structure and make the people’s democracy more extensive, fuller in scope and sounder in practice,” Hu also said.

Without naming Bo, the president added that the party “must make sure that all are equal before the law”.

In his 90-minute address, Hu also stressed that China must recalibrate its export- and investment-led growth model, after years of breakneck economic expansion that experts warn is unsustainable.

Communist leaders including Premier Wen Jiabao – who is due to step down in March as part of the leadership transition – have long been calling for China to rebalance its economy by fostering domestic consumer spending.

The congress will end this week with the installation of Xi as the party’s new general-secretary, and he is in line to succeed Hu as state president next March.

Behind closed doors, Communist Party leaders appear to have settled on the new line-up of the Politburo Standing Committee, China’s highest decision-making body, which will be unveiled when the congress ends on November 14.

The committee will be steered by Xi, 59, who has previously headed some of China’s most economically dynamic and reform-minded areas. – AFP

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Briefly

DAMASCUS – A defiant President Bashar al-Assad on November 8 rejected calls that he seek a safe exit, vowing in an interview with state-backed Russia Today television that he will “live in Syria and die in Syria” and warning that the world cannot afford the cost of foreign intervention.

WASHINGTON – The Pentagon revealed on November 8 that two Iranian fighter jets fired multiple rounds at an unarmed US Predator drone in the Gulf on November 1 but the aircraft was not hit, in an incident that underscored tensions in the region.

BAMAKO – Preparations are accelerating for an intervention in Islamist-occupied northern Mali with West African leaders poised to adopt a military blueprint before seeking approval from the UN Security Council on November 15. – AFP

US President Barack Obama savours a hug from his wife, Michelle, after delivering his re-election victory speech before a jubilant crowd in Chicago early on November 7. Obama made history by becoming only the second Democrat to win a second term. His inauguration ceremony will take place in Washington on January 21. – AFP

• Earlier report, P. 31.

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WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama returned to the White House on November 9, 2012, and signaled to Washington that he was returning him to the Oval Office, American voters returning him to the Oval Office, American voters returning him to the Oval Office, American voters returning him to the Oval Office. His re-election means that the minority Republican leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell, as well as top congressional leaders, including Speaker John Boehner, will precede his January 21 session of Congress that will try to break the deadlock in the lame-duck session of Congress.

The liberal euphoria that greeted Obama’s landmark victory was to try to break the worst of the economic crunch forced by mandatory budget cuts. Republican nominee Mitt Romney, defeated and exhausted, offered a dignified speech, as did the defeated president in Boston moments after phoning Obama to formally admit defeat.

This is a time of great challenges for America and I pray that the president will be successful in guiding our nation,” Romney said. Obama’s victory means he will get the chance to embed his healthcare and Wall Street reforms. Romney had pledged one of his first acts would be to repeal Obamacare.

The president ran for re-election on a platform of offering a “fair shot” to the middle class, of fulfilling his pledge to end the war in Iraq, killing Osama bin Laden, and starting to build a clean energy economy.

But he also ran a fiercely negative campaign branding Romney – a multi-millionaire former corporate turnaround wizard and ex-governor of Massachusetts – as indifferent to the woes of ordinary Americans. — AFP

### Gay rights make advances

WASHINGTON – Supporters of gay rights celebrated important gains for same-sex marriage in four states. Vermont, as well as Maine and Washington, approved marriage equality in referenda held simultaneously with the November 6 elections – the first time it has been approved at the ballot box in the United States.

In Minnesota, voters rejected a proposal to ban gay marriage in the state’s constitution.

Same-sex marriage is already legal in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont in Maryland, Maine and Washington approved marriage equality in referenda held simultaneously with the November 6 elections – the first time it has been approved at the ballot box in the United States.

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### Historic gains for women

WASHINGTON – Historic gains for women in the US Congress will see the largest number of women in the US Congress since Franklin Roosevelt in 1912, with 100 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives, the 100th session of Congress, and the Senate, about one-fifth of the US legislative chamber.

In the House of Representatives, there will be a record 76 women – 56 Democrats and 20 Republicans. Republican leader John Boehner, Speaker of the House and leading conservative, has moved to block the election of any woman to the speaker’s post. But Obama also ran a fierce campaign against Romney, who will get the chance to undo the US president’s legacy. — AFP

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**UK plans talks with Syrian rebel groups**

**LONDON** - Britain announced on November 7 it would begin direct talks with military figures in Syria’s uprising amid a push for a single global vision for a democratic Syria. The talks will be held at the request of Syrian opposition groups, as Prime Minister David Cameron called for a new international approach to ending the conflict.

In a statement to parliament, Foreign Secretary William Hague said Britain would not supply weapons to the rebels and said officials would stress the importance of respecting human rights.

Hague said opposition groups were playing an “increasingly influential role” in Syria as the conflict worsens.

“I have therefore now authorised my officials to have direct contact with an opposition to government representatives, including military figures in the armed opposition,” he said.

“This will help us to understand better the situation in Syria and the relationship between political and armed opposition groups so we can properly support political transition,” Hague said.

All the contacts would take place outside Syria, Hague said.

In an interview with Al-Arabiya television on November 6, Cameron had said he would support giving safe passage to President Bashar al-Assad if it meant ending the near 20 months of bloodshed in Syria, and he repeated this the next day.

“I would like to see President Assad face full international justice for the appalling crimes he has committed,” Cameron told the BBC from Zaatari refugee camp while not far from the Syrian border.

“We need more pressure at the United Nations, more help for the refugees, more action to turn the screw on this dreadful regime.

“And that is my priority with the newly elected president.”

Cameron used the visit, at the end of a three-day tour of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, to announce an extra £14 million (US$22.5 million) in aid for Syrian refugees.

“This brings the total British humanitarian aid in the crisis to £33 million since the start of 2012.

Britain’s main goal is to encourage Syria’s many opposition groups which were meeting in Doha last week, to unite around a single vision for a democratic and stable Syria.

Hague said all contacts with armed groups would comply with Britain’s stated policy of only supplying non-lethal support, and with an EU arms embargo on Syria.

— AFP

**JOHANNESBURG** - South Africa’s state broadcaster SABC has ordered its journalists not to refer to President Jacob Zuma’s controversial state-renovated homestead as a “residence”, but as “Zuma’s Nkandla home”.

In a memo to staff, seen by AFP on November 7, SABC news editor Jimi Matthews said the compound at Nkandla, which has been refurbished at an estimated cost of taxpayers of US$20 million, should be described as the “Nkandla residence”.

“My colleagues have been notified that, with immediate effect, President Zuma’s Nkandla home should be referred to as the President’s, or Mr Zuma’s, ‘Nkandla residence’ and not a ‘compound’ or ‘homestead’ or any other such term,” Matthews wrote.

Please also refrain from using imported terminology in reporting on the controversy surrounding the infrastructure developments around the residence, such as “Nkandlagate”, “Zumaville” and such like.”

Zuma has been lambasted for the costly and allegedly extensive renovations to the sprawling compound in his home state of KwaZulu-Natal.

— AFP

**BEIRUT** - More than 37,000 people have been killed since the outbreak of Syria’s anti-regime revolt in March 2011, with over 1,000 dead in the week to November 7, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Civilians, at 26,596, represented the vast majority of those killed, said the Observatory, which included in that figure non-military people who have taken up arms against President Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

The rest were from the military – 9,440 soldiers – and 1,331 who defected to join the rebellion.

Another 498 people killed could not be identified, it said.

The Observatory did not include thousands of people who have gone missing in the conflict, some thought to be in detention and others dead.

It also excluded thousands of pro-regime militiamen.

The violence in Syria has been heavy since an attempt to impose a ceasefire for the October 26-29 Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday collapsed, with 247 killed on November 5 in the bloodiest day since the truce attempt.

— AFP

Death toll exceeds 37,000: watchdog

The Observatory relies on a network of activists, lawyers and medics at military and civilian hospitals inside Syria for its information.

The uprising began as pro-reform protests inspired by the Arab Spring but transformed into an armed insurgency after the government began brutally crushing demonstrations.

Most rebels, like the population, are Sunni Muslims in a country dominated by a minority regime of Alawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam.

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Nobel prize for EU ‘unlawful’, says global peace organisation

OSLO – Giving the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union is “unlawful” since it is not a “champion of peace” as defined by the will of founder Alfred Nobel, the International Peace Bureau said last week.

In an open letter to Sweden’s Nobel Foundation, the organisation asked that this year’s eight million kronor-prize (US$1.19 million) be withheld, a demand that was immediately rejected by the Norwegian committee tasked with selecting the peace laureate.

“The European Union ... clearly is not one of the ‘champions of peace’ Alfred Nobel had in mind and described in his will,” the peace federation said.

The Swedish diplomat and philanthropist, who died in 1896, stipulated that the award should go to the “person who shall have done the most or the best work for the furthering of peace on earth, and for the establishment of international brotherhood.”

The International Peace Bureau noted that the EU “is not seeking to realise a demilitarisation of international relations”, and that its members “condone security based on military force and have waged wars rather than insisting on the need for alternative approaches.”

The Geneva-based peace network, which has more than 300 member organisations and was itself the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950, accused the committee of having “redefined” the prize, which also recognises “persons and anti-poverty campaigns.”

The Nobel Prize was on October 12 awarded to a crisis-stricken EU for its “advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.”

The award will be presented to the EU in Oslo on December 10, which is the anniversary of Alfred Nobel’s death.

In Oslo, the secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, who voted against awarding the prize to the EU, has said the award should be “reconsidered” if the EU changes its policies.

In a statement, the committee said it “cannot yet see any improvement in EU policies, for example, in its approach to the Middle East, or in its treatment of refugees.”

Berevik complains of rights violations

OSLO – Mass killer Anders Behring Breivik, convicted of killing 77 people last year, has complained that prison conditions are violating his human rights, one of his lawyers said on November 7.

Tord Jordet said Breivik, 33, had been denied access to his father, who writes the letters he sends and receives are censored if poli-

“His freedom of speech is being regulated and he is afraid of being fired for free expression breaches the constitution and human rights.”

Jail term for maker of anti-Islam video

LOS ANGELES – The US judge in the case of the anti-Islam video blamed for sparking deadly protests in the Middle East has sentenced its creator to one year in prison and an additional one-year jail sentence in California, for making the video and for broadcasting it internationally.

Mark Basseley Youssef, 51, appeared in Los Angeles federal court today to face sentences of 18 and 18 months for convictions on two of the nine charges he faced in 2011. Two of the charges were dismissed in a plea deal.

Basseley Youssef, an American who converted to Islam in 2009, was convicted on June 27 of distributing an audio-visual work designed to incite others to commit an act of murder.

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He was also convicted of distributing an audio-visual work designed to promote the himself as a “person being killed” and “a victim of police torture.”

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Lea Hin (Singapore) - 77th years anniversary - established since 1935
New Item
KATHMANDU – A Nepalese migrant worker who spent 15 years in a Japanese jail for a murder he did not commit has been quashed and he is finally free.

Mainali was charged with murdering a woman and his life sentence was upheld after court decided not to grant him a retrial.

The case attracted lurid attention across Japan as DNA evidence proved he could not have committed the crime. He was forced to undergo 15 years of horrible and torturous time in jail, despite being innocent. The semen in the condom sample had also been dated to before well before his death.

Mainali was not Mainali’s. The semen in the condom sample was also dated to before well before her death. Looking nervous and flanked by family members as he read out a statement, Mainali answered questions in fluent Japanese. He said he had not yet decided whether to seek compensation.

The Supreme Court upheld his life sentences in 2002. Mainali, who has always maintained his innocence, was released and granted a retrial after fresh DNA evidence proved the original probe had overlooked the fact that semen found inside Watanabe had not Mainali’s. The semen in the condom sample was also dated to before well before her death.

Mainali said he felt “tears of joy swelling in my eyes” when he learned of his acquittal. He said he felt “tears of joy swelling in my eyes” when he learned of his acquittal. The semen in the condom sample had also been dated to before well before her death.
BEIJING – China has reshuffled its military top brass in a move analysts said last week was probably aimed at ensuring President Hu Jintao remains commander-in-chief of the military after a 10-yearly leadership change.

At a top Communist Party meeting on November 5, Hu oversaw the promotion of Generals Fan Changlong and Xu Qiliang as vice chairmen of the powerful 12-member Central Military Commission (CMC), state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Hu, the CMC chairman, was set to step down as head of the ruling party at a congress that started on November 8 this week and will retire as national president in March as part of the leadership change.

But Willy Lam, a China politics expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said: “Hu Jintao would want to serve another five years (as CMC chief), particularly given the fact that he has to watch over his political proteges... and protect his political legacy.”

“As long as he is the CMC chief, he will still be the power behind the throne.”

Lu Siqing, head of the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, which seeks to advance political reform in China, said both promoted generals have close ties to Hu.

Xu is the first air force general to become a vice chairman of the committee and his ascension also reflects the importance China places on quickly developing its air capability.

China’s 2.3-million-strong military forces – the world’s biggest – include nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles and a recently commissioned second-hand aircraft carrier bought from Ukraine.

The two incoming CMC vice chairmen will be tasked with pushing forward the modernisation of the military and overseeing the increasingly powerful arsenal.

Unlike most modern states the military is directly run by the ruling communist party, not by the government, an arrangement that stems from the revolution that brought the party to power in 1949.

The late revolutionary leader Mao Zedong – who said that “power comes from the barrel of the gun” – used the People’s Liberation Army not only to advance revolution, but also to protect the party’s political and secretive political process, only succeeded him as CMC chairman in 2004.

There was also a possibility that Hu would only retain the CMC chairmanship for an extra two years, Lam said, long enough to let him influence the naming of the future heir to Xi Jinping, his own successor as party head of China’s opaque and secretive political process, and protect his political legacy.

Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, and seek to place other key allies in top posts at the 19th Party Congress in 2017, Lam added.

Xi was effectively chosen as China’s next core leader in 2007 in a selection process heavily influenced by Jiang, who had already stepped down.

In a statement, Lu said: “Hu Jintao will seek to continue on as chairman of the Central Military Commission for another five years until 2017. “This is due to worries over Xi Jinping among a lot of people in the higher levels of the military.”

Xi was named a CMC vice chairman in 2010 in a rocky approval process that reportedly took more than a year to complete.

“If Hu Jintao retains his seat for another year or so, this certainly maintains the previous political practice,” Kenneth Jarrett, a China-based director for the APCO Worldwide consultancy, told reporters.

“ But I would say it’s not good for China in the sense that you have a divided leadership, where you have Hu Jintao who will have the allegiance of the military at the very top even though he has given up all of his other positions.” – AFP
SEUL - South Korea’s conservative presidential frontrunner appeared likely last week to maintain her lead, and on November 7 dismissed the decision of her two left-wing competitors to call a three-way televised debate. The next such meeting, set for November 14, is expected to inflame rich and cutthroat campaigns as a political “circus” that has nothing to do with the people’s lives.” Yonhap news agency quoted Park as telling a meeting of her policy advisers.

"How can we put people’s lives in the hands of those who are obsessed with taking power through publicity stunts rather than developing policies?” she said at a separate meeting with supporters.

Although Moon and Ahn agreed to merge their campaigns, they have yet to decide which one will drop out of the race in favour of the other. They promised to announce a decision before November 25 – the final deadline for candidate registration before the December 19 election.

Lee Nak-Yon, a lawmaker who co-chairs Moon’s election camp, said Park’s comments reflected the concern within her ruling New Frontier Party over the opposition merger. “The NFP is overreacting...out of a sense of crisis,” Lee said.

Both Moon and Ahn had come under intense pressure to merge or face the risk of losing their presidential aspirations in the presidential election next year. Ahn has virtually no political experience but is enormously popular with young liberal voters, who see him as untainted by corruption or political commercial abuse of power. – AFP

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Laos to build Mekong dam

VIETNAM – Laos said last week it was ready to start work on a controversial multi-billion dollar dam after adapting the design to calm environmental concerns from neighbouring nations.

“After two years of protracted talks, the government will have a ground breaking ceremony on November 7 and will then start working on the dam itself in the Mekong river this week,” deputy energy minister Viraphonh Viravong told AFP on November 5.

The US$3.8 billion hydroelectric project at Xayaburi, led by Thai group CH Karnchang, has sharply divided four Mekong nations – Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand – which are concerned the dam could store fish in the river for transportation, stalling for about 18 months over concerns relating to the environmental impact.

Building work on the main project has been stalled for about 18 months over concerns about its environmental impact. Viraphonh said some aspects of the dam’s design had been changed to “reassure neighbouring countries”, but he insisted that objections would not derail plans to finish the project by the end of 2019.

The mooted 1260 megawatt dam has become one of the potential risks of hydropower projects in the region.

Thailand has agreed to buy most of the electricity generated by the project, but Cambodia and Vietnam fear the dam could decimate their fishing and farming industries.

Environmentalists say the dam would be disastrous for the 60 million people in the Mekong basin who depend on the river for transport, food and economy.

They fear Mekong fish species will become endangered as vital nutrients are trapped and dozens of species are prevented from swimming upstream to mating grounds.

In July, Viraphonh told the state-run Vientiane Times that it would be “one of the most transparent and modern dams in the world”, but promised that construction would not go ahead until fears from neighbouring countries had been assuaged.

He said changes to the project would address the two major issues – fish migration and sediment flow – by including a passage to allow 88 percent of fish to travel along the river and a “flushing system” to prevent sediment build-up.

Campaign group International Rivers accused the Laos government of pressing ahead with the project without conducting sufficient environmental studies.

“This latest announcement shows that Laos never intended to genuinely cooperate with neighbouring countries,” the group said on November 5. “The Xayaburi project was never really delayed and always continued on schedule.”

Fifty Thai villagers representing communities along the Mekong river submitted a lawsuit to a court in Bangkok in August seeking to prevent their country buying power from the hydroproject.

Thailand’s Administrative Court has yet rule on the suit, which is against the state-run Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, the energy ministry and the Thai cabinet. – AFP

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Sri Lanka’s top judge denies allegations

COLOMBO - Sri Lanka’s Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake has dismissed allegations brought against her on November 8 denied financial wrongdoing alleged in an impeachment motion filed in parliament two days ago were false and insisted there was no financial impropriety in her appointment.

“Our client totally denies the other allegations and can easily refute them,” said the law firm Neelakandan and Neelakandan in letters sent to media outlets in Colombo.

Lawmakers from President Mahinda Rajapakse’s party had said they wanted Bandaranayake, 54, to step aside and the conclusion of an impeachment hearing, which could take months, but the chief justice made it clear she would not bow out.

“He will, as always, continue to duly and properly discharge her duties without fear or favour (and) she will do so, independently and impartially at all times,” he said in a two-page letter.

The drive to impeach the judge followed a decision last month by the Supreme Court to effectively snapper a bill giving more powers to the economic development minister, who is the president’s younger brother, Basil.

“She has plunged the entire Supreme Court and specially the office of the Chief Justice into disrepute,” said the motion, printed in the parliamentary agenda under SL117 ruling party lawmakers.

The United States voiced concern earlier this month about the move to impeach Bandaranayake, who is Sri Lanka’s first female chief justice, and called on the government to protect the independence of the judiciary.

The impeachment motion is the latest sign of efforts by Rajapakse to tighten his grip on power after crushing the Tamil Tiger separatist rebels in 2009 at the end of a decades-long war. – AFP

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Panetta visits region again

WASHINGTON – US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta will visit Australia, Thailand and Cambodia this week as part of a five-nation trip to build ties to the Asia-Pacific, officials say.

In his fourth trip to the region since June, Panetta will travel first to Thailand by a passenger jet, an opportunity to further ad- vance the strategy of rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific,” said Pen- netta. He will then travel to Australia on November 11, before making a first visit to Thailand by a Pen- tagon chief since 2008, and then Cambodia, where he will visit for a meeting with his ASEAN counterparts.

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Waves face financial probe, says paper

HONG KONG – China’s ruling Communist Party may consider launching a formal investigation into the alleged wealth and activities of his family at his own request, a report said on November 8.

Citing sources, Hong Kong’s South China Morning Post said Wen had written to the Politburo Standing Committee, the country’s highest policy-making body, the charges in a letter.

“Or his member – formally asking for the probe,” the paper said.

- AFP

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Self-immolation protests escalate

DHARMASHALA, India – Six Tibetans set them- selves on fire in China last week in an escalating wave of protests by exiles, leaders said on November 8.

There were two self-im- maluions in accordance with the law, resulting in the death of a woman, 23, the India-based exile government said, adding that four people self-im- maluated the previous day, including three teenagers, while the one who later died.

Self-immolations to pro- test the Chinese government have occurred regularly since March 2011.

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Inquiry to probe cover-up claims

SYDNEY – The Australian state of New South Wales has announced a special inquiry to look into deaths in custody at the Catholic ChurchCovered itself up for paedophile priests, the state’s premier said on Friday.

The inquiry will examine the allegations made by a former police investigator who out- lined a cover-up of sexual abuse in the recently published in the Newcastle Herald newspaper. – AFP
Cartoonists show the ‘cancer inside’

By Nuam Bawi

A CONTEST for cartoons satirising political and social issues was held at the National Theatre in Yangon on November 4, in conjunction with festivities marking the 75th anniversary of the Nagan Book Club.

The contest attracted 49 competitors, each of whom submitted two cartoons for consideration. The winners were chosen according to votes cast by those who attended the book club celebration.

The first prize of K100,000 went to Thiha (Sakhan Thit), while three second place prizes (K50,000) were handed out, to Thiha (Sakhan Thit), Naw Mee Kyang and Maung Shwe Win. Thar Oo was awarded a K30,000 consolation prize.

Thiha (Sakhan Thit) told The Myanmar Times that his winning cartoon was aimed at “showing the decline of the winning cartoon was aimed at showing the decline of the justic pillar in Myanmar”.

“I drew a cartoon about the lawyers in our country. It’s the job of lawyers to turn big cases into smaller cases, and to make smaller cases disappear. One of the lawyers says in my sketch that if all the cases disappeared, they wouldn’t have anything to do,” he explained.

One of the event’s organisers, U Khin Hlaing (Zawtika), said satirical cartoons were a suitable way to illustrate public sentiments and feelings.

“Many people don’t have time to read a long article, but a cartoonist can clearly convey an idea with one sketch, which is why I chose to hold this contest as part of the book club celebration,” he said.

U Khin Hlaing (Zawtika) also used the occasion of the anniversary to announce the re-launch of the Nagan Book Club, which had been defunct since it closed in 1941. During its four-year existence, the club published 70 books, mostly on politics.

In a lecture delivered at the ceremony, Aw Pe Kye said cartoons have been published in Myanmar since U Ba Ka Lay started in 1915.

“Our country has just passed through a 50-year era of anarchy, so we are far behind in every sector, including cartoons. But we...”

Art gallery opens door to raise funds for the elderly

By Pinky

A NEW art gallery opened at Hninzimyaing Home for the Aged in Yangon on November 3, with the aim of raising funds to help care for the facility’s 200 elderly residents.

U Kyine Myint, a member of the Hninzimyaing management committee, told The Myanmar Times that proceeds from sales of artwork at Hninzimyaing Art Gallery will go toward running the home and caring for residents.

“We are now exhibiting about 70 paintings that are the property of the home. They were all donated by the artists,” he said.

He said that in the future, the gallery space would be available for artists to rent for holding exhibitions. In those cases, 20 percent of the proceeds from art sales would go to the home.

“In this way artists can show their paintings and donate to a good cause at the same time. This benefits everyone, including the elderly residents at the home, the artists and the art buyers,” U Kyine Myint said.

Meanwhile, the Hninzimyaing Home for the Aged will hold its 51st annual fundraising sale on December 1, featuring vendors selling food and merchandise, as well as games. The entrance fee will be K200 a person.

The shops will open at 3pm, and the opening ceremony, led by singer Daw Yee Win, will occur at 5pm. An a nyin by the Gita Myin Hoe (Mount Meru Music) troupe will start at 7pm.

Daw Myint Myint San, the home’s deputy administrative officer, said the annual event always attracts a lot of companies, organisations and schools interested in opening vending booths.

“We ask for a donation of at least K50,000 for renting one shop, but most vendors actually donate more than that,” she said.

“All the money goes toward caring for our residents, including supporting their living costs, medical care and funding for trips. For times a year we take the residents on trips around Yangon and also outside the city.”

Hninzimyaing Art Gallery is located at 21 Kaba Aye Pagoda Road in Bahan township. Opening hours are 9am to 5pm daily.

Youth art comp in December

By Lwin Mar Htun

THE Youth Art Award Competition 2012 will be held in December under the theme “Moving on up Hand in Hand with Myanmar”, and organisers are calling for submissions by artists aged 14 to 20.

The competition, which has been held since 2008, is organised by Parkroyal Hotel, supported by RV Centre International and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) in Singapore. Faculty from the academy will serve as judges for the awards.

“The aim of this competition is to improve the painting skills, artistic abilities and thinking skills of young artists,” Mr Ram Karani, general manager of Parkroyal Hotel, said at a press conference last month.

“Competition must be Myanmar nationals living in Myanmar, and may submit one painting on 15x24 or 18x24 inch paper or canvas, along with their name, father’s name, date of birth, NRC number, address, phone number and email address. The submission deadline is November 23.

The first prize winner will get US$800 and a set of oil paints valued at $200. The prize for second will be $500 and acrylic paints worth $80, while third will earn $300 plus $80 in acrylic paints. The paintings will be judged on December 1, and the awards ceremony will be held on December 29. The artwork will be exhibited at Parkroyal Hotel’s Young Corner.”

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Guests look at satirical cartoons on display at the National Theatre in Yangon on November 4. Pic: Thiri
PARIS — A Paris-based trickster has emerged from a creative condominium foraging in the art market with forged paintings of India’s most famous modern artist and controversial modernist, M. F. Husain, police said Thursday.

The 32-year-old man, identified as Sofiane B, was arrested on Wednesday following a complaint from a city art dealer. He was charged with a number of offences and placed under judicial supervision on a hefty bail after a 48-hour detention.

Based in the working-class northern quarter of Saint-Ouen, the place that famous flea market is located, Sofiane B took advantage of Husain’s reputation to sign to him to sign paintings done by others, police said.

He then attempted to sell them in Britain and France and succeeded in doubling two of the fake paintings to a Paris art dealer for more than 100,000 euros (US$130,000) in 2010.

“Husain is a case of fraud and counterfeiting,” said a source close to the police.

Magboul Fida Husain, dubbed the “Indian Picassos,” was a Polish-Hindu artist whose career took off after Indian independence in 1947.

He was forced to flee his country in 2006 after death threats from Hindu extremists and a criminal complaint was filed against him last year at the age of 95.

Hindu ultra-conservatives, including the regional Shiv Sena party in Husain’s home state of Maharashtra — whose capital is Mumbai — denounced his works as pornographic, blasphemous and an affront to national values.

They based their narrative on alleged depictions of Hindu gods and goddesses but Husain, however failed to dampen the enthusiasm of overseas collectors.

His paintings, influenced by Hindu epic Mahabharata, fetched $1.6 million at Christie’s in London.

The Paris art dealer to whom Sofiane B had sold the first painting back to for his reproach when he contacted the London auction house Sotheby’s and told them they had purchased a forged artwork according to the Parisian newspaper.

The seller then asked the dealer to proceed to Dubai where Husain spent the last years of his life and had a studio, to authenticate the works.

He even gave the dealer 15 other watercolours purportedly done by Husain and they too turned out to be fakes.

Paris police suspect Sofiane B had been selling fake Husain’s works around the world at least since 2004.

Husain’s departure from India followed attacks on his home and galleries showing his work, death threats and the placing of an $11.5 million bounty on his head.

He said in 2008 he was homesick and longed to return to Mumbai, where he trained at the Sir J.J. School of Art, but feared the government of not being prepared to provide him with the protection he needed.

Husain, who once worked as a sculptor, was once thrown out of a Mumbai private members’ club for not wearing shoes, and then given Qatari citizenship in 2010, admitting that his advancing years made it impossible to fight his detractors.

Indian ministers had tried unsuccessfully to tempt him home.

The artist always said that nudity symbolised purity, insisting that naked goddesses were a long-established part of the country’s heritage dating back to antiquity.

Many saw him as a victim of the fierce communication that gripped India in the 1990s and early 2000s, and of the socially conservative country’s tough censorship laws. — AFP

Parisians charged with selling fake ‘Indian Picassos’

By Charles Sicurani

AN art exhibition entitled “Bring the Gangang Land Back to Life” art exhibition of paintings from Judson Centre on Pyay Road from November 5 to 9.

It featured 105 paintings by 65 artists, including several former prisoners, with subject matter ranging from important landmarks on the university campus, such as the Convent Hall and Judaun Church.

“Yangon University faded into insignificance after 1988,” he said, adding that the committee plans to re-establish the Student Union, which was destroyed in 1962. Now the time has come to take action, and we founded a committee in June to work towards reconstructing the building at its previous site, and restorating the campus to the way it looked before 1988,” he said.

About half the paintings at last week’s exhibition were by members of the Gangaw Ywar artist group, founded in 1979 by 20 artists who had been members of the Yangon University Arts Association. The association had been established on the campus in 1951.

If events had good opportunities to study art, drama and singing at the Arts Association on campus, compared with today, there don’t have such associations anymore,” said U San Minn, a member of the Gangaw Ywar artist group, who arrived at Yangon University in 1989 to study botany.

He said the beauty of the campus last inspired him to paint important features of the university, and a few of those original artworks were on display at the exhibition.

It was so much fun studying art on the campus. We spent a great deal of time drawing. The university was run by student leaders as students pursued their interests on campus, such as music, drama and studying,” he said.

Meanwhile, the International Multimedia Art Festival at the French Institute will take place from November 23 to 25, from 10am to 6pm daily.

The event, by the French Institute of Southeast Asia and local artists, will feature more than 80 video, installation and performance artists from around the world, including Myanmar.

“In our country, only a few artists can come and display their art,” said artist organiser Ko Aye A. “I have invited many artists from abroad so that we can learn from them and exchange ideas.”

There will be daily presentations from 10am to 12pm, and from 1:30pm to 4:30pm to 6:30pm and performance art shows from 6pm to 9pm.

The French Institute is located at 340 Pyay Road.

No entry at both festivals are free of charge.

More page 39

Career Opportunity

D&Y group is one of the biggest textile corporations in China, which is going to establish factory in Yangon, therefore we offer one position of Executive Assistant in Yangon.

Major responsibility:
- Assist MD in day-to-day administrative work
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Qualifications and experiences:
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- University graduated, can drive.
- Fluent in Chinese, good computer skills.
- 3 years or more experience in related fields.

Please send personal resume with recent photo, wage expectation and scanned copy of diploma to hr.dynamy@gmail.com.

Note: Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for further review.

Yangon festivals survey multimedia art

By Byon Pann Pwint

The ‘Bring the Gangang Land Back to Life’ art exhibition of paintings from Judson Centre on Pyay Road from November 5 to 9. Pic: Nyein Maung

The ‘Bring the Gangang Land Back to Life’ art exhibition of paintings from Judson Centre on Pyay Road from November 5 to 9.

The exhibit was a former Bollywood poster artist and former politician Kr San Jaw Htwe said many people think that rebuilding the Student Union was important. “We have done a lot of work, but the public needs to know some information for our safety as well. But there is still no transparency, and we still can’t get correct information about our own country.”

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With ‘Skyfall’, Sam Mendes reinvigorates the James Bond series with a sleek, crisp, classy installment exhibiting just the right proportion of respect for legacy and embrace of novelty. Pic: Francois Duhamel

Epic novel set in Corsica wins France’s top literary prize

PARIS – France’s top literary prize, the Goncourt, last week went to Jerome Ferrari for a Corsican epic about dashing hopes set in a village bar on the troubled Mediterranean island.

Le Sermon sur la Chute de Rome (The Sermon on the Fall of Rome) tells of a young man who packs in his plumbing job to become a bar on the island with an old friend, hoping to turn it into a haven of peace and friendship.

But things take a radically different turn as drink, sex, corruption – and the violence for which Corsica has become known – cast their shadow over the young romantic’s plans.

“Did you know that Barack Obama was rejected today? Don’t you think we should put things in perspective?”

The novelists joked with reporters pressing him for a reaction to receiving the century-old prize.

Born into a Corsican family settled on the mainland, Ferrari returned as an adult to teach high school philosophy in the Corsican capital Ajaccio. He now teaches in Abu Dhabi.

His Goncourt win comes headlines over a jump in violence, with 38 murders and 117 attempted murders since the start of 2011, for a population of just over 300,000 – the highest homicide rate in Europe.

The Goncourt jury called the book a “fine parable on contemporary hopelessness, but with a hopeful message: The end of a world doesn’t have to spell the end of the world.”

It’s title refers to a sermon delivered by the medieval philosopher Augustine following the 410 sack of Rome, from which Ferrari quotes the lines: “The world is like a man, it is born, it grows and it dies.”

Ferrari said he wanted to show how “the same mechanism can apply to empires, to a village bar or the hearts of men”.

“Corsica is my natural literary milieu,” he said in a recent interview, explaining how he fell in with pro-independence activism as a 20-year-old, writing at the time for a nationalist newspaper.

There’s good news for Corsica – it gives another image than one of violence,” said the newspaper chief official on the island, Michel Barrat.

By Ann Hornaday

ONE of the marks of a good director is the take and judgment with which he deploys the most cherished tropes of the franchise he’s in charge of extending. With Skyfall, Sam Mendes proves to be just that adept, reinvigorating the James Bond series with a sleek, crisp, classy installment exhibiting just the right proportion of respect for legacy and embrace of novelty.

From the first smoky notes of a theme song sung by Adele, it’s clear for legacy and embrace of novelty. Particularly good here are Craig and Dench (as always), but also Ralph Fiennes, Javier Bardem, the enigmatic Naomie Harris as one of Bond’s comeliest MI6 colleagues and Ben Whishaw (currently on view in several roles in Cloud Atlas) as Q, who, when he gives Bond a standard-issue gun and radio, delivers one of several self-referential jokes. “You were expecting an exploding pen?” he quips. “We don’t really go in for that anymore.”

Like everything else in Skyfall, Whishaw’s new version of Q is both refreshing and comforting, an ineffable mix that makes this piece of well-executed popcorn fluff satisfying on every level. Somehow, Mendes and his writers (Neal Purvis, Robert Wade and John Logan) have managed to make a movie that is your father’s Bond, but your teenage kids’, too, as he tries to bid performances that are the best.

As one of Skyfall’s most benevolent characters wisely opines, just before he tries his hand at making one known to one or two beloved characters while making way for one or two new ones (or at least new old ones). As both an advance and a throwback, Skyfall may be the dearest film of all Bond’s and artisinal values tend to endure.

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**Tea makers customise flavour to fit tastes of their patrons**

By Nadia Arumugam

If you’ve ever bitten into a raw habanero, eaten a dish laced with Scotch Bonnets, or skinned a basket of roasted New Mexico green chillies, you’re familiar with the heat that can result from trying to cool itself down — the sensation of warmth that can linger on your tongue.

When chillis make you feel hot, the body reacts to cool itself down — hence the sweat that often accompanies a spicy meal. Redness on your hands and face is another sign of your body attempting to cool off. Capsaicin — the chemical that gives the skin dilate and the flow of blood increases, causing a burning sensation in the intestine, pain receptors lining the intestine, pain receptors lining the stomach, and acid reflux in the oesophagus.

When capsaicin reaches the small intestine, pain receptors lining the intestinal walls can trigger the release of the neurotransmitter that stimulates strong rhythmic contractions in the gut — which manifest themselves as painful cramps. This is another defence mechanism to clear out the “heat-causing” contents in the intestine by causing you to expel it as quickly towards the colon. Glans itself also secretes more fluid, which can sometimes lead to the most unpleasant outcome of chilli consumption.

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**Why do chillies make noses run?**

By Michelle Thane

The style of the tea maker also influences the flavour. “The brewers have different brewing techniques — the amounts of condensed or evaporated milk vary from one cup to another, for example,” Ma Niye Aye Tun, 22, said.

Khi A Tun has been brewing tea at Shwe Padauk yet on Bo Ayar Kay road in Kyauktada township for eight months. He learned to brew tea by steeping the leaves in hot water and “pulling” the resulting liquid, known as tea, a few times, using two cups until the tea’s colour and smell has disappeared.

After adding spoonfuls of condensed or evaporated milk to the waiting tea cup, the tea deepens the ah Ayar yoy and boiling hot water into the cup, and tea is made. Both water and milk is added to some teashops, such as ah pawt stall in the market, to tone down the biting flavour of the ah Ayar yoy.

But where the process starts to get funny, because these variations on the simple cup of tea.

A tea maker pours condensed milk into cups at a teashop in Yangon. Pic: Pong Msei

**The rich alchemy of oak and wine**

By Nadia Arumugam

If you’ve ever bitten into a raw habanero, eaten a dish laced with Scotch Bonnets, or skinned a basket of roasted New Mexico green chillies, you’re familiar with the heat that can result from trying to cool itself down — the sensation of warmth that can linger on your tongue.

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If you’ve ever bitten into a raw habanero, eaten a dish laced with Scotch Bonnets, or skinned a basket of roasted New Mexico green chillies, you’re familiar with the heat that can result from trying to cool itself down — the sensation of warmth that can linger on your tongue.

When chillis make you feel hot, the body reacts to cool itself down — hence the sweat that often accompanies a spicy meal. Redness on your hands and face is another sign of your body attempting to cool off. Capsaicin — the chemical that gives the skinned tomatoes, the wine tannins, and the wine’s acidity.

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**Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life’s true taste**

**A bit of N’awlins in your kitchen**

**THIS dirty rice recipe is a signature dish from the city of New Orleans, and is cooked throughout the southern United States. The dish was originally cooked with chicken liver, and the name “dirty” came from the dark-coloured look of the chicken liver.**

**Some chefs add chopped chicken giblets, sausage, and ground meat to the rice, but I prefer this vegetarian version, which uses red kidney beans. I really love the idea of using beans and not too much meat in the rice, but I’ve included a recipe for pan fried turmeric and lemon chicken for those who can’t do without it.**

**Red kidney beans can be difficult to find in Yangon, so when you’re available, use yellow beans as a substitute. I have prepared this recipe using pae’ lun beans, which are used in steamed sticky rice. They’re a very good match here. I also use soy sauce to add a bit of darkness as well as some flavor.**

**The result is a delicious dish that I can serve to my entire family, including my little toddler.**

**NEW ORLEANS DIRTY RICE**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups of rice
- 2 cups of reduced-salt chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 teaspoons of ground cumin
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 2 onions (sliced in rings)
- 1 cup of cooked pae’ lun beans
- 3 tablespoons of chopped coriander, plus a handful for garnish
- 15-10 pieces of okra
- ½ teaspoon of paprika
- ⅓ tablespoons of soy sauce

**PREPARATION**

1. Soak the pae’ lun beans in water for at least one hour, then cook in boiling water (⅓ cup of uncooked beans will yield 1 cup of cooked beans).
2. Wash the rice and cook in stock with 1 cup of water. After the rice is cooked, place it on a tray and allow it to cool.
3. Blanch the okra in boiling water for 2-3 minutes, until it just becomes tender. Refresh in cool water and drain well. Cut the okra diagonally into 2 cm slices.
4. In a large wok, heat the oil and fry the onions. When they become translucent, add the okra and fry for 2 minutes. Then turn the heat down to medium, add the cumin seeds and paprika, and fry for 1 more minute. Add the pae’ lun beans into the wok and mix well.
5. Add coriander, cooked rice and soy sauce to the mixture and fry until the rice and beans are thoroughly heated. Salt and pepper for seasoning.
6. Garnish with coriander leaves on the top and serve with chili sauce.

For those who want some meat with their rice, pan fry turmeric and lemon chicken makes a fine accompaniment.

**Pan fried turmeric and lemon chicken**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 500 g of chicken breast (skinless and boneless)
- ⅓ tablespoon of turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon of ground coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon of lemon zest
- 2 onions (finely chopped)
- 2 cloves of garlic (sliced)
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon of salt

**PREPARATION**

1. Cut the chicken breast into 3-4 cm cubes and marinate with turmeric powder, ground coriander seeds, and lemon zest. Keep in the fridge for half an hour.
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan and sauté the onions. When they become translucent, add garlic and fry for 3 more minutes. Add the marinated chicken into the pan and seal all sides well.
3. Add ⅓ cup of water (of 250 ml), cover the pan and cook the chicken until tender. Then remove the lid and fry the chicken until the gravy is sizzling. Serve with lemon wedges.

**FOOD REVIEW**

**Say ‘hello’ to great sushi**

**HELLO Maki and Sushi opened its second location on Inya Road six months ago in what is quickly becoming a trendy, albeit still short and traffic snarled, stretch in Yangon. Along with Hello Maki and Sushi there is a gourmet ice cream shop and renovated colonial hotel, there is no overpriced cupcake boutique, as of yet.**

**Hello Maki and Sushi offers a large menu that includes the expected: sushi and sashimi, as well as an extensive range of tempura, noedles and grilled items.**

**I started with the sashimi platter, a love of the sashimi, and sashimi, as well as an extensive range of tempura, noedles and grilled items.**

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**HELLO Maki and Sushi**

**135 Inya Road, Bahan township, Yangon; Tel 09-4924-9297. Junction Centre Mawtin, Yangon; Tel 218155, ext 1411**

| Food: | 8 |
| Drink: | 9 |
| Atmosphere: | 9 |
| Service: | 10 |
| X Factor: | 8 |
| Value for Money: | 8 |

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**FOOD & DRINK**

**November 12 - 18, 2012**

**Main Tips**

You can add more green leaves and green pepper into the rice. But blanch the green leaves first.

Use vegetable stock instead of chicken stock for the vegetarian version.

**Red Wine**

**Michel Picard Saint-Amour 2010**

A tip of this ruby-red French wine will set off a refreshing assault on your taste buds, as if Carmen Miranda’s fruit bat had exploded in your mouth.

**White Wine**

**Cantina di Soave Cantis Chardonnay 2011**

This inexpensive Italian white leaves a strong, lingering taste of rancid apples. Pay a little more money and purchase a wine with a smoother, less overbearing taste.

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IT was another fine week of whooping it up Yangon-style for Socialite, starting with the über-fantastic KSS Café Lucky Draw program on October 29. Not everyone possesses the capacity to recover from the knock-down, drag-out excitement of a lucky draw within 24 hours, but Socialite does! She was back at it the very next day, starting with the opening ceremony of the Garden Home Gallery at the New Bogyoke Museum, followed by the Mrs Ocean Beauty Pageant Final Competition at East Point. She ended the day by attending a donation ceremony by Best One Mobile at Shwedagon Pagoda. Socialite, being scared silly of ghosts, ghouls and goblins, did not dare go out on Halloween night, but on November 3 she rushed over to the new product launch for HMA Company Ltd, as well as the new shop opening for Beauty Mart. The next day she popped in at the 8th Anniversary of Sein Gay Har Supermarket and the silver jubilee of the Nagani Book Club at the National Theatre. Socialite ended her week by attending Taw Win Center’s Monsoon Lucky Draw Program. Now, time for some R&R!
NZ mines touri

By Neil Sands

WELLINGTON – From a giant, bug-eyed Gollum character looming over passengers at Wellington Airport to promotional banners covering the facades of entire office blocks, the upcoming The Hobbit movie is impossible to ignore in New Zealand.

Tourism chiefs, hoping to recreate the surge in visitors inspired by the original The Lord of the Rings trilogy, are launching a marketing campaign around director Peter Jackson’s latest Middle Earth three-parter.

The first trilogy, The Hobbit movies use New Zealand’s mountaneous scenery as a backdrop, amounting to what some Kiwi insiders describe as a nine-hour-long advertisement for the country’s rugged charms.

Tourism New Zealand creative Kevin Bowler does not go that far, but says the films offer the country invaluable global exposure that can be converted into tourist dollars.

“We aim to show potential travellers that the fantasy of Middle Earth is in fact the reality of New Zealand,” Bowler said.

But behind the hype, official figures show the first of the new movies, The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, was not enough for an industry that has struggled for momentum almost a decade on from the original Middle Earth trilogy.

New Zealand’s international visitor arrivals jumped from 1.5 million to 2.4 million between 2000 and 2005, during the height of the Lord of the Rings but have since plateaued at about 2.2 million for the past four years.

A recent Tourism Industry Association report expressed concerns New Zealand had “lost its edge” and was no longer regarded as a must-see destination.

New Zealand is perceived to have fallen off the global radar as a desirable destination to some extent,” the report found. “In part, as a result of increasing competition from other destinations, and in part because of economic conditions (in tourist) generating countries.

The earthquakes that devastated Christchurch in 2011, resulting in 185 deaths, and a local currency pushing record highs have also not helped matters.

Tourism operator David Gatward-Ferguson said that when the first Rings film was released in 2001, encourage visitors to stay longer in the city. For more information and details on advertising in Discover Mandalay, contact Money at the MMC Office by email mmctourism@mgm.com or fax (+95-1-325-473).}

The Myanmar Marketing Committee (MMC), the marketing arm of Myanmar Tourism Board, works to promote Myanmar as a destination to develop the Myanmar tourism industry. For more information and guidance on advertising in Discover Mandalay, please visit our website at www.myanmar-tourism.com or contact the MMC Office by email mmctourism@mgm.com or fax (+95-1-325-473).
the industry was surprised by the influx of visitors who jumped to places featured in the movie. “We were initially caught out, yes, and glared up over the next year or two to meet demand,” he said, recalling a time when the currency was at a 25-year low and international travel was buoyed by a booming global economy.

Gatward-Ferguson’s Nomad Expeditions soon revamped its eco-adventure tours along a Middle Earth theme, taking tourists speaking elvish and wearing Tolkien costumes to set locations in the South Island. “With the entire tourism industry abuzz over potential spin-off benefits from Jackson’s latest project, there is little chance operators will be wrong-footed when the first Hobbit film premieres on November 28.”

Tourism New Zealand has changed its “100 Percent Pure” global branding to “100 Percent Middle Earth” and Wellington has dubbed itself “The Middle of Earth” for the premiere, contributing NZ$1.1 million (US$855,000) to the event.

Middle Earth coins have been minted, Hobbit stamps issued and Air New Zealand is running an in-flight safety video full of orcs, elves and wizards.

The national government is so convinced of the benefits to the tourism and movie industries that when a union dispute threatened to send filming offshore in 2010, it amended the country’s industrial laws to ensure it stayed.

Glen Croy, a specialist in film-driven tourism at Australia’s Monash University, said research showed any jump in visitor numbers would not be driven by hardcore Tolkien fans sporting prosthetic Hobbit feet and pointy Gandalf hats.

He said the film’s value lay in putting New Zealand on the agenda as a destination for ordinary travellers considering a long-haul holiday, adding that the country had become synonymous with Middle Earth and each movie release reinforced the perception.

“People still talk about Lord of the Rings, people still remember the films. You choose to watch a film, which you don’t do with an advertisement, and that makes people more receptive.”

He said the incidental benefits from filming in New Zealand – such as Orlando Bloom花草ing about Kiwi ski-fields or Stephen Fry waxing lyrical on Twitter about Wellington’s coffee – also drew people in.

“From New Zealand is not specifying how much of a lift it expects from The Hobbit but Gatward-Ferguson said the high local dollar and tough economic times meant it was unlikely to match The Lord of the Rings.

“It’ll be positive but it’ll be muted,” he said. “There’s a lot of naysayers out there and we’re not going to get another wall of visitors, but New Zealand is small enough that we only need to win over a small proportion of the world market to make a big difference.”

The Kiwi dollar has almost doubled against the greenback since the first movie, currently around 83 US cents and tipped to threaten a record high of 88-89 US cents last year.

The doubters have not prevented Gatward-Ferguson from expanding his fleet of off-road expedition vehicles by five and buying Hobbit-themed licence plates to adorn them, including “Bilbo”, “Smaug” and “Thorin”, all characters in the movies.

“We’ve come to our own conclusions, made our assessment and now we’ve just got to wait and see if we were right,” he said. – AFP
Saudia rapper limited by “fear and respect”

By Emma Charlton

PARIS — Making hip-hop in Saudi Arabia is a bit of a tightrope act, says Qasi Kheder, self-styled ambassador for the genre who has built a niche following for his sex-and-violence-free brand of rap music.

“Saudi Arabia is a very conservative country — you have to consider the respect. I do a little bit of both,” he said with a laugh.

Qasi cut his teeth as a member of Saudi Arabia’s tiny hip-hop scene, becoming the first Saudi to make a rap record. He uses earning him the status of “outcast, a black sheep, still a day I feel like, they are out to get me.”

So in 1996, he left to study in the United States, making a name as a DJ and radio personality.

Ten years on he returned to his home country, speaking of how he runs his own studio in Jeddah — though with music still viewed as sin by the country’s Islamic authorities, it is a “miracle” to be able to perform in public.

“To publish the majority if not all the songs are talking about love — habibi this, habibi that,” he said smiling. “Our TV, you’re going to express how you feel,” he says. “Our number one subject, for all Arabs, is Salaam. Peace. Because it’s a non-ending battle, and we are going to continue singing about peace because this is the only way we can smell it.”

It’s the theme of his new album, titled The Inevitable Change is an exploit of his personal experience and outlook on the Arab World United” warns that “most of our wounds are from ourselves.”

But this is no political manifesto: Any allusions to demands for greater democracy are veiled, or generic, such as: “My Arabic rappers, is Salaam. Peace. Because it’s a non-ending battle, and we are going to continue singing about peace because this is the only way we can smell it.”

“In the United States, making a name as a DJ and radio personality.”

“Arabs Got Talent was the breakthrough of my life,” he said. “And it was a chance to introduce the world to the Saudi Arabia, because it does exist in the region, but strongly.”

But Qasi is not content to be a hip-hop artist. Since the MyanMar Times

November 12 - 18, 2012

Events Flash

The Myanmar Book Centre is hosting an exhibition of paintings at its branches in Yangon (55 Baho Road, at the corner of Alarion Road and Mandalay Road (Room 100, Third Floor, Yadanabon Diamond Plaza) from November 10 to 14, 9am to 6pm daily.

The British Council will hold a charity art fair for people living with HIV, at Kandawgyi Park on December 1 from 2pm to 9pm daily. The event, organized by Salsam, will feature an auction and performances by noted artists.

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every Wednesday and Friday at 7pm.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113, Thamain Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameaste@gmail.com

For more details:

www.myanmartimes.com

By Astrologer Aung Myin Kyaw

Your fast actions and quick decisions could get you passing you by according to its own rules, so you could lost you some political points. In love, you should take care of your personal life. Try not to overplay your hand, pointless at times but it could help earn you the respect of your colleagues. Pay greater attention to social engagements and social confusion, and you will get a lucky chance. Fighting over principles might seem ridiculous and a waste of time, but it could help you secure the loyalty of your colleagues.

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Libra

(April 23 - Sept 22)

A love affair will be a useful means for you to channels your creative energies but don’t let your heart take control of your head. Now is not the time to talk to people about whatever you feel yourself feel. Focus on the problems heading your way and not on mistakes made in the past.

Emotive and sensual love means you might feel yourself close to a love that is not sustainable, and your dream of love will be with you. Create opportunities to heal your heart even at the cost of a little pain. There is no virtue in loneliness, love is an emotional response under the rules of understanding.

Aries

(March 21 - April 19)

Work on your powers of observation — the world is passing you by according to its own rules, so you should take notice of your surroundings at all times. Your fast actions and quick decisions could get you into trouble; slow down and think about things more carefully. Pull yourself of the embarrament of the past and prove your good nature in friendship and society.

Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

Some close friends might leave your side without saying goodbye. Leading by example is the best means of gaining the respect of others. Now is a good time to help the people up and don’t try to think whether they can see the future. Don’t give up on what you think is right just to protect your life. Your love life for the sake of love will change nothing.

Gemini

(May 21 - June 21)

Blame nothing on yourself, but be courageous in your personal life. Try not to overlook your hand, pointless at times but it could help earn you the respect of your colleagues. Pay greater attention to social engagements and social confusion, and you will get a lucky chance. Fighting over principles might seem ridiculous and a waste of time, but it could help you secure the loyalty of your colleagues.

Scorpio

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Invest some courage in your love life, and take time to think deeply before assuming greater responsibilities. Though of love and win all touch you a little mad. Criticize yourself but don’t get too close, because you are working on an easy ride, but this could change without warning.

Sagittarius

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Not everyone will be aware of your domestic issues, you might have to find your way of getting involved in your private life. Don’t look at the top of your personal life. Try not to be any, but a new manner to help you with your new opportunities, but a sharp manner to help your personal life. Don’t look at the top of your personal life. Try not to be any, but a new manner to help you with your new opportunities, but a sharp manner to help your personal life.

Capricorn

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

This is the best month for you, your friends and your anger liners in your heart. Try to get on better with relationships in your personal life. Don’t look at the top of your personal life. A good balance can exist between competition and cooperation. Clever observation in personal relationships can help you make good decisions without misunderstanding.
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English Speaking Finance Manager x10

About - Imagin Talent

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- Prepare financial reports for management
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- Coordinate with external auditors

Requirements:

- A degree in Business Administration or Accounting
- At least 3 years of experience in a similar role
- Excellent communication and leadership skills
- Proficiency in English

Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. If you are interested, please submit your application with the subject line: "FM Application - English Speaking - Imagin Talent".
SEOUl – Thirty years ago this month, South Korean boxer Kim Duk-Koo entered a Las Vegas ring for a world championship bout that would end with his death, trigger at least one suicide and change the sport forever.

For a generation of South Koreans, millions of whom watched live on television, the fight between Kim and US lightweight champion, Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini, remains a powerful memory.

New a book and accompanying documentary that coincide with the 30th anniversary of the. The consequences of the Kim-Mancini bout were far-reaching and tragic in their own right.

Four months after her son’s death, Kim’s distraught mother killed herself by drinking a bottle of pesticide.

Four months after that, referee Richard Green also took his own life, although there was no indication that his suicide was linked to the outcome of the fight for which he was never held in any way responsible.

Mancini, a devout Catholic, endured a prolonged period of depression and, although he fought again, was never the same boxer.

In all the obvious ways, he was haunted,” American sportswriter Mark Kriegel, author of a new biography of Mancini titled The Good Son, told AFP in a telephone interview.

“His star was over. The complications for Ray have more to do with the fact that the rest of the world didn’t get over it and continued using that fight as a kind of reference point for his life,” Kriegel said.

Kriegel’s book, and an accompanying documentary of the same name, climax at the meeting in Mancini’s home, Jiwan admitted to the “hatred” he once felt for the boxer, before absolving him of any blame.

“I think it was not your fault,” he said.

The Kim-Mancini bout proved to be a watershed in boxing, triggering a series of major changes to the sport.

Championship bouts were reduced from 15 to 12 rounds, the standing eight-count was introduced and the medical tests required of boxers before a fight were overhauled.

US government sells Zetas horses for $8.8 million

CHICAGO – More than 300 race horses allegedly owned by a top leader of Mexico’s feared Zetas drug cartel will be sold for $8.8 million after being seized in the United States, US officials said.

US officials allege that Miguel Angel Trevino Morales, and his wife Zulema Trevino were among seven people arrested in a massive raid which accompanied the documentary.

One of the brothers, Jose Trevino Morales, and his wife Zulema Trevino were among seven people arrested in a massive raid which also saw the seizure of the prize-winning horses.

The quarter horse racing front appears to be more than simply a shell corporation. Several of the horses have won major races, including a Dash of Sweet Heat, which sold for $1 million.

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Royal Montreal to host 2014 Canadian Open

MONTREAL – Royal Montreal, North America’s oldest golf club, will host the 2014 US PGA Tour Canadian Open, Golf Canada executive director Scott Simmons announced on November 5.

Mee, had been pregnant at the time of the 1982 title fight and seven months later gave birth to a son, Kim Jiwan, now 29.

While being interviewed by Kriegel for the book, Jiwan had suggested a trip to the United States to meet with Mancini.

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GLASGOW – Neil Lennon said Celtic are in a great position to qualify for the last 16 of the Champions League after his injury-ravaged side secured a shock 2-1 defeat of Group G favourites Barcelona at Parkhead on November 7.

However, the 41-year-old Northern Irelandman, who is in charge of his first Champions League campaign with the club - and whose biggest problem this season has been to cope with the fans expectations - said they would have to reach the Last 16.

“It (the victory) gives us a great chance of qualification than we expected before the game but we still have two very difficult games,” he said.

“The problem myself and the players will have to deal with now is the expectation level. There is still a lot of hard work to be done but we’ve given ourselves a fantastic platform.”

Celtic could now qualify from the group stages for only the second time in their history if they get a draw or better against Benfica in two weeks time.

Barcelona still top the group on nine points, two more than Benfica and Celtic, who have each won three and lost one of their six matches.

Neither team scored after the hour mark and Barcelona’s Portuguese goalkeeper Victor Valdes saved the penalty taken by John Hartson in the opening minute.

Lengthy build-up – The build-up to this first Champions League game for new Celtic manager Lennon had been anything but easy.

The players had to travel to China to take part in the annual race to decide the world’s best marathon runners.

Barcelona’s goalkeeper Victor Valdes watches the ball hit the back of the net after Celtic’s forward Victor Wanyama scored during their UEFA Champions League Group G football match at Celtic Park in Glasgow on November 7. Pic: AFP

Barcelona in the Last 16 of the UEFA Cup in the 2003/2004 season, said the result was his greatest in management, coming on the day after the club celebrated its 125th birthday.

“I think it’s one of the greatest nights in the club’s recent history. It was very poignant on the club’s 125th anniversary that we got to play Barcelona in such a prestigious game and then to win the game under huge difficulties was amazing.”

The players are heroes. I can’t speak highly enough of their performances and they will go down in the history books of the club as the team that beat probably the best team in the world.”

The obvious plum target was Tim Linecum of World Series champions the San Francisco Giants, Navasero told AFP.

The Filipino-American pitcher starred in relief in the Giants’ World Series sweep of the Detroit Tigers last month, but declined the Philippine offer out of respect for his father.

“This is the capital in the Philippines, but it was his father who raised him after the couple split, ”Navasero said.

Instead 14 players mostly from the US minor leagues have been recruited, and will join the Philippine team at a qualifying tournament in Taiwan on November 15.

New Zealand, Taiwan and Thailand are also competing, with the winning team qualifying for the World Baseball Classic in March next year.

Philippines head coach Allan Guanzon, who led the Philippines team to a 6-5 victory over the Philippines last month, said “We’re looking far and wide for good players.”

The screening also includes 21-year-old Philip Navasero, a Filipino-American pitcher who is a combined 0.1 and 3.60 ERA in five innings pitched for the Chunichi Dragons in Japan’s professional baseball league over the past two years.

The Filipino national football team, the Azkals – slang for mongrel dogs – mixed European soccer to improve the record of Asia’s perennial doormat, who were ranked 195th by FIFA in 2006.

Former Chelsea FC youth players Phil and James Youngblood, as well as goalkeeper Neil Eberlidge, who plays professionally at Bristol Rovers, have since helped boost their ranking to an all-time high of 143rd.

Using a similar approach the Philippines’ rugby union team, the Volcanoes, secured the services of six Australian-Filipinos who play professional rugby leagues, the highest among the Philippines' national teams.