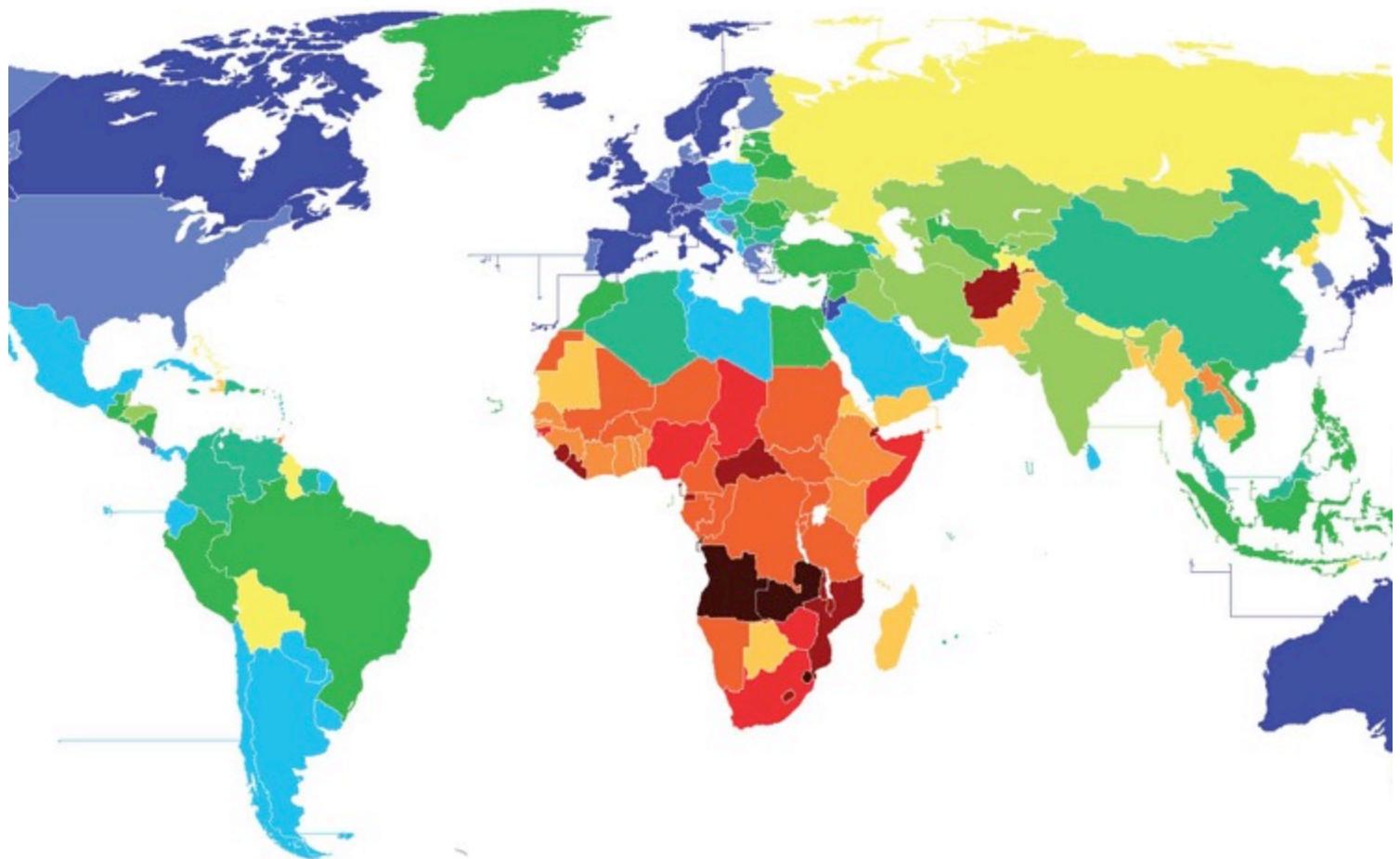


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**MYANMAR TO CREATE NEW POST FOR
AUNG SAN SUU KYI**

**JAPAN KILLS 333 WHALES IN LATEST
ANTARCTIC HAUL**

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Headlines

MYANMAR TO CREATE NEW POST FOR AUNG SAN SUU KYI, CEMENTING HER POWER



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, center, during a ceremony in Parliament in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, on Wednesday.

The governing party of Myanmar's democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took a step to formalize her role as the country's leader on Thursday, circumventing a stricture in the Constitution that prevents her from being president.

Her party, which won elections in a landslide last fall, introduced a bill in Parliament to create a new post for her as "state counselor," which some analysts are comparing to prime minister.

The position would cement her influence over the executive and legislative branches, which are already controlled by her allies, and would cap a remarkable rise for a woman who was a political prisoner for 15 years.

Along with the four cabinet positions she was sworn into on Wednesday, including foreign minister, and her leadership of the majority party in Parliament, the array of titles will officially make her the most powerful person in the government.

“If Daw Suu becomes the counselor of the state, it is clear she would be guiding both the government and the Parliament,” said U Yan Myo Thein, a political analyst in Yangon, the largest city in Myanmar.

Myanmar’s Constitution, drafted by the military that ruled for 53 years, prohibits Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming president because her children are British citizens, as was her husband.

She vowed during the election campaign last year that she would be “above” the president, at least until she could achieve her goal of amending the Constitution. For the first time, her party, the National League for Democracy, is making it clear how that will happen.

The state counselor bill was introduced in the upper house of Parliament on Thursday. The National League for Democracy controls large majorities in both houses of Parliament, ensuring the bill will easily become law.

Richard Horsey, a political analyst and former United Nations official in Yangon, said the main point of creating the position was not to give the democracy leader more power but to allow her to use the power she already had more effectively.

“Most important, I think, is that it allows her to meet any person, and report to the legislature, which means she can advise the speakers with less risk of being accused of violating the strict separation of powers in the Constitution,” he said, referring to the speakers of each house of Parliament.

But members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party, the military-aligned party that governed this country until this week, denounced the move as a power grab.

“It seems she wants to hold as many posts as she can,” said U Hla Swe, a former lawmaker with Union Solidarity and Development. “Using her hands, feet and her teeth, she is holding those posts. I want to say she is crazy for power.”

He said that under the existing laws, the post of minister of the president’s office — one of her four ministerial positions — would give her all the authority she needs to be involved in any issue.

U Aung Kyi Nyunt, a member of her party who helped draft the bill, described the position as “coordinator between the government and the Parliament.”

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's longtime ally, U Htin Kyaw, was sworn in as president on Wednesday and is openly seen as her proxy. On Wednesday, he asked the public to be patient as the country's first predominantly civilian government took over after decades of military rule.

It is a sign of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's dominance over her party and Parliament that the first bill introduced to the legislature was the state counselor bill. The bill not only creates the position but designates her to fill it.

In addition to her post as minister of the president's office, she was sworn in as minister of foreign affairs, education, and electric power and energy.

The Constitution gives the armed forces chief the authority to appoint the ministers of defense, home affairs and border affairs. The division of power means that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's party will have to negotiate with the military in matters of national security, ethnic issues and major foreign policy.

After the November election, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi negotiated with the military to try to waive the constitutional restriction that bars her from the presidency, but without success. The military's control of a quarter of the seats in Parliament gives it enough votes to block any constitutional amendments.

Mr. Aung Kyi Nyunt said that the advisory position would give her the authority to weigh in with top officials in Parliament and the government on the most important issues facing the nation.

"With the adviser to the state role, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi can advise two house speakers on important matters of the country such as peace, democratization and development," he said.

By The New York Times

Environment

JAPAN KILLS 333 WHALES – INCLUDING MORE THAN 200 PREGNANT FEMALES – IN LATEST ANTARCTIC HAUL AS IT CONTINUES TO REJECT INTERNATIONAL ORDERS TO STOP HUNTING



The last of Japan's four whaling ships returned to port on 23 March 2016 after a four-month expedition that saw 333 minke whales killed, including more than 200 pregnant females

It comes despite an international outcry about their conduct.

Japan has continued to reject international orders to stop whale hunting and a ruling by the UN's International Court of Justice, which said the hunt was a commercial venture masquerading as science.

Under the International Whaling Commission, to which Japan is a signatory, there has been a ban on hunting whales since 1986.

Japan has admitted to killing 333 whales - including more than 200 pregnant females - in its latest Antarctic hunt.

The last of Japan's four whaling ships returned to port yesterday after a four-month expedition, which the country claims is for 'scientific' purposes.

Their haul is a 'significant increase' over their 2014 hunt, which saw 252 whales captured.

But Japan continues persists in the practice using a loophole in the ban that allows for lethal research.

Tokyo claims it is trying to prove the whale population is large enough to sustain a return to commercial hunting, and says it has to kill the mammals to carry out its research properly.

However it makes no secret of the fact whale meat is sold in stores in Japan [though few Japanese still buy it].

Japan said the research had been carried out to understand the minke whale populations in the Antarctic Ocean. The purpose was to study the best methods for managing minke populations, the Japanese Ministry of Fisheries said in a statement. It added that there had been no incidents with anti-whaling activists, unlike the previous mission that was hampered by environmentalist group Sea Shepherd.

The returning fleet arrived early on Thursday to the Shimonoseki port in western Japan.

Besides the kills, Japan said it conducted non-lethal research such as observation, the taking of skin samples from live whales and attaching tracking devices to whales.

Japan's actions are in defiance of international criticism.

Patrick Ramage, from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, said: 'If our Japanese friends really care about science and international law, it's time to put down the harpoon and chopstick, stop cutting these creatures into bits in the name of science, and join Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries studying living whales in their ocean environment in the 21st century.'

Environmental campaign group Greenpeace labelled the hunt 'unnecessary' and said it violated the UN court ruling.

'It is completely unacceptable for the Japanese government to ignore the ICJ's findings and furthermore, completely unnecessary to go ahead with lethal research,' said Greenpeace Japan executive director Junichi Sato.

Greg Hunt, the Australian environment minister, said his government opposed whaling 'clearly, absolutely and categorically'. 'It is in my view abhorrent and a throwback to an earlier age,' he said. 'There is no scientific justification for lethal research.' Mr Hunt criticised Japan for going ahead with the killings 'in spite of a resolution by the [International Whaling] commission calling on it not to go whaling'.

However some activists have criticised the Australian government for not doing enough to stop the Japanese hunting whales.

Some experts claim Japan's refusal to give up the whaling mission despite censure by the international court is largely due to a small group of powerful politicians.

By Daily Mail

local

RATS! THEY'RE BACK IN BUKIT BATOK

Rodents spotted in Street 23 area, burrows found on vacant state land managed by HDB



Ms Sim, a volunteer at See Thian Foh Combined Temple, shows the rat traps around the temple. Temple volunteers said rat infestation has been a problem there since the middle of last year.

Rats! It looks like Bukit Batok has an infestation problem yet again.

About a year after a major rat infestation on a hilly area near Bukit Batok MRT station in end 2014, rats have been reported around Bukit Batok Street 23 this and last week.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) said about 20 rat burrows were found along a footpath near the See Thian Foh Combined

Temple in Street 23 last Thursday. It had also received feedback about rat activity in an industrial estate in the area on Wednesday.

While NEA said rat control works were carried out this week, the rodents were still a problem yesterday at the temple, where the pests have been damaging property and eating food offerings.

Temple volunteers said yesterday that rat infestation has been a problem there since the middle of last year.

"We catch about four or five rats a week. Sometimes, we also use rat poison to ease the problem. Once we found about 20 rats dead behind the temple," said a 73-year-old temple volunteer who gave her name only as Ms Sim.

She showed The Straits Times the rat droppings she came across yesterday in the temple's kitchen.

"I just wiped the stove in the kitchen clean yesterday, but there are rat droppings again today," she added.

The rats appeared to have come from rat burrows found on vacant state land behind the temple.

The managing agent for the land is the Housing Board.

NEA told ST yesterday that it has deployed its pest control operator to help HDB to bring down the rat population at the vacant land.

So far, 40 rats have been caught in one round of operations, using means such as glue boards or traps.

NEA investigations found that the rodents involved are roof rats, whose "main harbourage areas are the trees on the vacant land". The burrows on the ground are their hiding spaces when they are on the ground foraging for food, it added.

NEA said it will continue to help HDB with rat control operations over the next few days. It added it will also work with HDB to put in place a tight rat control regime.

Meanwhile, temple volunteers said the temple has tried to keep the rodents at bay using various methods, including planting sticky traps or installing wire mesh beneath drain covers. Volunteers also caged the temple's plants, to prevent them from being eaten by rats.

A temple volunteer who identified himself only as Mr Leow said the temple sought help from a pest control operator last month.

"They said they could deal with the rats in the temple, but could not exterminate the rats in the land outside the temple, as it was managed by the Government," he said.

Jurong GRC MP Rahayu Mahzam, who oversees the area affected by the rat infestation, said: "Action has been taken promptly on the same day and I will keep a close watch and work with all parties to resolve the issue."

By The Straits Times

Science and Technology

DEAR GOOGLE, PLEASE HELP US USE OUR DATA TO BEAT DENGUE AND ZIKA

A worried dad wants the tech giant to allow its users to share access to their location history to help protect families from mosquito-borne diseases



Better sprayed where needed

The mosquito-borne disease dengue usually causes only flu-like symptoms but it can be lethal, especially to children. "My youngest is bitten constantly," says Steven Barnes, who lives in Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, a megacity in the grip of an outbreak. "It would be really easy for her to get infected."

Barnes isn't just slapping on repellent and spraying bedrooms to keep mosquitos at bay. He has created an app called Fight Dengue that tells users if anyone nearby has the disease. If so, they know they should take extra precautions to avoid being bitten.

Barnes built the app for personal use, but it has gathered 400 users since he made it freely available. He has created another app called Fight Zika to track the disease currently sweeping through South America, and plans to create one for malaria.

Currently, the apps alert people to nearby cases using government data or self-reporting. But Barnes wants to make them a more powerful tool for preventing disease by using information about where people have been to pinpoint where people are getting infected. To do that, he's calling on Google to help.

Pools of disease

Speaking via a video link to a conference on neglected tropical diseases in London last week, he put up a slide appealing directly to the tech giant. "Dear Google," the

slide read. “Can we have an API please? Allow the user to give access to the last 15 days of location data upon infection. Anonymously. We’ll do the rest.”

Dengue and Zika spread after a mosquito feeds on blood from someone infected with one of the viruses. After a few days incubation, the mosquito will then pass the virus on to anyone she bites in the remaining weeks of her life.

The mosquitoes that carry these viruses don’t usually fly more than a few hundred yards. So if one of your neighbours gets dengue, your risk of getting the disease is much higher than if the nearest case is a kilometre or two away. A few months ago, something happened that gave Barnes a new idea for tracking the disease and the insects that spread it.

Three of his wife’s friends came down with dengue at the same time. They all lived in different parts of Kuala Lumpur, but had recently met in a park.

It seemed likely that the park was the point of infection. Barnes, who runs his own software consultancy company, realised that if his apps could track where large numbers of people had been before getting infected, then overlay their location histories, the major mosquito hotspots would emerge from the data.

Search and destroy

People living nearby could then take extra precautions, and they or local authorities could focus on killing mosquitoes there rather than spraying indiscriminately. “Once you find the source, you don’t need to blindly fog anymore,” Barnes says.

The idea is that people who have just come down with dengue would download the app and anonymously share their location data for the past 15 days. The trouble is that while Google does keep a history of its customers’ locations, it doesn’t offer any way for third-party apps to request access.

Would Google ever consider letting its users opt-in to sharing their location histories? Google didn’t say when *New Scientist* asked, but it has previously said it is interested in helping the fight against Zika.

Even if Google does play ball, success will depend on lots of infected people sharing their data. But it would be in people’s interests to do so, not just to protect family and friends, but because coming down with one strain of dengue doesn’t stop you

getting the other four strains, so catching it is still something you need to avoid. The terrible pain these later infections can cause give the disease its nickname, “breakbone fever”.

By New Scientist

PAINTING BY NUMBERS: WHAT VALUE IN CHINA'S ART MARKET?



China's best-selling living artist Cui Ruzhao poses in Beijing

The serenity of Cui Ruzhuo's ink landscapes is a far cry from the turmoil of China's contemporary art market. But he can bank on his own status as the country's best-selling living artist.

Cui's works reflect traditional Chinese forms and subjects, replete with largely monochrome mountains, lakes and trees.

Little known in the West, his works fetched more than \$120 million at public auctions last year, up 69 percent, even as the overall market plummeted, according to wealth publisher the Hurun Report's newly-released China art list.

"When an artist is creating, a very important point is to definitely be sincere and responsible towards your own art," Cui said at the launch of the document.

"Do not just see your works as products," he added.

Cui is in a position where he can afford to proclaim himself on the moral high ground.

But he acknowledged that he watched the market "quite closely", before lauding multi-billionaire art collector Wang Jianlin as a man with "personal cultivation".

Connoisseurs fear that in a system where money dominates the conversation around value, artistic quality risks being sidelined.

"China's art market is a chaotic mess. People are always looking for a standard by which to judge works, but art isn't like the Olympics," said artist, columnist and curator Xie Chunyan.

"You measure a long jump in metres, but art isn't that simple -- money is one metric, but it's not the only criteria."

Hurun Report chairman Rupert Hoogewerf said that the art list was intended as a guide for someone like him, who loves "the idea of being interested in art" but "lacks a deep understanding of it".

"These people are looking to become more educated and cultured and are looking to get into the art world," he said of China's nouveau riche entrepreneurs, "but where to start?"

Flying in circles

China's contemporary art market is riddled with systemic flaws and inconsistencies, insiders say.

The country's system of museums remains weak, and critics are regularly offered "red envelopes" of bribe money in exchange for positive reviews, aiding unchecked speculation.

Hoogewerf admitted that the auction statistics his list depended on were "far from" perfect.

"It's well known that a lot of the auction prices might be ramped, and some of the works are never paid for at the end of it," he said. "There are a lot of problems."

It is a phenomenon that threatens quality and development, according to artists and critics.

"An art world that focuses on money can only spit out artists of high net worth -- not profound or truly great artists," lamented Li Mo, calligrapher and history researcher at Beijing University.

"The art market and artistic creation are like two wings of a bird -- if the creative wing is atrophied and the money-making one is strong, our art world can only fly in circles."

Test of time

Auction sales for China's top 100 living artists totalled \$565 million last year, according to Hurun Report, down 45 percent on 2014.

The fall was largely due to a collapse in volume, rather than average prices, with 6,863 works auctioned over the course of the year, compared to 15,921 in 2014.

China's contemporary calligraphy and painting business remains immature and subject to individual distortions, said long-time art analyst Qi Jianqiu.

The "deformed market" of years past, he said, was based heavily on gifting practices and had been hard hit by slowing economic growth and an anti-corruption campaign under President Xi Jinping.

But according to art critic and ink painter Zhang Zhaohui, some artists' sales values rose "because they have good relations with bureaucrats and the wealthy".

"They aren't in fact very good artists, but they work their network of relationships -- perhaps using only 10 percent of their energy and brainpower on painting and 90 percent of their energy on making use of those relationships."

Even so, he said, the long arc of art history would establish the difference between price and genuine artistic value.

"History is like a sieve -- it will always filter out works that do not stand the test of time, while the truly good works will be gradually passed down through generations."

By Yahoo

The logo features a stylized magnifying glass icon on the left, composed of a green outer ring and a white inner circle. To its right, the words "UNDER THE MACROSCOPE" are written in large, bold, yellow capital letters. The "U" and "T" are partially overlapping, and the "M" and "A" are also partially overlapping.

UNDER THE MACROSCOPE

Under the MacroScope is a weekly summary of what's happening around the world and what's worth pondering. Stay on top of international and local news with this bulletin produced by the Raffles Economics and Current Affairs Society