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Take a front line seat at world events and be part of the buzz in the region by joining the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand.

Found at the heart of Asia's news and providing a hub of conviviality and professional commitment, the FCCT is a must for anyone wanting to engage in our times.

Frequent programme nights reveal and explain current affairs. Meet friends, colleagues and leading figures from the region's business, government, diplomatic and media circles at the bar. Press conferences, film nights and international receptions all happen here.

Members have special privileges: exclusive Internet access; this unique quarterly magazine for free; a weekly bulletin detailing upcoming events; insight into path-breaking photography and art, Jazz on Friday nights, special gourmet nights, and more. For street cred and sustenance in these trying times, the FCCT is the only choice.

Feeding The Machine

Dateline magazine looks at the stories behind the stories. All offerings will be considered, from articles and photo essays to letters, analysis, gossip, etc. Soi Whispers was cut from this issue for space reasons but will return.

Please send material to editor (jimpollard_1999@yahoo.com). Submissions are paid for with glory and bar/ restaurant coupons.



Anasuya Sanyal,
President FCCT

Greetings, thanks, and please join us

Our Generous Sponsors

The FCCT gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our sponsors whose contributions to the Club's programs and activities have ensured we remain Bangkok's premier public forum. Please support our sponsors when you can, as they support us!



The Tourism Authority of Thailand, whose generous and consistent support has made possible this year's publication of Dateline.



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- **Star Alliance**, for our wi-fi internet service and air tickets supporting the FCCT's annual photojournalism contest
- **Maneeya Realty**
- **Mandarin Oriental Bangkok**, often voted "The Best Hotel in the World", for their consistent support, including, for the past 3 years, our Year-End Party.

It's with great pleasure and excitement that I take over the position of President of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand from my colleague and friend Nirmal Ghosh of the Straits Times. June will mark my eighth year in the Kingdom and, like many of you, I can only look back and marvel at all that's happened in the years gone by, both personally and professionally.

Though the entire media industry has changed greatly in the past decade, the FCCT remains an important space for voices to be heard. We continue to be a venue for up-to-the-moment discussions on current affairs and though the country is in a period of relative stability, it's always wise to be attuned to the currents beneath the surface. In March we were honored to host Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra at our annual Prime Minister's Dinner for a second time. It is our yearly marquee event and a club tradition. Ms Yingluck, as the first female Prime Minister of Thailand, possesses a unique charm that differentiates her from her predecessors. Of course, the foreign press corps is always on the lookout for any signs of machinations behind the scenes, although most of us wish we had 5 baht for every time our editors ask when her brother Thaksin is likely to come back.

Many of our colleagues are harder to pin down lately, but that's a positive thing as the past year or so has seen journalists be able to travel freely to Myanmar. Gone are the cloak and dagger days of switching hotels each night and operating undercover. Having been to the capital Naypyidaw a few times now with a proper visa, I must say that I have nothing but respect for our colleagues who reported from there while posing as tourists... not an easy feat! I don't think it's overstatement to say that the Bangkok-based press corps has been indefatigable with regards to Myanmar coverage and we are still hoping that one day opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi will address the club. It's been a time of unprecedented change in her country and despite the enthusiasm and optimism, there are worrying signs of growing sectarian violence and an ominous anti-Muslim movement that has spread through central Myanmar. This is something that will be a continuing topic for discussion at the Club as it threatens to disrupt the progress that's been made thus far.

The club continues to be a place for the world's best photojournalists to show their work. We are looking forward to reviving the documentary showcase when our colleagues can come – to show some of their most significant photos and tell us the stories behind them.

Meanwhile, I'd be remiss not to thank our many staff who welcome one and all to the club, day in and day out and sometimes late at night. Regarding our bar and restaurant staff, they deserve applause for implementing the new POS system, which had made life a lot easier for those of us monitoring operations. We hope you've appreciated the small changes at the club and will try to improve things in the future while retaining what we like so much about the place. Watch this space.

Anasuya Sanyal
IndoChina Bureau Chief
Channel News Asia

'Climate change is the issue we'll be judged on'

Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh drew a big, appreciative crowd for an evening of discussion that ranged widely from Myanmar's appalling colonial legacy, to Bangladesh and Bangkok sinking under rising seas

By Jim Pollard



Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh is a former journalist who worked for the Indian Express and then the New Yorker, before turning his hand to historical fiction in the mid-80s. The author of popular novels such 'The Glass Palace' and 'The Hungry Tide', he has also found a niche in academia in the US, where he now lives.

He spoke at the club after a visit to Yangon that left him astonished by the "amazing transformation" of a country once in the tight grip of a paranoid military junta. Visiting in the late 90s, he had been closely tailed by Burmese intelligence agents, he said, "because I'd met Suu Kyi twice".

Rangoon/Yangon was built as a South Asian city, he said, "designed by the same people who built Calcutta", the city where he was born. But Burma - he used the old name for Myanmar - was a country wracked by multiple insurgencies, whose leaders had swapped trade for security.

"The lingering after-effects of 16 insurgencies are still with them. Burma was flattened twice after the Second World War. The British had a scorched earth policy when they left - there was no Marshall Plan for Burma. It was actively flattened by the Allies."

The extraction of resources was much more intense than in India, he said - "teak, and a lot of mining". British rule extended from 1824 to 1948 and colonial overseers systematically picked Burmese society apart. "It's quite easy to do and a society can collapse..."

Burma's last king, Thibaw, was forced into exile in India in the late 1880s - "kept in a little bungalow" in Ratangiri and the British "wouldn't allow any pictures of him".

"How do you rebuild a society that's been systematically dismantled? ... It's got to rebuild itself. I think it'll struggle for a very long time."

Conversations overheard in the lobby of his hotel on a visit to Yangon late last year added to his concerns - with "arms dealers, hotel investors" and many more, all trying to get a slice of the action. "It does fill you with apprehension for their future."

But growing problems from climate change were far more disturbing - a nightmare on the horizon for Bangladesh, he said. A one-metre sea rise in the

Continued on page 13

2013 Executive committee

From left: Kelly MacNamara, Mick Elmore (back), Tony Doherty, Pailin Wedel, George McLeod (rear), Anasuya Sanyal, Supatra (Jum) Vimonsuknopparat, Patrick Winn (rear), Henry Silverman, Nirmal Ghosh, Jeanne Hallacy, Matt Jasper. Absent: Umesh Pandey.



Memorials Unveiled in Cambodia

Correspondents and photographers who covered the war in Cambodia returned to Phnom Penh in February for the unveiling of two memorials that honour the memory of friends lost during the conflict.

The main memorial, in front of the Royal Hotel, is dedicated to the 37 foreign and Cambodian journalists and cameramen who died or went missing between 1970 and 1975. The Royal was the meeting place for correspondents during the war and it was there that a head count was done each night to see who had not returned.

Information Minister Khieu Khanarith attended the inauguration at the Royal on Feb 6 and also accompanied journalists, widows and relatives of those killed to the unveiling of a second plaque near Wat Po in Kompong Speu province, 60km from Phnom Penh. This was put by a Bodhi tree planted in 2010 at the site where nine journalists were killed in 1974 in a Khmer Rouge-controlled zone.

The foreign journalists who died during the Cambodian war included 10 Japanese, eight French, seven Americans, and others from Switzerland, West Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, India, Laos and Australia.

Photographers Roland Neveu (who took some of these pictures), Tim Page and Kurt Hoeffle, plus Jim Pringle and Mike Morrow were among the veterans who travelled for these ceremonies.

Reporting in Cambodia has remained hazardous albeit to a lesser degree. Over the past 20 years, 12 journalists have been killed, according to rights group Adhoc, which said in late 2012 it believed most of these murders were politically motivated. Another 12 had been imprisoned and one injured in what the group deemed to be a revenge attack.

Meanwhile, in late January, American Al Rockoff, one of the few photographers who remained in Phnom Penh at the time the city fell to the Khmer Rouge in April 1975, gave eyewitness testimony in the UN-backed Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) about the events around the time the capital fell. A full account can be found at the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor website (January 28, 2013).



1. Monks and correspondents at the unveiling of the memorial near Wat Po Kampong Speu on 5 February 2013 (Photo: Roland_Neveu)
2. The memorial at Le Royal Hotel, Phnom Penh on 6 February 2013 (Photo: Roland Neveu)
3. Tim Page and other correspondents by the Kampong Speu memorial. (Photo: Michael Hayes)



Dinner with the Prime Minister

SECOND TIME AROUND

By Ron Corben*

Photos by Nick Nostitz

Frank Sinatra's song how "love is lovelier the second time around" captured the atmosphere for Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's acceptance at the Foreign Correspondents Club dinner in her honour in March.

The prime minister also showed her appreciation by way of her Twitter account, pouyingluck-shin, saying: "Thanks to FCCT President (Anasuya Sanyal) for such a great introduction and warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here at FCC Thai again today."

The warm welcome was evident in applause for the prime minister, especially over questions after her official

address, and notably focused on her brother, Thaksin, who addressed the club on several occasions when in he was in power from 2001 to 2006.

As she began her speech, the prime minister made a note of saying "I only agreed to come back here because you were so kind to me the last time that I was here! And I hope you will be kind to me again."

Success has been the calling card for the government since the disastrous 2011 floods as the economy has rebounded and investor confidence is again in place.

So it was no surprise the prime minister, in her official address, detailed the government's economic "success story" and steps taken to boost Thailand's regional foothold ahead of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015.

There were key words for the listener as the prime minister spoke of her travels to over 25 countries in the past 18 months since taking office, pointing to the "renewed credibility on Thailand's part which was disrupted by political conflict over the past seven years". Thailand, in her view, was "back on track as we are on the path towards a true democracy".

The prime minister said ensuring freedom

Captions:

1. Anasuya Sanyal, FCCT president, escorts the PM in to the FCCT dinner.
2. Club board members with the PM.
3. Bangkok Post Editor Pichai Chuensuksawadi greets the PM.
4. Varathep Rattanakorn, left, with PM, Anasuya.
5. Nirmal, Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak, Pravit Rojanaphruk (Nation), Dr Pavida Pananond.
6. Jonathan Head BBC with Deputy PM and Education minister Phongthep Thepkanjana.





7. Dinner guests listen to the PM's speech.
8. PM answering questions from the members.
9. Financial Times's Gwen Robinson.

of speech was important in a democracy, hence her engagement "with all of the international press here in Bangkok" was a "key part of this process".

Asia is currently on a winners' run as money shifts away from economically slow and depressed Europe or floods out of Japan and the US, where quantitative easing has allowed easy money to flow into the region.

“ I only agreed to come back here because you were so kind to me the last time that I was here! And I hope you will be kind to me again. ”

But a strengthening of the Thai baht was a leading "concern" for the government, "so we have to make sure the appreciation is in line with the economic (fundamentals). So this one we have to make sure that the funds will be (directed to) real investment," she told the Financial Times. In her official address the prime minister gave priority to the need for political stability "as it is the foundation for sustainable economic growth". She also reminded the audience that ratings agency Fitch had upgraded Thailand

from BBB to BBB-plus "on the grounds that the political situation has stabilised, economic fundamentals and external finances remain strong".

Highlight was given to infrastructure programs, some viewed as controversial by environmental groups as the projects could cause conflicts over their affect on local communities. But in an address indicating determination, the prime minister said the government would press ahead with a \$12-billion investment

in water management and \$66-billion expenditure on transport and logistics, including high-speed rail lines and new economic zones.

She also mentioned the sensitive issue in dealing with thousands of displaced Muslim Rohingya from neighbouring Burma/Myanmar. The prime minister said the government had "been dealing with the Rohingya based on humanitarian grounds".



PM meets the club executive committee

But she was less certain when the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) presented evidence over the alleged killing of two Rohingya by Royal Thai Navy personnel. She spoke of her special concern “especially in the care of women and children”. “In the case of the Navy (incident), I think we will work on the fair basis and [try to] be fair to everyone under the legal process,” she said.

“But an investigation?”, the prime minister was pressed.

“OK, first of all, I have to say that we don’t encourage any violence and to do any harm to anyone. This is our policy and of course we will have to be fair to everyone and we will look into and investigate the case,” she replied.

No meeting with the press by a member of the Shinawatra family would be complete without questions over the role and influence of former government leader and elder brother of the prime minister, Thaksin.

The Thai media refer to Mr Thaksin as a “fugitive” after he left Thailand in 2008 to see the Olympics and has stayed on the run ever since in the face of a two-year jail term for corruption.

But the prime minister has become adept at fielding this issue. To an Inter



PM in conversation during the dinner.



Former FCCT Manager Richard Holt with FCCT Assistant Manager Khun Chananya “Pear”.

Press Service (IPS) question regarding Thaksin’s role in securing a peace dialogue in Thailand’s violent southern border provinces, the prime minister replied: “(In) 18 months I [am] still Dr Thaksin’s sister. But [after] 18 months and [I am] still ...prime minister to handle the Thai economy and I think we have the Cabinet [as well]. And please believe me, that if [I had to] rely on him I don’t think I can come back each year and answer you this question [a] second time. Thank you.” The parry was greeted by applause; points to the prime minister.

To the BBC on a similar question regarding “emotions” surrounding her brother, again the prime minister was prepared: “My answer is that the political stability will be based on the people who try to be patient and to make sure all the dialogue has been [used to] bring all the stakeholders to discuss [the unrest], and as the government, so we encourage everyone to talk and be encourage[d] to discuss on the right way, to discuss and not on the street [act with] violence.”

In a last-parry to a question that drew both herself and Mr Thaksin into the “dislike” category, and why many in Thailand held these feelings, the prime minister responded: “I’m saying that I can’t be for the whole [of the] Thai people to [be] right [for] everyone, 100 per cent.”

Gaining support from the whole country was not possible, she said. “And of course people might like and dislike but this is the nice [aspect] of [a] creative democracy, and democracy will encourage people to discuss and to be the balance of that voice [opinion],” she said.

But what of the future? Will the FCCT again play host to the prime minister for a third year? To a Reuters’ inquiry of her place in the government come the next election in 2015, the prime minister gently laughed: “I think I am sorry to say that, I think for me, I think it’s a bit early to tell you exactly what is the new policy. Of course from this government, whichever policy has been useful and has been helping on growing of the Thai economy, we will continue. But anyway by that time we have to ask the people.” Indeed, prime minister.

** Ron Corben has been a correspondent in Thailand for more than 20 years. He reports for the Australian Associated Press, Voice of America and a range of other outlets.*

‘Climate change is the issue we’ll be judged on’

Continued from page 5

Bengal Delta would be catastrophic. “Basically, we’re looking at the end of the Bangladesh delta. And what will happen to these people? This is going to create enormous pressures. But we don’t talk about climate stresses... Journalists in general don’t take account of this. You saw what happened to New York [flooding last October] – and it’s not on a vulnerable [sea] level.”

Bangkok was also sinking and extremely vulnerable, he said. “All these roads were canals before ... well, they’ll all be canals again too [in the future].”

What upset him was there was little discussion about climate change in the US media, a land famed for its free press. “If rational discussion is not permitted in public debate what sort of catastrophe is awaiting? The impacts [from climate change] are there. They’re on us. This is the single most pressing problem for the world at large. We’re facing something that humanity has never faced. And I think it’s no longer possible to do writing as usual.”

Climate change had shown that the idea of countries and economies “growing your way out of problems is folly”. Western ideas of free trade, constant growth and consumption had been adopted by the whole world, but it was a “predatory lifestyle” that was unsustainable.

“How do we expect a Western leader to sell this to their country? I think a Chinese leader can sell this idea more easily.”

China, he felt, was pursuing a development model that was a century old, and even after becoming a communist state, was doing the same thing it did in the 18th century – “producing huge quantities of lots of goods”. Western states could hardly ask Beijing to slow its development without adopting a different path themselves.

“I think Asia is saying ‘If you want us to live a different way, you have to do that first’. China has actually said that – [and] it’s perfectly reasonable. It’s like a very

dramatic game of chicken. Essentially, what Asia’s saying is ‘If you don’t stop [chasing economic growth], we won’t stop growing.’”

But a bigger question was whether societies around the world stop could stop consuming at the current rate. “If you talk to our children, they don’t even know what they consume,” he lamented.

Ghosh, who studied in Egypt in the 1980s (for a PhD), said it felt liberating to come to Southeast Asia, as people in this region knew “how to put the past behind them”. Egyptians tended to look back, while Southeast Asians look forward, he said. The two places that had changed dramatically for the better in his lifetime were Cambodia, and now Myanmar.

ASEAN deserved more credit than it had been given, he thought, for its “steady policy of engagement”. “They do have a way of slowly, steadily prompting change. “The Burmese are a very proud people. It’s been terrible for them to see Thailand going ahead.”

America’s rush to embrace the ‘new’ Myanmar, with visits by Hillary Clinton and President Obama, was nonsense, he felt. ASEAN helped deliver the transformation in Naypyidaw. “I think it’s a cultural approach to trauma – very much a Southeast Asian thing – a certain pragmatism. I just don’t think they (ASEAN) get enough credit for what they’ve achieved.”

A Bengali, whose family hails from Bangladesh, he felt it faces a crisis of epic proportions, because of rising seas. “How are we going to deal with the displacement of hundreds of millions of people? The UN estimates 700 million climate change refugees in 10 to 15 years.

“These questions aren’t being asked. What strategies are we looking at to deal with this – mass deaths on a scale we’ve never seen.”

— Jim Pollard

Slow Travel For Deeper, Meaningful Experience

Once we step outside Bangkok and the modern speed of city life, we experience the real Thailand, the land of smiles. The Thai way of life is slow in origin; we live slowly in accordance with the time and with the seasons, the true speed of life. Slowing down your travels allows you to spend more time in one place and truly experience what life is like for the locals there. Embrace this opportunity to explore a new culture, enjoy the food, learn about the customs and mingle with the local people. This is particularly easy in Thailand where the food is delicious and the locals are so friendly. Staying in locally owned hotels, utilizing local guides and transportation is a great way to help support the local economy.

One future holiday travel scenario is that of 'slow travel' where air and car travel are rejected in favour of forms of transport with lower greenhouse gas emissions. Here are a few tips to help slow down your Thailand travels, or simply to make any trip a little more eco-friendly.

Seek Alternative Transportation Options: Train travel is easily accessible in Thailand and is a great way to see the country and interact with the locals. It is also very inexpensive and is of course more environmentally friendly as well.

Traveling by ferry is another great alternative to flying in Thailand, and also provides some incredible scenery, when traveling to some of the islands in the South of Thailand.

Walk: Another way to slow your travel down and make it more eco-friendly is to walk. Not only will you see and experience more, but you'll save money on taxis and transportation. During any major festival such as Songkran, the Thai New Year festival, instead of taking taxis or tuk tuks, walking is a great way to see the celebrations, not just in the city center but in other parts also.

Below four locations are highlighted as slow travel destination. Those are perfect for green, community-based and laid-back tourism, with its strong local spirit and seven national parks.



Krabi Ko Klang Ecotourism Village:

Ko Klang is a small, calming island perfectly suited to those who seek utter relaxation or to really get back to nature. Its name is literally translated as 'Middle Island,' is home to one of Krabi's sizable communities. The local people seek ways to best harmonize with the island's abundant resources and natural charm. They joined forces to designate Ko Klang as an ecotourism destination. Discover their lifestyles through hands-on activities such as replanting mangrove trees, kayaking, or bird watching

Nan province's Wiang Sa district:

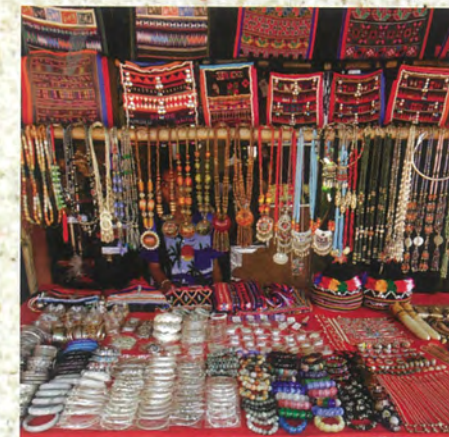
Located in the central part of Nan Province, Wiang Sa is not to be confused with the district of the same name in the southern province of Surat Thani. Home to some breathtaking caves, the stalactite and stalagmite formations are worth a closer look. The surrounding countryside, mountains and nature are ideal for quiet contemplative trip, but be sure to explore further afield to visit temples and take in



the scenic riverside spots for picnics and allow yourself a quick dip to cool off and play in waterfalls.

Mae Hong Son's Pai district in the North:

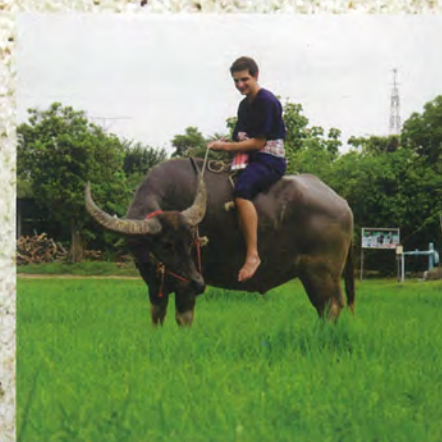
This small riverside town in Mae Hong Son Province is a popular escape from the city, close to the border with Myanmar. For the seasoned motorbike travelers, this makes for a picturesque journey. Motorcycles and bicycles can be rented



locally although Pai is explorable on foot or from the back of an elephant too. Pass waterfalls and dense flora and fauna for a truly memorable northern experience.

Loei's Chiang Khan District in the Northeast:

Chiang Khan is hugely popular with Thai tourists who make the trip from Bangkok every weekend. A bicycle is the perfect way to navigate the narrow streets and many homestays provide them free



of charge. Laos is barely a stone's throw away and it is possible to enjoy a drink on the banks of the Mekong River while overlooking northeast Thailand's nearest neighbor. There are not any bars or nightlife to speak of and Chiang Khan is so sleepy that it virtually grounds to a halt at night. The strengths of Pai and Chiang Khan include their interesting local ethnic groups and lifestyles.



Reps move towards impeachment

Both houses of parliament push for removal of tribunal, after president refuses to order members to resign

By Soe Than Lynn and Win Ko Ko Latt

MYANMAR'S first constitutional crisis rumbled on without a resolution last week, in what is shaping up as a major test of the political system established under the 2008 constitution.

On August 24, the Amyetha Hluttaw agreed to discuss a proposal to impeach the Constitutional Tribunal after President U Thein Sein ruled out forcing its members to resign.

The proposal, signed by 162 MPs, was proposed by U Zaw Myint Pe and supported by 167 of the 223 representatives present on August 24, with only military representatives voting against it.

Earlier this month, the Pyithu Hluttaw had set a deadline of August 21 for the tribunal members to resign voluntarily rather than be impeached. The dispute concerns the tribunal's March 29 decision that parliamentary committees and commissions are not considered union-level organisations.

Representatives insist that the decision was incorrect, as the status of committees as union-level bodies is stated in parliamentary laws enacted by the State Peace and Development Council. They cite section 443 of the constitution, which states: "The preparatory work done by the SPDC, before this constitution comes into operation, to bring the constitution into operation, shall be deemed to have been carried out in accord with this constitution."

They are seeking to impeach the tribunal's members under section 334(a)(ii) - breach of any of the provisions under the Constitution - and 334(a)(v) - inefficient discharge of duties assigned by law.

"We have accused the whole tribunal of failing to follow the provisions of sections 443 of the constitution," U Zaw Myint Pe said. "They are not fulfilling their duty to preserve the fundamental law and breaching the law. They ignore the fundamental agreement of the state as well as disregard it."

However, at a rare press conference on August 20 - a day before the Pyithu Hluttaw's deadline to resign - the tribunal's chairman, U Thein Soe, said he and his colleagues would "continue to do the duties entrusted by the state".

More page 4



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An end to the red pen Myanmar Times.



Geoff Goddard hugging Sonny Swe on his return to Yangon. Geoff Goddard: "We had been waiting more than eight years for that hug!" (Credit: The Myanmar Times/Aung Htay Hlaing).

End of The ~~Red~~ Pen

Amid dramatic changes in the media in Myanmar, Geoffrey Goddard reflects on many years of working under the junta and governments anxious to censor the free flow of news

By Geoffrey Goddard

I am confident I am speaking on behalf of all journalists working in the private sector in Myanmar - and perhaps most of those working for state-run newspapers - when I say that up until August last year censorship was the curse of our professional lives.

On a personal level my response to it has ranged from quiet exasperation to furious contempt. It has been the cause of outbursts in the news room which proved beyond any doubt to many of my Myanmar colleagues that I am an uncivilised barbarian; it is the ostensible reason why my dearest Myanmar friend, Sonny Swe, the former deputy CEO of The Myanmar Times, who was one of the few civilian victims of the purge of Military Intelligence in 2004, is serving a 14-year jail sentence. It has been eight and half years since he was taken away, for censorship offences.

I knew that I would be working under one of the worst censorship regimes in the world when I accepted a position with The Myanmar Times in June 2001, so what was the attraction?

The attraction was that I had already spent more than 10 years working in this part of the world, most of them in Thailand, but also in Singapore and Cambodia, and I badly wanted to return, even if that involved breaking a promise I had made to myself after the tragic events in Myanmar in 1988 that I would never come back here until it was a democracy.

Another factor was that working under censorship was not a new experience: during the 10 years I worked for Radio Australia I was selected for an exchange program with Radio Beijing and I worked there from December 1988 until a few

days after the Tiananmen massacre. After I left Radio Australia in 1997, I spent 18 months working for a government radio station in Singapore.

Those experiences of working with censorship certainly made it easier to adjust to my position as editor of the English edition of The Myanmar Times, a position I held until the end of 2005. But that did not mean there were some censorship decisions which either appalled or amazed me. And some which did not surprise me at all, mainly involving Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Perhaps here I should describe the process. The Myanmar Times was censored by Military Intelligence until it was purged in October 2004. We had to fax a copy of every story to an MI office and would get a call back to say if a story or a photo was rejected or had to be cut. We also had to send MI an A3 of the front page, which was often adjusted under its orders.

After the MI purge we were censored, like all private sector publications, by the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), to which we had to send A3 copies of every page. To fill holes caused by stories or pictures being rejected or cut, we had to send what we called alternate stories as backups. It was also necessary to roster a sub-editor on every Saturday night to make the necessary adjustments to pages after they had been mutilated by the censor. A minor upside of the end of pre-publication censorship in August was no longer having to squander our Saturday nights on tasks that involved a denial of the truth.

The censorship decision that left me most flabbergasted was the ban on running any story about the death of Ne Win in early December 2002. I could not believe that no private sector newspaper was allowed to mention anything about the man who had run the country for 26 years and, many would say, ran it into the ground.

Some censorship decisions were incredibly petty. I remember a travel story about a visit to an old teak monastery far from Yangon which mentioned that it was reached by travelling down a dirt road. We had to remove "dirt".

Some of the most petty censorship decisions involved mentions of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In May 2002 when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and gave a news conference at the headquarters of the National League for Democracy, we wrote a 22 paragraph story about the event. It was cut to five paragraphs.

We reported that she arrived at party headquarters "amid cheers from a jubilant crowd of several hundred party members and supporters." That was deleted and we were instructed to write that she arrived at party headquarters and "met local and international journalists."



Sonny Swe right and Yangon lawyer Michael Min Sein (Aung Htay Hlaing)

In September 2002, a service to commemorate the victims of the September 11 attacks in the US the previous year was held at a Yangon hotel. The Myanmar Times reported that among the 150 people who attended was the leader of the NLD, Aung San Suu Kyi. We were instructed to delete the reference to her and say that "executive committee members of the NLD were among the audience."

Some censorship decisions reflected a sensitivity, or perhaps even embarrassment, about how much more advanced were neighbouring countries or how much more successful at dealing with social problems. A feature story about the opening of the Bangkok Skytrain was banned, as was a story about an opium crop substitution project in northern Thailand.

One censorship decision, in late 2001, resonates with the situation today in Rakhine State.

It was about Myanmar's response to the annual report issued by the US about religious freedom around the world.

It quoted a senior Foreign Ministry official as saying that Myanmar should be regarded as a model society when it came to religious freedom and tolerance.

Cut from the story was a sentence quoting the US report as accusing the Myanmar government of restricting some religious activities, "including the building of churches and mosques."

Some censorship decisions made me laugh. In June last year, the French news agency, AFP, to which The Myanmar Times subscribes, ran a report quoting the then head of PSRD, Tint Swe, as saying that the end of pre-publication censorship was imminent.

AFP contacted me for a comment, which I gave anonymously, observing that Tint Swe had one of the worst jobs in Myanmar, because "he was pressured from above by ministers, officials and powerful business people to keep stories out and pressured from below by editors to keep stories in."

The censors cut that paragraph from the story. They censored a story about censorship.

On August 20, Tint Swe summoned the editors of dozens of weekly and monthly news publications to a meeting in Yangon to announce the end of pre-publication censorship. It has been one of the most significant changes of the reform process driven by President Thein Sein. It has certainly been one of the most celebrated reforms by members of the fourth estate.

One of the most deeply satisfying consequences of the end of pre-publication censorship for me has been to observe how much more motivated are my Myanmar colleagues because they know their stories will be published.

It is wonderful to see.

NOTE: Sonny Swe was released from Taunggyi prison on April 23.

Barry Wain

**A hard-working
and dedicated
Asia Hand**

By Jim Pollard

Image: Harry Harrison, courtesy
of the Asian Wall Street Journal.



Barry Wain, who died in Singapore in February at the age of 68, was an outstanding journalist and editor who developed a deep knowledge and love for Southeast Asia during 40 years living in the region.

An Australian who had started his career at QTQ9 television station in Brisbane, he joined the ABC, then *The Australian* shortly after it was launched in 1964. During his six years with the paper he became defence writer and travelled to Vietnam at the height of the conflict. In a tribute in the Murdoch paper, colleague Philip Bowring wrote: "The Asia bug soon bit him and it was off to the desk of Hong Kong's *China Mail* and then to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*... Wain was secretary and later chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, providing training as well as representing journalists' interests."

When the *Asian Wall Street Journal* was founded in 1976, Wain was hired as a night editor. He proved to be a loyal

and dedicated writer not afraid to tackle sensitive or difficult topics, according to co-workers. In 1982, he was booted out of Thailand, when his reports on conditions in a camp for Vietnamese refugees angered a deputy prime minister. Months later, he was allowed to return, they said. The first of several books Wain wrote was about the exodus of refugees after the war in Vietnam ("The Refused"). However, he is best known for "Malaysian Maverick", a biography of former Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad that was widely acclaimed.

Wain served the *AWSJ* with distinction from several bases – Kuala Lumpur from 1976-79, Bangkok from 1979-84, and Hong Kong from 1984-92. During the latter period he became managing editor, then editor of the *Journal*. In a tribute to the "Asia Hand", colleagues said: "Barry was committed to writing deep, informative stories and had a wonderful gift for telling them well.. [he] was one of the first Western journalists to get back into places like Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos

and Myanmar once they began opening up." With Wain at the helm, the *AWSJ* carried "groundbreaking reporting from all over Southeast Asia, including hard-hitting stories on Suharto's Indonesia, Mahathir Mohamad's Malaysia and Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore that sometimes got reporters banned and the *Journal* in trouble".

In 2005, Wain joined Singapore's Institute of SE Asian Studies as a writer-in-residence. From there, he wrote his book on Mahathir, and covered issues such as tensions in the South China Sea. American journalist and author Tom Plate said in a tribute: "I fondly wish I were half the journalist that this Australian-born workaholic was... [he] left behind a legacy of a standard of reporting and editing that exemplified professional journalistic norms at their best". Wain is survived by his wife, Yvonne, and son David.

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