

**FILIPINO BOOM** In 2011, Philippines took over from India as the call center capital of the world, employing some 600,000 people. Whether you're calling to book a flight, secure a theater ticket or demand to know why your TV is malfunctioning, you're likely to get a Filipino. **Manila teems with young people who man phone lines night and day from impersonal skyscraper offices.** Their customers are usually in other time zones. Filipinos are particularly popular among customer service lines of U.S. businesses. They are friendly, fluent in English, and influence by their American colonial past. But Filipino operators are also active in other Western countries.

Driving the increased investment is labor costs now lower than Indian norms. On average, a Filipino call center agent earns about \$4,800 a year. **Manila decided to jump into the call center business about a decade ago, as web telephony began growing.** Phone software programs such as Skype have opened the door to massive

communications openings in many developing countries. **In the Asian archipelago, where a quarter of the population lives below national poverty lines, the web communication has created an employment boom.** Local authorities are encouraging the spread of call centers from Manila, the capital, to other areas of the country, in an effort to jumpstart employment throughout the country. India is still the model. If Filipino call center have more operators, India still has the most advanced technologies, so much so it has the largest total number of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) employees. **In 2010, Indian BPO revenues stood at \$70 billion, compared with \$9 billion in the Philippines.**

**UNLOVED EUROPE** Positive views of the European Union and European nations have declined sharply over the last year. Not only that, but Germany has been overtaken by Japan as the world's most positively viewed major nation. The results

come from a 22-country global poll conducted for the BBC by GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

**The perception of China, both the developing and industrialized world, has also jumped, overtaking both the EU and the U.S.** The 2012 Country Ratings Poll asked 24,090 people around the world to determine whether their view of 16 countries and the EU was "mostly positive" or "mostly negative."

While in past years the EU has generally received quite positive ratings, this year positive views of the EU have dropped from 56 to 48 percent. Ratings of other European nations dropped as well, with the UK down six points and France down four. Germany, the most positively regarded nation last year, saw its positive ratings drop from 60 to 56 percent. **This puts Germany in second place behind Japan, which is now rated most positively.**

Positive views of China rose from 46 to

50 per cent on average. They jumped particularly sharply in the UK (up 19 points), as well as in Australia, Canada, and Germany (all up 18 points). The most negatively rated countries were, as in previous years, Iran (55 percent negative), Pakistan (51 percent negative), and Israel and North Korea (both 50 percent negative).

**Said GlobeScan President Chris Coulter: "The turmoil in the EU, long seen as an attractive bastion of political and economic stability, has raised doubts in people's minds about its continued ability to be a global leader. Hopes are turning to China."**

Added PIPA director Steven Kull: "The fact that views of the EU itself had a sharper downturn than specific EU countries suggests doubts about how the EU is dealing with its collective problems."

The falls in the positive way the EU has been viewed in the past was particularly



Ap Photo / L. Seng Sin

marked in some countries. **There were particularly sharp falls in Ghana (down 26 points), Indonesia (down 20 points), Chile (down 18 points), and Australia and South Korea (down 17 points each).**

Although views of the U.S. changed little, positive views rose in Europe (France from 46 to 62 percent, UK from 38 to 57 percent, Spain 41 to 51 percent and Germany 37 to 44 percent), but dropped in South America (Chile 62 to 47 percent, Brazil 64 to 55 percent, and Peru 53 to 46 percent).

*Malaysian protestors as they took to the streets in December 2010.*

**MALAYSIAN SPRING** Eighteen months after the Arab Spring, the spring mood is on the move. **In Malaysia, prominent opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has begun talking about a Hibiscus Revolution (the national flower) and a Malaysian Spring, both in reference to recent protests against the country's electoral system.**

Since Malaysia, formerly Malaya, won its independence from England 54 years ago it has been governed the by United Malays National Organization, known as the Bersatu coalition. But in April, more than 100,000 people gathered in the capital of Kuala Lumpur to oppose the government, the largest such protest in the history of the Muslim-majority country. **Police and protestors clashed when the crowd entered Merdeka Square, with authorities using water cannons and tear gas.**

Some saw the protest as a kind of NGO revolt. Since 1984, Bersih has acted as an umbrella for 84 non-governmental organizations critical of the Malaysian electoral system. "The system lets the governing party obtain an executive majority even if it has low popular support," says the co-chairman of Bersih. **But Bersatu rejects the accusations, insisting the NGOs are tools of domestic opposition groups.**

In reality, the government all heavily monitors Malaysian courts, businesses and media. As in many protest-rich states, the web is the protest tool of choice, with [www.malaysiakini.com](http://www.malaysiakini.com) providing Malaysians with uncensored information. Meanwhile, the Malaysian economy continues flourishing. Unlike the North African uprisings, triggered mostly by economic conditions, Malaysian has a vibrant middle class. **Slowly but surely, Malaysians are demanding that human rights violations end and that the citizenry be granted greater justice and freedom.**

## LAST CALL

There's a lot on the line for a 75-year-old Nepalese woman named Gyani Maiya Sen. She's the last living person to fluently speak the Kusunda language, a tribal tongue of unknown origins that linguists have struggled for years to understand. **As a result, Sen has become something of a quiet celebrity.**

According to linguistics professor Madhav Prasad Pokharel, Kusunsa is a rare "language isolate," unrelated to any



Ap Photo / G. Amarasinghe

*A rickshaw in Chitwan, located about 80 kilometers from Katmandu.*

known language. **It's morphology and syntax are unique.** But the Kusanda tribe is vanishing, and the language with it, with Pokharel warning that the world stands to lose "a unique and important part of human heritage."

Sen is fortunate. She can also speak Nepali. **At the same time, she rues "not being able to speak [my] own language with the people from [my] community."** Though the Kusanda tribe still has members, none understand or speak the language. Sen fears Kusunda will die with

her since the government is making not effort to intervene to save the language.

Sen, a stone-crusher by profession, still takes time out to meet with linguistics students who want to learn her expertise. **Some are documenting Kusunda language and have identified three vowels and 15 consonants.**

Linguists and tribal campaigners have begun pushing Nepalese officials to protect the language.

In the meantime, Sen keeps talking, for the sake of history.