



Press Release

Date: September 25, 2014

## **Second Blue Plaque unveils at the former Rowe & Co building**

**Yangon:** The second commemorative Blue Plaque of Yangon was unveiled at the headquarters of AYA Bank on Mahabandoola Road today.

The building at the corner of Mahabandoola Garden Street and Mahabandoola Road was built in 1910 and housed the Rowe & Co. department store in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For over 30 years it held the office of the Department of Immigration and Manpower until 2005. This Blue Plaque stands as part of Yangon Heritage Trust's efforts to highlight historical buildings and renowned residents who contributed to the narrative of the city.

Yangon Heritage Trust believes that the introduction of commemorative Blue Plaques will make Yangon's history accessible to people of all age and backgrounds.

Founder and Chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust, Dr Thant Myint-U said, "We are extremely pleased with the renovation of the old Rowe & Company building and hope it might inspire the renovation of many other privately owned heritage buildings in Yangon. The plaque is recognition of its significant place in Myanmar history and social life over generations as well as its architectural distinction."

Rowe & Company was once among the most opulent department stores in Asia, and this store contained one of Yangon's earliest electrical lifts, ceiling fans, and basements. Europeans and wealthy Asians flocked to the retailer for luxury items as well as practical imported goods. During the Second World War, the store was thoroughly looted, but Rowe & Co. managed to rebuild its assets and retain its former glory as "a veritable Harrods of the East."

In April 1964, the store was nationalized along with its other 38 branches and 12,200 other trading establishments throughout Myanmar. During the Socialist period the building served as a library for the Worker's College. After damage sustained during Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the Ministry of Construction chose this building for renovation which included an entirely new roof.

The first Blue Plaque was unveiled at City Hall in August. AYA Bank Headquarters is the second of many buildings and sites to receive commemorative plaques to come in the coming weeks.

Royal Philips agreed to contribute US\$ 75,000 for the Yangon Blue Plaques initiative. Aside from the highlighting key cultural heritage locations, the contribution will also support the research and curation of historical sites, and creation and installation of Blue Plaques that will share the historical relevance and background of notable people and places across the city.

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## **Yangon Heritage Trust**

Established in 2012, the Yangon Heritage Trust promotes the proper conservation of Yangon's rich urban heritage within a cohesive planning process. It believes that good integration of conservation and development can make Yangon into one of Asia's most beautiful and liveable cities. The Trust assists in the conservation of urban heritage places, advocates for sustainable and sympathetic development within the historic city, advises on the adoption of planning policies and manages a range of training, public outreach and advocacy programs.

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## **Royal Philips:**

Royal Philips (NYSE: PHG, AEX: PHIA) is a diversified health and well-being company, focused on improving people's lives through meaningful innovation in the areas of Healthcare, Consumer Lifestyle and Lighting. Headquartered in the Netherlands, Philips posted 2013 sales of EUR 23.3 billion and employs approximately 113,000 employees with sales and services in more than 100 countries. The company is a leader in cardiac care, acute care and home healthcare, energy efficient lighting solutions and new lighting applications, as well as male shaving and grooming and oral healthcare. News from Philips is located at [www.philips.com/newscenter](http://www.philips.com/newscenter).

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