

# The BURMA DAILY

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## Jakarta Park To Be Created For Protesters

REUTERS

JAKARTA - Fed up with protests snarling Jakarta's already chaotic traffic, the authorities in one of the world's most congested cities plan to build a park dedicated to keeping public demonstrations off the streets.

The park is also a sign that democracy has taken hold in Indonesia. Demonstrations were almost out of the question during the 32-year rule of autocratic former President Suharto until public frustration with his leadership led to mass protests in the late 1990s that eventually drove him from power.

Since then, colorful and noisy demonstrations have become a common occurrence in Indonesia. While they are seldom violent, these protests can sometimes make the capital's already bad traffic even worse, especially when activists march around a landmark roundabout near Hotel Indonesia.

Jakarta Governor Fauzi Bowo now wants to build a speaker's corner, with room for 10,000 people, near Indonesia's National Monument, spokesman Cucu Ahmad Kurnia told reporters yesterday.

"We want to make it so everybody has a place to speak their mind, and so they know the right place to do that," said Kurnia.

The Presidential Palace, the Vice President's office and the Governor's office are within close range of the monument, in the center of Merdeka Square.

The protests make getting around Indonesia's sprawling capital and suburbs, home to some 14 million people, even more time-consuming and arduous as they add to the traffic jams caused by rising motorcycle and car ownership, as well as heavy flooding during the rainy season.

Bowo last year banned rallies around the Hotel Indonesia after clashes between opposing demonstrators. The park, which Kurnia said will be completed some time next year, would also be equipped with a stage for concerts.

The mayor of Jakarta, Sylviana Murni, said it was the government's responsibility to allocate an area for people to criticize those in power.



Reuters

Soldiers take part in a ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of the Communist Party of Vietnam in Hanoi yesterday. The late revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh founded the party in Hong Kong on February 3, 1930.

## Grave Exhumation Ritual Dying in Philippines

REUTERS

MANILA - Members of the Hanunuo Mangyan tribe in the Philippines do not leave their dead in the grave for long, digging up the remains of loved ones in an unusual revival ritual that itself is slowly being phased out.

The "kutkot" ritual is a tradition of bringing the dead back to life. A Filipino word for "scratch" or "unearth," it entails dressing up the remains of the dead in cloth so that they take on a human form again.

Many of the nearly 100 indigenous peoples' groups across the archipelago hold rituals for the dead, but very few among the 25,000 Hanunuo Mangyans remaining in the central island of Mindoro still practice kutkot, which has fallen victim to modern influences.

For some, kutkot is an obligation that tribal members must perform, in keeping with clan practice or honoring a dead relative's request.

A year after tribesman Hulyong Antonio was buried, six of his children and other relatives traveled to his grave and unearthed his coffin to perform kutkot.

"This man told his children,

"Whatever happens to me, you have to do the kutkot ritual, in the same way that you did for your mother," Baryos Gawid, Antonio's nephew, said.

The family members cleaned the skeleton, then wrapped the parts in a large cloth. The ritual involves an elaborate process of draping the cloth around the bones in such a way that it resembles a sort of mannequin, called a "sinakot."

Only a few Mangyans have mastered this skill. The cloth must be tied taut with a string and bulked in certain areas to create a

human shape, much like a mummy, only in this case wrapped after the corpse is exhumed.

"To this day, we have not forgotten our culture. It has remained alive," said Bapa Amando, one of Antonio's children. To humanise the sinakot, family members dress up the bulked up remains with clothes and jewelry, with each son or daughter making a contribution.

A year after his death, Hulyong Antonio was welcomed back in his village with the sound of gongs and a traditional dance.

### — Regional Brief —

#### Burma Opens Its Doors to Pro Golf Tournament

SINGAPORE - The Burma Open golf tournament will return to this season's Asian Tour schedule in April following a four-year absence, officials said yesterday. The tournament will take place Between April 8 and 11 at the Pun Hlaing Golf Club, located near Rangoon, and offer a total purse of \$300,000. "As a player-led organization the Asian Tour will continue to grow the game across the region," Asian Tour executive chairman Kyi Hla Han, himself from Burma, said. Burma's most recognizable player, Zaw Moe, said the tournament would help boost the standard of golf in the country. "It's always special to play in front of your home fans," said the 1997 Singapore Open champion. "I'm looking forward to it and I will be ready to give my best." Australian professional Scott Strange won the last Burma Open, held in 2005. (Reuters)

## REGIONAL

## Obama To Visit His Old Haunts In Indonesia

REUTERS

JAKARTA - US President Barack Obama will travel to Indonesia with his family next month, returning to the country where he spent four years as a child, the White House said on Monday.

Obama, who has referred to himself as "America's first Pacific president" because of his birth in Hawaii and his years in Indonesia, will also visit Australia during the trip, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said.

Gibbs said that while in Indonesia, Obama will launch a US-Indonesian partnership aimed at broadening and strengthening ties between the US and the country that is home to the world's largest Muslim population.

Asked whether Obama, to be accompanied by his wife Michelle and two young daughters Sasha and Malia, would visit childhood haunts, Gibbs said: "I'd anticipate that will likely be one of the stops."

Obama's late mother, Ann Dunham, came to Indonesia with her six-year-old son in the late 1960s to join her second husband, an Indonesian man named Lolo Soetoro.

Obama recounts in his book, "Dreams From My Father," being amazed to find the house they moved into on the outskirts of Jakarta had a collection of exotic animals including a monkey, birds of paradise, a cockatoo and several baby crocodiles.

His time in Indonesia was cut short in 1971 when he was sent to Hawaii to live with his grandparents, while his mother stayed with her husband.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said the visit reflected "current expectations" in relations with Washington.

"This is about developing a comprehensive partnership between the US and Indonesia in all areas," he told reporters.

Indrajaya Madewa, a friend of Obama's when they attended the same elementary school, said he hoped the president would visit the school during his visit.

"He remembers me and my family because we were neighbours, as well as classmates for three and a half years," said Madewa, now a 47-year-old businessman.

Gibbs said, during the trip, Obama would also visit the island of Guam, where he would speak to US military personnel.



The opened cockpit canopy of a Royal Australian Air Force F-111 Aardvark jet is pictured at the static display area of the Singapore Airshow yesterday. Reuters

## Indonesian Censors Curtailing Free Speech

BY PETER GELLING  
GLOBALPOST

JAKARTA - Indonesia's thought police are attempting a comeback. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration, in fact, launched a surprising new offensive on free speech last year with an intensity not seen since the Suharto regime, which brutally ruled Indonesia for more than 30 years before being toppled in 1998.

Such autocratic restrictions returned to the public's radar in December when the Jakarta Foreign Correspondent's Club canceled a screening of the film "Balibo"—which depicts the 1975 killing of five Australian journalists by the Indonesian military in East Timor—for fear of legal reprisals after being told that authorities had banned the film.

The government's growing penchant for the blacklist contrasts starkly with Indonesia's ferociously free press, possibly the most unfettered in Southeast Asia. That freedom was on display as nearly every newspaper, television and magazine organization in the country derided the censor's decision to ban "Balibo."

The Indonesian Journalist's Association openly defied the order, organizing dozens of screenings using text messages and social networking. Copies of the film are also easily found at numerous pirate DVD outlets around the capital Jakarta and clips are widely available on the Web.

"There is no point in banning anything these days," said Anhor Gonggong, a professor of history at the University of Indonesia who has spent a lifetime fighting censor-

ship. "There is no use. If a film is banned we can still find it. If bookstores don't carry a banned book, we can easily read it online. It's no problem."

Not that the government isn't trying. A new film law passed last September requires producers to now submit their scripts to a committee of red pens before shooting can begin. Even "slasher" films are getting slashed. The directors of the internationally acclaimed gore fest, "Rumah Dara (Dara's House)," said the censors forced them to cut several particularly gruesome closeups.

But censors have been the most busy with the oldest of old media—books. More than 200 books are now listed as banned. After Suharto's ouster, some books, including ones by celebrated Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, were taken off the blacklist and the practice in general nearly ceased. Between 2002 and 2008, the government banned only six books in total.

Five books were banned, by contrast, in 2009 alone.

Several more could meet the same fate within weeks, according to Didiek Darmanto, a spokesman for the attorney general. And Patrialis Akbar, the minister for justice and human rights, with no hint of irony, said his department had suggested the attorney general ban another 20 books it deemed inflammatory.

All circulated media falls under the purview of the censors, including Internet websites, Darmanto said. The two censorship boards (a collection of officials from departments like education, religion, police and national intelligence) refer to a law passed in 1963 to de-

termine what should be blacklisted.

"Anything that can disturb the public order can be banned from circulation," Darmanto said in an interview.

He said items that contradict the country's national development plan, spread concepts of Marxism, Leninism or communism, disparage the nation or national leadership, degrade morals (such as pornography), are anti-religion or disgrace any of the religions permitted in Indonesia or oppose an ethnic group or custom, could disturb the public order.

One recently banned book, which is easily available from any number of street-side booksellers, recounts the still mysterious ascendancy of Suharto in 1965 to when he became president in 1967. Others discuss religious pluralism.

A book about the 1970s leftist organization known as Lekra, called "Lekra Doesn't Burn Books," was also recently banned, though not yet burned.

Facing criticism for the recent spike in censorship, the president pointed to the free press in his defense but warned a group of students last week that their freedom was "not unlimited."

Activists said the administration's recent effort to control information has revealed its inability to move fully beyond the Suharto-era culture of repression they grew up in.

"The government is stuck in the past," said Gonggong. "Banning books, that is not democratic. That is authoritarian. The government can't have it both ways. We are free enough now that if they want to practice that sort authoritarian behavior, we will scream."

## INTERNATIONAL

## Russians Rally Around Moscow Enclave Demolished by Gov't

BY MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

MOSCOW - The bulldozers came at night, flanked by armor-clad riot police officers, to clear the houses of a small neighborhood here at the behest of Moscow's mayor, forcing residents out into subzero temperatures.

The mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, said they were living on the land illegally. But as more and more homes—some stately, some mere shacks—have come tumbling down over the last week and a half, an uncharacteristically fierce backlash has broken out, challenging one of Russia's most powerful politicians. Politicians, human rights activists, media organizations and even nationalist and anarchist groups have come to the defense of the neighborhood, called Rechnik. Legal or not, these critics say, the demolition operation has crossed the line.

"The methods used to resolve this problem were completely unacceptable," Vladimir Lukin, Russia's government-appointed human rights ombudsman, told the Interfax news agency on Thursday. He called on the prosecutor general's office to investigate what he called "gross violations" of Russian law.

On Monday, residents and their supporters blocked the entrance to the neighborhood, preventing crews from resuming demolitions.

More than a dozen homes have now been destroyed, and Moscow officials have told Russian news agencies that the operation would continue throughout the week.

Sergei Mironov, the speaker of the upper house of Parliament, said

the city had "discredited" itself.

"I am personally disturbed by the fact that the Moscow government decided simply to throw these people out on the streets despite the minus-[29-celsius] degree temperatures," he wrote on his blog.

Even government-run television channels, typically gushing in their coverage of top officials, have focused their cameras on dumbfounded and teary-eyed residents watching the bulldozers tear their homes apart.

Once a charming neighborhood of about 200 single-family homes, a rare sight in a city dominated by hulking apartment blocs, Rechnik has become a battleground in a long-running fight between the government and homeowners over Russia's ambiguous land laws.

The Soviet government set aside the plot of land on the Moscow River as a gardening collective in the 1950s. Residents claim that Soviet-era permits, which many bought or inherited from the original holders, give them de facto title over the land that their houses stand on. The city says those permits are invalid, and never allowed for the large mansions and quaint cottages that the residents built.

Luzhkov, who in his 18 years as mayor has not been given to tolerating affronts to his authority, has stood firm. In an interview published Thursday in the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, he called the residents "impostors" squatting on land that he said was zoned to be a park. "These cottages are located in a protected environmental zone," he said.



Reuters

Interior Ministry officers stand guard while an excavator demolishes a mansion in Rechnik settlement in Moscow, on Jan 21.

"The city has been saying for years that construction in this area was forbidden."

To prove his resolve, he has promised next to send his bulldozers to a luxury housing development neighboring Rechnik, where several dozen government ministers are said to live.

Critics have accused the mayor, whose wife is a billionaire real estate developer, of using ambiguous land laws to acquire prime property and resell it to private interests. Just over a year ago, several dozen similar homes were destroyed in a neighboring community that was in the same nebulous legal situation.

President Dmitri Medvedev, who has the authority to remove Luzhkov, has been silent on the issue, as has Prime Minister

Vladimir Putin, who appointed the mayor to his current term. After years of threats and legal battles, police officers in black riot gear finally swept into Rechnik around 3 am on Jan 21, rounding up several dozen residents who had blockaded the entrance with their cars, said Konstantin Shtolko, one of the residents. "We called the police and they told us that they were conducting a special operation as if we were terrorists in Dagestan," Shtolko, 39, said, referring to the volatile region neighboring Chechnya.

About a dozen homes have been demolished in the last week, and crews began tearing down more on Friday, officials said. Several elderly residents have reportedly been hospitalized with chest pains, as have others who were beaten with nightsticks.

## Five US Citizens Arrested in Pakistan Complain of Torture

REUTERS

SARGODHA, Pakistan - Five US citizens accused of contacting militant groups over the Internet and planning terrorist attacks inside Pakistan told a court on Tuesday that they had been tortured and threatened with death while in custody.

"They also said they were given electric shocks," their lawyer, Tariq Asad, told reporters.

The case of the Americans, all in their 20s and from Virginia, has focused some attention on global security dangers posed by the Internet as militants use cyberspace to evade tighter international security measures and wage holy war.

Pakistan is struggling to contain

Taliban insurgents who have carried out waves of suicide bombings at crowded markets, police and military facilities and mosques.

The men, who have not been charged since being detained in December, say they had wanted only to provide fellow Muslims with medical care and financial support. "We are innocent."

"Since our arrest, the US, [the US Federal Bureau of Investigation], and Pakistani police have tortured us," said a complaint written on tissue paper the Americans threw at journalists from a police van.

"They are trying to set us up. We are innocent. They are trying to keep us from the public-media, our families and our lawyer. Help us!"

Police official Amir Abbas Shirazi said the court had ordered medical checkups after the men, who appeared in court handcuffed and wearing track suits, complaining about extreme stomach pains.

Asad said he was seeking access to the men. They are expected to appear in court again on Feb 16.

The men were arrested in the central city of Sargodha, home to one of Pakistan's biggest air bases, 190 km southeast of the Pakistani capital Islamabad, not long after arriving in Pakistan.

Two of them are of Pakistani ancestry, one of Egyptian, one of Yemeni and one of Eritrean. They could face lengthy prison terms if

found guilty.

Police officials have said emails showed the suspects had contacted the Taliban, and that the militant group had planned to use them for attacks in Pakistan, which Washington sees as a front-line state in its war against militancy.

A defense lawyer distributed a letter he said Egyptian suspect Ramy Zamzam, 23, wrote to his parents.

"Dear mom and dad. Stay patient and trust and pray to Allah. We have been tortured since our arrest," it said.

"Keep trying your hardest to contact us directly and speak to us personally. I love you all. Just stay patient and keep making dua [prayer]. Your son Ramy Zamzam."

## OPINION

## My Life With Alzheimers Should End With the Death I've Chosen

BY TERRY PRATCHETT  
THE GUARDIAN

As a pallid and nervous young journalist, I got to know about suicide. It was part of my regular tasks to sit in at the coroner's court, where I learned the manifold ways the disturbed human brain can devise to die. Coroners never used the word "insanity." They preferred the more compassionate verdict that the subject had "taken his life while the balance of his mind was disturbed." There was ambivalence to the phrase, a suggestion of the winds of fate and overwhelming circumstance. In fact, by now, I have reached the conclusion that a person may make a decision to die because the balance of their mind is level, realistic, pragmatic, stoic and sharp.

And that is why I dislike the term "assisted suicide" applied to the carefully thought-out and weighed-up process of having one's life ended by gentle medical means.

The people who thus far have made the harrowing trip to Dignitas in Switzerland to die seemed to me to be very firm and methodical of purpose, with a clear *prima facie* case for wanting their death to be on their own terms.

I got involved in the debate surrounding "assisted death" by acci-

dent, after taking a long and informed look at my future as someone with Alzheimer's. As a result of my "coming out" about the disease, I now have contacts in medical research industries all over the world, and I have absolutely no reason to believe that a "cure" is waiting just around the corner.

And so I have vowed that rather than let Alzheimer's take me, I would take it. I would live my life as ever to the full and die, before the disease mounted its last attack, in my own home, in a chair on the lawn, with a brandy in my hand to wash down whatever modern version of the Brompton Cocktail some helpful medic could supply. And with Thomas Tallis on my iPod, I would shake hands with Death.

This seems to me quite a reasonable and sensible decision for someone with a serious, incurable and debilitating disease to elect for a medically assisted death by appointment.

The Care not Killing Alliance assures us that no one need consider a voluntary death of any sort since care is always available. This is questionable. Medicine is keeping more and more people alive, all requiring more and more care. Alzheimer's and other dementias place a huge care burden on the

country. A burden that falls initially on the next of kin who may even be elderly and, indeed, be in need of some sort of care themselves.

A major objection frequently flourished by opponents of "assisted dying" is that elderly people might be illegally persuaded into "asking" for assisted death. Could be, but the Journal of Medical Ethics reported in 2007 that there was no evidence of the abuse of vulnerable patients in Oregon where assisted dying is currently legal. I don't see why things should be any different here.

Last year, the government finally published guidelines on dealing with assisted death. They did not appear to satisfy anybody. It seems that those wishing to assist a friend or relative to die would have to meet a large number of criteria in order to escape the chance of prosecution for murder. As laid out, the best anyone can do is keep within the rules and hope for the best.

That's why I and others have suggested some kind of strictly non-aggressive tribunal that would establish the facts of the case well before the assisted death takes place. The members of the tribunal would be acting for the good of society, as well as that of applicants, to ensure they are of sound and informed mind, firm in their pur-

pose, suffering from a life-threatening and incurable disease and not under the influence of a third party. I would suggest there should be a lawyer, one with expertise in dynastic family affairs who has become good at recognizing whether there is outside pressure. And a medical practitioner experienced in dealing with the complexities of serious long-term illnesses.

I would also suggest that all those on the tribunal are over 45, by which time they may have acquired the gift of wisdom, because wisdom and compassion should in this tribunal stand side-by-side with the law. The tribunal would also have to be a check on those seeking death for reasons that reasonable people may consider trivial or transient distress. If we are to live in a world where a socially acceptable "early death" can be allowed, it must be allowed as a result of careful consideration.

I would like to die peacefully before the disease takes me over. I hope that will not be for some time, because if I knew that I could die at any time I wanted, then suddenly every day would be as precious as a million pounds. If I knew that I could die, I would live. My life, my death, my choice.

*Terry Pratchett is the author of the Discworld novels.*

## Malaysia Itself, Not the Opposition Leader, Is Standing Trial

EDITORIAL  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

More than a decade after he was beaten, tried and jailed, opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim will once again face a Kuala Lumpur court today on charges of sodomy. The accusations are highly dubious and raise a serious question: Is this moderate Muslim democracy becoming a nation with no real rule of law?

The circumstances surrounding Anwar's prosecution are suspiciously familiar to most Malaysians. In 1998, he was arrested as he was mounting serious arguments against the increasingly erratic government of United Malays National Organization chief Mahathir Mohamed. On a nearby page, Anwar's former aide Munawar Anees describes being tortured and forced to confess to sodomy, a criminal offense in Malaysia. Anwar was convicted of sodomy and abuse of power and served six years in jail before the sodomy ruling was overturned in 2004. He

was allowed to run for political office again in 2008, which he did, in earnest.

Anwar was arrested again in July 2008, a day after participating in his first nationally televised debate in more than a decade—an event that showcased his political skills and highlighted the growing momentum behind his three-party opposition coalition. He was accused of sodomy with a 23-year-old former aide, Saiful Bukhari Azlan. Saiful was taken into protective police custody after he made his allegation and has since rarely been seen in public. The government denies any political motivation for the

charges. Saiful himself has not been charged.

As in 1998, the evidence in this case is thin at best. The police made a show of arresting Anwar, put him in jail for a night, and forced him to undergo a humiliating medical "examination." The government then passed a bill in parliament to give the police expanded powers to collect DNA in criminal cases. Anwar's lawyers claim they have a hospital report that shows no sodomy occurred.

Also troubling is the public involvement of Prime Minister Najib Razak, who was deputy leader at the time of Anwar's 2008

arrest—and the man most politically threatened by Anwar's popularity. Najib acknowledged that he was photographed with and spoke to Saiful after he was allegedly sodomized and before he went to the hospital for tests. Najib says he didn't influence Saiful's decision to press charges. Saiful couldn't be reached for comment.

Voting may be the mechanism that keeps Malaysia free and honest. Ordinary citizens—including the majority ethnic Malays—increasingly support Anwar's secular platform of religious tolerance, economic liberty and modernization. The opposition won five of 13 states in national elections in 2008, and it has since won seven of nine by-elections. Anwar was re-elected to parliament in a by-election the month after his arrest in 2008. There will likely be protests in front of the courthouse to show support for him.

The trial that begins today threatens domestic political unrest and undermines confidence, at home and around the world, in Malaysia's rule of law.

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