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Rakhine State Advisory Commission to submit interim report within two months

A MEMBER of the Rakhine State Advisory Commission said that the commission would submit an interim report to the union government in the next two months.

The commission will make its final report a year from now, but an interim report would be much anticipated because of the ongoing tensions in northern Rakhine State.

"We won't decide on anything. We will just recommend the best measures that will benefit all people in the state. We don't have any right to make decisions," said Daw Saw Khin Tint, a member of the advisory commission and Chairperson of the Rakhine State Literature and Culture Association.

She added that the commission will submit its interim report between January and February of 2017.

Former UN Secretary-General and Chairman of Rakhine State Advisory Commission Mr Kofi Annan has been in Rakhine State to listen to the voices of residents and officials since 29th November. Yesterday morning, he travelled by military helicopter to Mrauk-U together with Chief Minister U Nyi Pu of Rakhine State and Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut.

His first stop in Mrauk-U was the Shitthaung Pagoda, the site of an ancient palace and an archaeological museum. U Nyein Lwin, the director of the Archaeological and National Museum, escorted the former UN secre-



Following their visit to Rakhine State, the Rakhine State Advisory Commission chaired by Mr Kofi Annan is scheduled to meet with the President, the State Counsellor, the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and MPs today and to give a press conference in Yangon on 6th December 2016. PHOTO: MNA

tary-general and commission members around the museum.

Later, Mr Kofi Annan and party met with six local ethnic people from Paungtote Village, led by U Tun Hlaing, in the meeting hall of the district general administration department and 21 members of the Muslim community from the same village, led

by U Chit Maung, at the middle school of the village.

In the afternoon, the commission chairman met with the township administrator and officials of government departments in Myebon Township in the town meeting hall. At the meeting, district officers of the Mrauk-U District Immigration Department

reported on the number of households in Rakhine State, the comparison of Buddhist and Muslim populations, background history, the citizenship scrutiny of Muslims, objectives, future plans, the formation of State/Region Citizenship Scrutiny Boards, issuance of National Verification Cards (NVCs) and difficulties to

Mr Kofi Annan.

Questions raised by Mr Kofi Annan were answered by Rakhine State Security and Border Affairs Minister Col Htein Lin and officials.

Afterwards, Mr Kofi Annan and party visited the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp
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Improvised land mine on bridge in downtown Kutkai defused

A TATMADAW bomb squad defused a highly-explosive improvised land mine at a bridge in downtown Kutkai yesterday morning, according to a press release of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

As news was received that a



suspicious tin container was found on the bridge in downtown Kutkai, members of the government bomb squad examined the container and found about one hundred blocks of highly-explosive TNT with 13

detonators attached with a wire to a motorcycle battery. The bomb squad defused the land mine and government troops conducted area clearance operations.—Myanmar News Agency

Mongkoe under control by government forces

MONGKOE, which has been under attack by armed groups for two weeks, has been brought under control by the government forces, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services yesterday.

Control of the town was regained after reinforcement columns of the Tatmadaw joined troops at the Monekoe military post in northern Shan State and

after clearance operations in the town were conducted by troops yesterday. The combined forces of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) withdrew from the area after Tatmadaw troops fought back and conducted clearance operations in the town.

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Natpauk Elephant Camp to appeal to visitors with ecotourism tours

NATPAUK Elephant Camp, one of the camps in the west Katha timber extraction area that is part of the Myanma Timber Enterprise, welcomes visitors to observe elephants and to enjoy natural landscapes through various ecotourism services.

A new plan that allows visitors to go on a long-term elephant ride in the forest is underway, said Dr Aung Thura Soe, the camp manager, adding that the camp officials are negotiating with an American firm to expand accommodation facilities for foreign visitors.

Currently, visitors can enjoy a 15-minute elephant ride and tour and other sightseeing programmes at the camp in Indaw Township, Sagaing Region.

For the ecotourism show, there are different charges for local and foreign visitor. The admission fee is Ks20,000 for foreigner and Ks3,000 for local. The camp collects the same amount to

those who wish to go on the elephant ride short trip.

The Natpauk Elephant Camp started offering ecotourism services with 27 elephants in 2009, when it hosted 126 foreign visitors. The number of visitors increased to 240 in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, 315 in FY2011-2012 and 516 in FY2012-2013. The number declined to 210 in FY2013-2014.

Myanmar is over 261,000 square miles in size, with a large variety of natural resources, plants and animals. The richness of its natural biodiversity makes the country ideal for ecotourism.

According to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, the country received over 4.6 million international visitors last fiscal year. This number was a 52 per cent increase when compared to 2014. The ministry estimates the number will increase to 5.5 million this fiscal year.—Aung Thant Khaing



Natpauk Elephant Camp seen with visitors. PHOTO: AUNG THURA SOE

Anti-child begging campaign in Mandalay deemed a success



Such child beggars are rarely seen these days. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING

“NO CHILD BEGGARS have been seen on the streets of Mandalay since early November, as municipal police began arresting street beggars starting from October as part of an anti-child begging campaign,” said a member of the public.

Under this campaign, police arrested 12 child beggars who were found within the municipal area. They were sent to the

social welfare department along with their parents and guardians. However, police were unable to arrest persons who train and control those beggars for profits.

Child beggars were mostly found at the railway station, at the corners of 26th street and 80th street; 35th street and 80th street; and 26th street and 66th street in downtown Mandalay.

According to a survey con-

ducted by World Vision between 2013 and 2016, 57 street kids were detained by authorities within three years. Of these children, 22 children received a public school education.

“Members of the Water and Sanitation Department under the Mandalay City Development Committee brought those child beggars to be sent to training schools opened by the social welfare department”, said its head U Kyaw Win.

He went on to say that members of the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Organisation met the parents of those children to educate them on child rights and related matters.

A survey of the social welfare department on 120 street children in Mandalay found that 75 per cent of street children used drugs such as yaba and other stimulants.

Authorities urged residents to donate cash to philanthropic bodies instead of giving cash to child beggars.—Aung Thant Khaing

Myanmar's first waste-to-energy plant nearly finished

THE waste-to-energy plant being constructed in Shwepyitha Industrial Zone in Yangon is 95 per cent completed, according to the Yangon City Development Committee.

The country's first-ever plant to produce energy from waste materials is estimated to be put into operation in April of next year, said a spokesperson of the YCDC's Environmental Conservation and Sanitation Depart-

ment.

The Yangon Waste-to-Energy Plant Project has been implemented by the YCDC and tender winner Japanese Future Engineering Cooperation Agency since October last year with the use of a US\$16 million budget.

After the project is fully completed, the plant will generate up to 700 kilowatts per hour, 300KW of which will go to Yangon residents through the

national grid. The plant will produce electricity from 60 tonnes of waste materials a day.

The waste collection in Yangon is estimated at around 1,700 tons per day, according to the YCDC.

The new plant will help reduce methane and carbon dioxide transmissions that damage the natural environment of the city, a spokesperson of the committee said.—200

Crime NEWS

14 charged for smuggling of farm animals last month

FOURTEEN people have been charged for illegal smuggling of farm animals under the Essential Supplies and Services Law after they were unable to produce documents proving their ownership of the animals last month.

Police arrested three people and confiscated 13 cattle in Mandalay Region and four men and 11 cattle in Banmauk Township in Sagaing Region in early November. The two men who illegally transported 20 cattle by truck were also arrested in Indaw Township in Sagaing Region in mid-November.

A similar case occurred on 17 November in PyinOoLwin Township, where police discov-

ered the illegal smuggling of five cattle by two people. Three other men were arrested for smuggling farm animals in Ayadaw Township in Sagaing Region.

The Myanmar Police Force charged 15 traffickers who illegally transported 80 cattle in October and 21 others for smuggling of 90 cattle in September.

According to the Essential Supplies and Services Law, a person who violates any provision issued under Section 4 of this law shall be punished with imprisonment for a term from a minimum of six months to a maximum of three years and shall also be liable to a fine not exceeding Ks500,000.—Lynn Lynn

Yaba tablets, raw opium seized in Monyin, Mandalay, Tachilek

MEMBERS of the Anti-Drug Squad Unit 3 based in Monyin searched a motorbike driven by Ma Nu Nu Lwin accompanied by Nay Win, alias Cho Win, on board at the checkpoint on Mawluu-Monyin Road in Nantiaung village, Monyin Township on Saturday and discovered 21 kilos of raw opium.

On the same day, members of Anti-Drug Squad Unit 17 based in Mandalay (North) searched a room above the KhineLee Hot-Pot Shop and seized 4,000 yaba tablets on a table at which Bo Tun, alias Maung Tun, and Zin Ko Oo had been sitting. Police continued to search the house owned by Bo

Tun and seized 1,560 additional yaba tablets.

Similarly, members of Anti-Drug Squad Unit 30 based in Tachilek searched a house owned by Ma YarMi in Pabi-3 village, Mongkoe village-tract, Tachilek Township. Police found Ma YarMi together with Ma Helem and KumShu alia Arti and seized 2,101 yaba tablets, 200,000 baht and a motorbike. After an investigation, police arrested a woman, Ma Ardo, who was allegedly a drug seller. Police have filed charge against all the suspects under the Psychotropic Substances Law and Anti Narcotic Drugs Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Rakhine State Advisory Commission to submit interim report between ...

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in Kanthahtwetwa Ward, where U Kyaw Thein, a resident of the camp, explained the issuance of NVC cards.

Mr Kofi Annan posed questions to residents of the camp including U Kyaw Thein, U Aung Lwin, Daw Khin Mar Cho and Daw Myint Myint Htay.

Yesterday evening, Mr Kofi Annan and party proceeded to Nay Pyi Taw. Concerning the visit of the advisory commission, Rakhine State Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery U Kyaw Lwin said that he believed that the advisory commission was formed by the State Counsellor's Office with the aim of examining the situation on the ground without bias in accordance with law. However, he said

he knew nothing about discussions between the residents and the former UN secretary-general as he was not involved in the matter but he was optimistic about the discussions because he believed the former UN secretary-general is a man of rationality.

Mr Kofi Annan said that the commission was not a UN commission but a national commission and they would submit recommendations and the union government would make decisions based on their reports. He said that he was glad to see peaceful demonstration against his visit to Rakhine State and negotiations between the two communities would lead to a solution. — *Ye Khaung Nyunt and Myint Maung Soe*

Two civilians wounded by heavy artillery shelling from KIA/TNLA



TWO civilians were injured, one seriously, by heavy weapons fired by joint forces of the KIA and the TNLA in Kutkai, northern Shan State yesterday after-

noon, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

The joint forces attacked Kutkai at about 12:10pm with heavy artillery, three shells of which exploded in Ward-5 of the town, damaging the roofs of three houses and injuring Ma Hnin Hnin Swe and Ma Toe Toe. Ma Hnin Hnin Swe was seriously injured by shrapnel, requiring her transfer from Kutkai Hospital to Lashio Hospital. Government troops are conducting area clearance operations in the area.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Shwe Baho, Thayay Konebaung and Villages in southern Maungtaw!

Myint Maung Soe

WE, THE NEWS TEAM, who are currently in Maungtaw of the Rakhine State, left for villages in southern Maungtaw in a vehicle on November 30. The car took us along the Maungtaw-Buthitaung road and moved on along the concrete road near May Yu Golf Club 4 miles far from Maungtaw, arriving at the village of Vesali. Houses are sparsely situated in the village but systematically built and well-fenced. Near the village, a school was found nearly in a state of newly constructed building.

Proceeding from there, we reached the village of Shwe Yin Aye very soon, a village where local ethnics reside. In the surrounding, a beautiful landscape—a mountain range and fields were seen. Then we got to

the village “Khayemyaing”, going past by Kantharyar and Bho-dhi-gone villages along the road. Most of the local populace in the village well-built with a primary school, a dispensary and corrugated-iron-sheet-roofed & bamboo-walled houses in it, eke out their living by farming.

Out of all the villages, Shwe Baho is a remarkable one, being next to the road and being abundant with pucca-buildings—50 units at the conservative estimate and roads with an urbanized pattern. There is a drinking water well each on both sides of the road, crowded with people who came to take baths or to fetch water. The houses are fenced with woods and at the top of the village is a monastery. Some of the local residents are learnt to have immigrated to the country from

Voices from Local Residents on Kofi Annan's Maungtaw Trip

Myint Maung Soe

KOFI ANNAN, the chairman of the advisory commission on Rakhine State, commission members, U Nyi Pu, Chief Minister of Rakhine State Cabinet and responsible officials went to villages in Maungtaw District to hear the voices of local residents.

Here are some excerpts from conversations with residents.

Mohamed Rafeik of Buthitaung---

“We assume that the commission's present visit will benefit peace and stability of the area. As regards Buthitaung's situation, the local populace did try for conflicts not to take place in the region in 2012 as well. Now we are taking great care for any problems not to break out in Buthitaung. For peace



U Hasaung Amed. PHOTO: A1Soe

and stability of the area, all the populace residing in the region will have to try hand in hand with each other.”

U Zaw Phyto Tun (administrator, Kyikanpyin, Wapeik Village) said: “We warmly welcome the trip of the commission. As the existing situations are being dealt with according to law, we hope for the good outcome.”

U Saw Thein Aung (In-charge of the school, Wapeik village): “It will be successful if all the nationals work together. The

commission's visit will result in a good outcome concerning peace and stability, which is the vital role in the region.”

U Hasaung Amed of Kyety-oepyin village: “We want to live in peace here. We don't want to move to other places. We warmly welcome the visit of the commission and we hope for the best. We all are willing to co-exist in this place. We don't want any problems.”

Daw Nyo Ma Oo of Shwe Baho village said that Mr Kofi Annan's visit would bring about the just and fair performance and we have the best chance to live in unity.

U Tin Aung, the administrator of Gorduthara village said, “The present visit of Mr Kofi Annan will bear good results and the commission will perform at its best based on the existing situations, we assume.”

IDPs arrive in Nawngkhio and Namtu, Shan State

INTERNALLY displaced persons (IDPs) from Mantung have recently been moved to religious buildings in Nawngkhio and Namtu due to the attacks of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in northern Shan State, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office.

A total of 31 people of 10 households from Mawhtaik, Konmon, Namhu and Munggaung villages moved to the monastery of Ohnmathi Village in Nawngkhio.

A total of 415 IDPs were moved to Shwemyintha monastery, Kisu Temple and Kachin Baptist Church in Namtu after an incident between government troops and the joint armed groups.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Mongkoe under ...

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The attacks of the combined KIA/TNLA/MNDAA targeted government military outposts and police stations in the areas of Muse, Kutkai, Mongkoe, Kyukoke, Phangsai, Pangsang, Manken and Kyinsankyawk (Honang). According to updated government data, a total of 14 people have been killed and 50 injured in the northern Myanmar conflict since its outbreak. The dead include three policemen, one militiaman and 10 civilians, while the injured include 11 policemen, two government staff members and 37 civilians.—*GNLM*



PHOTO: A1 Soe

Bangladesh. Though not being economically developed, they mainly live on agriculture and livestock breeding, depending upon farmland and cattle given an aid by the government since the advent of setting up the village.

Other well-known villages in southern Maungtaw are Thatay Konebaung, Kaingyi, Mawrawady and Oodaung. It is learnt that there are about 11 ethnic-assembled villages linked

with concrete roads to each other. Only one vehicle can drive on the roads, but people in the area rely completely on these roads. On one side May Yu forest reserve and green mountain ranges can be seen with a vast land of golden paddy fields on the other side—some harvested and some ready to be reaped. Occasionally, firewood fetchers, paddy harvesters and cow herders were found. In the period after 1990s, these vil-

lages were systematically set up for nationals, with villagers provided with houses and cows free of charge.

A village has dwelling places from 50 to 200. At the time when Maungtaw district will be supplied with electricity from the greater national grid line, these villages are coming to have greater job opportunities and their socio-economic development will improve for sure.

Abe equals record for 4th longest-serving postwar PM

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday matched the record of 1,806 days in office set by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in the 1980s, the fourth longest total term for a Japanese leader in the postwar era.

The figure combines Abe's first stint in power from 2006 to 2007, before he resigned citing ill health, with his second administration that began in December 2012.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, the top government spokesman, often described as Abe's right-hand man, told a press conference Friday that Abe's longevity in leadership is the result of "making clear the parameters of what he's going to do and taking political initiative to bring the country forward."

Japan's longest-serving postwar prime minister was Eisaku Sato, who served for 2,798 days in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by Shigeru

Yoshida, who served in the 1940s and 1950s and logged 2,616 days in office.

Abe, 62, will match the third-place record of Junichiro Koizumi, from whom he took over in 2006, if he is in office on 27 May next year.

Abe is the sixth longest-serving prime minister when prewar and wartime leaders are taken into account, with Taro Katsura top at 2,886 days served in the 1900s and 1910s.

Abe would have to serve until 19 November, 2019, to match Katsura's all-time record, something that would be possible if the Liberal Democratic Party goes ahead with a plan to lengthen its term limit rule for party presidents to a maximum of three terms over nine years.

Japanese law has no limit on how long prime ministers can serve, but by convention they must remain the leaders of their parties.—*Kyodo News*

Australian PM says he's confident Trump won't pull out of US refugee deal

SYDNEY — Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said on Sunday he was confident a refugee resettlement deal with the United States would go ahead, despite White House comments which seemed to cast doubt about its future under a Trump Administration.

White House deputy spokesman Eric Schultz told reporters the deal to resettle in the US refugees currently held at Australian-funded offshore processing centres was reached with President Barack Obama, and it was the prerogative of each president to set policies.

"We have one President at a time," Schultz said on Friday. "The President-elect, Donald Trump, will set the policies once he takes the oath of office."

Turnbull downplayed the comments when questioned by reporters in Sydney on Sunday.

"It's a very good arrangement and we are confident that we'll continue



Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull uses his phone in the House of Representatives at Parliament House in Canberra, on 14 September 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

through the change of administration," the Australian Associated Press quoted him saying.

Australia announced last month the Obama administration had agreed to take a substantial number

of the 1,200 refugees held on Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.

The resettlement deal with United States came after Turnbull agreed in September to take part

in a US-led programme to resettle refugees from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador as part of Australia's annual intake of 18,750 asylum seekers.

Whether Donald Trump, who has advocated a ban on people from nations that had been "compromised by terrorism", honours the agreement is uncertain.

US Homeland Security officials were scheduled to begin assessing asylum seekers on Nauru this week.

Many of asylum seekers at the camps are Muslims who have fled conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, said it was very clear the deal Australia struck with the US was not airtight.

"The announcement was very hastily put together because they weren't expecting Trump to win and then it came very clear the whole deal could roll over," he said.—*Reuters*

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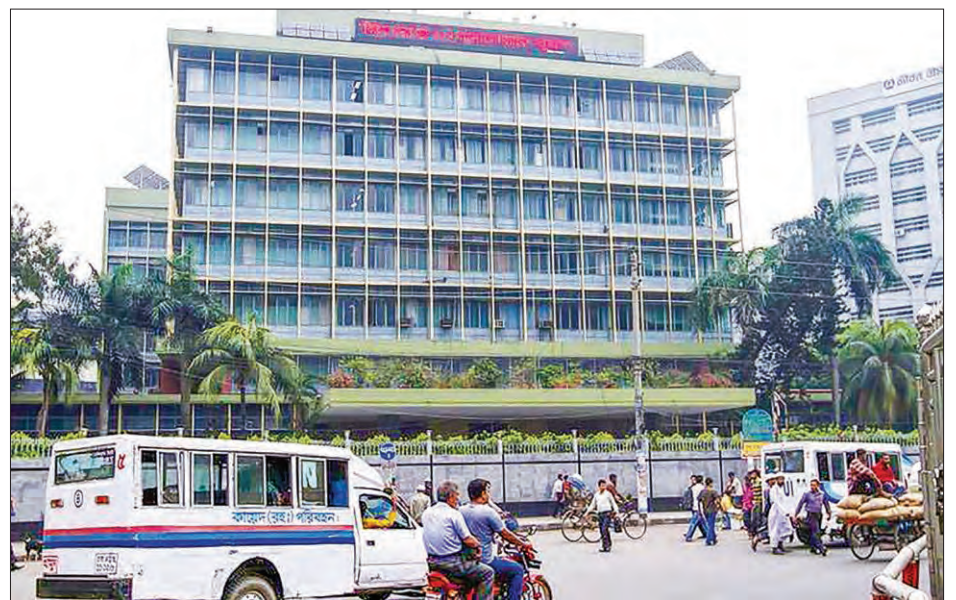
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Philippines urges Bangladesh to share results of heist investigation

MANILA — The Philippine government wants Bangladesh to share the findings of its investigation into how unknown hackers pulled off one of the world's largest cyber bank heists, to help speed up recovery of the stolen funds.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, who last week met with a Bangladesh delegation, said Manila "strongly recommended" Dhaka share the results of its investigation. He assured the visitors the government was doing it everything it could to find Bangladesh's missing money. Cyber criminals tried to steal nearly \$1 billion from Bangladesh Bank in February and made off with \$81 million via an account at the New York Federal Reserve. That money was transferred to four accounts with false names at one RCBC branch in Manila before vanishing.

"We are pursuing the lawsuits on your behalf as vigorously as we can," Dominguez was quoted in a statement as telling the delegation. Bangladesh Bank has declined to disclose the



Commuters pass by the front of the Bangladesh central bank building in Dhaka, on 8 March 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

findings of its own inquiry, saying it wanted to deny perpetrators knowledge of the investigation.

Most of the money was laundered through Philippine casinos. About \$15 million recovered from a gaming junket operator has been returned to Bangladesh, with a further \$2.7 million frozen.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who had

earlier pledged the stolen money would be returned, canceled a meeting with the Bangladesh team because of "pressing matters".

Asked if the findings of the probe would be shared with the Philippines government, Bangladesh's ambassador in Manila, John Gomes, said: "No one asked us anything yet."

But Philippine central bank deputy governor

Nestor Espenilla said Manila had received an assurance from Bangladesh it would provide an "initial update" since the investigation was not yet finished.

Bangladesh has said it wanted RCBC, or the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC), to compensate it for its losses, but RCBC refuses to pay and has said the Bangladesh central bank was "negligent".—*Reuters*

LOCAL Business



A locomotive running on a railway-track bieng seen. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading to be put out for bids in Japan

TENDERS to upgrade the Yangon-Mandalay railway will be open for bids in early 2017 in Japan, said U Tun Aung Thin, a general manager from Myanma Railway (Lower Myanmar office).

Upgrading of this railway track is slated to be completed in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The aim of putting out tender bids in Japan is to invite expe-

rienced companies from Japan who will build the tracks to meet international criteria. This project will be provided by the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA).

There are three different railway routes that are part of the upgrading project on the Yangon-Mandalay railway: Yangon-Toungoo, Toungoo-Yamethin and Yame-

thin-Mandalay. The estimated cost of the project is about US\$1,700million. Under the first phase, the upgrading of the Yangon-Toungoo railway track will be carried out, with an estimated cost of US\$200million.

After the whole project is completed, the Yangon-Mandalay rail journey is expected to take eight hours, it is learnt.—200

Yangon real estate market recovers late in the year

THE Yangon real estate market has bounced back from a two-year cooling period at the end of the year, with sales and rentals of real property going well, said Yangon real estate agents.

"It is a long time that the real estate market has been cool. However, the sales in the end of year are

higher than the previous year. Especially, the real property in Shwe Taung Kyar, Kamayut, Bahan and Mayangon are highly demanded.

The plots of land worth Ks1,000 million and Ks2,000 million are selling well", said a real estate businessman.

With the Yangon real

estate market raising its head again and foreign investments entering Myanmar, there is a surge in the rental market in industrial zones, especially in the East Dagon industrial zone and Thilawa.

Recognising the need to encourage real estate investment, the government has passed the Condomin-

ium Law to support the development of a more robust legal structure focused on the industry. With the Condominium Law enacted in January, expatriates can now own apartments in Myanmar, which has had a positive impact on the condominium market, it is learnt from the real estate dealers.—Ko Htet

Chambers of Commerce to suggest economic development in seven sectors

TO effectuate the development of local businesses, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) will give guidance on the needs in seven different sectors — agriculture, construction, energy, manufacturing, tourism, technology and finance, said U Zaw Min Win, the chairman of UMFCCI.

The UMFCCI will submit an assessment report in each sector to the government by April, 2017 in which the government will negotiate the matters concerning private sector development. The federation will put an

idea about the needs for development activities of local businesses.

The government subsidies in the private sector can bring about benefits for local businesses.

The development plan will be drawn up by local experts in cooperation with foreign experts.

To improve the private sector, there are weak points in law, procedures, monetary market and other areas.

The government and private sectors need to join hands to fulfill the requirements and to create a better opportunity, it is learnt.—200

Ministry to amend Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Law

THE Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is preparing to make amendments to the Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Law of 1993 to effectuate tourism development in harmony with each township in various regions and states.

The Hotels and Tourism ministry is exerting efforts in providing neces-

sary tourism facilities by issuing licenses for hotels and guesthouses, travel and tour agencies and tour guides after appropriate scrutiny. A total of 1,391 licences for hotels and guesthouses, 1,742 licenses for tourist transport businesses, 2,714 licenses for tour companies, 40,046 tour guide licences and 2,867

local tour guide licences were already issued as of end of October.

Additionally, continued efforts are being made to implement eco-tourism destinations in forest reserves to attract international travelers. The ministry is trying to meet the needs of the growing numbers of tourists expected

to visit Myanmar in the coming years. To expand the tourism industry in Myanmar, the ministry is exploring new markets and inviting international hotel chains.

Myanmar is rich in natural scenery across the nation, plus cultural heritage and ancient monuments.—200

THAI CENTRAL CHEMICAL PCL ESTABLISHES MYANMAR SUBSIDIARY

Thai Central Chemical Public Company Limited (TCCC) on October 3, 2016, established TCCC Myanmar Limited (TCCCM) as its subsidiary company in Myanmar.

TCCCM is building processing and bagging facilities and a warehouse in Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Yangon, and will start import and distribution of high quality compound NPK fertilizer mainly produced by TCCC in 2018.

Myanmar is an agricultural country with vast agriculture land. High quality fertilizer is not used much yet so there is high potential to improve farm productivity and quality of agricultural crops. By providing its high quality compound NPK fertilizer and fertilization know-how acquired through over 40 years in operation in Thailand, TCCC will enable farmers in Myanmar to increase agricultural production while also upgrading the quality of their farm products.

TCCC's fertilizer is already becoming popular with vegetable and fruit farmers. TCCCM's establishment will offer more agile and diverse services to farmers and distributors in Myanmar. Use of TCCCM's compound NPK fertilizer will also spread to rice and other major crops.

TCCCM will enhance collaboration with its partners in Myanmar to grow its fertilizer business through development and supply of fertilizer that is most suitable to the soil characteristics in Myanmar and which accommodates farmers' essential needs.

TCCCM also plans to build a compound NPK fertilizer plant in Myanmar on the same scale as TCCC.

TCCCM is committed to contributing to agriculture growth in Myanmar by supplying high quality fertilizer.

Mosul residents fear cold and hunger of winter siege

BAGHDAD — No food or fuel has reached Mosul in nearly a week and the onset of rain and cold weather threatens a tough winter for more than a million people still in Islamic State-held areas of the city, residents said on Saturday.

Iraqi troops waging a six-week-old offensive against the militants controlling Mosul have advanced into eastern city districts, while other forces have sealed Mosul's southern and northern approaches and 10 days ago blocked the road west.

But their advance has been hampered by waves of counter-attacks from the ultra-hardline Islamists who have controlled the city since mid-2014 and built a network of tunnels in preparation for their defence of north Iraq's largest city.

The slow progress means the campaign is likely to drag on throughout the winter, and has prompted warnings from aid groups that civilians face a near complete siege in the coming months.

A trader in Mosul, speaking by telephone, said no new food or fuel supplies had reached the city since Sunday.

Despite attempts by the militants to keep prices stable, and the arrest last week of dozens of shopkeepers accused of hiking prices, the trader said food had become more expensive and fuel prices had tripled.

"We've been living under a real state of siege for a week," said one resident of west Mosul, several miles (km) from the frontline neighbourhoods on the east bank of the Tigris river.



Iraqi people flee the Islamic State stronghold of Mosul in al-Samah neighbourhood, Iraq, on 2 December 2016.
PHOTO: REUTERS

"Two days ago the electricity generator supplying the neighbourhood stopped working because of lack of fuel. Water is cut and food prices have risen and it's terribly cold. We fear the days ahead will be much worse".

A pipeline supplying water to around 650,000 people in Mosul was hit during fighting this week between the army and Islamic State. A local official said it could not be fixed because the damage was in an area still being fought over.

Winter conditions will also hit the nearly 80,000 people registered by the United Nations as displaced since the start of the Mosul campaign. That number excludes many

thousands more who were forcibly moved by Islamic State, or fled from the fighting deeper into territory under its control.

Islamic State authorities, trying to portray a sense of normality, released pictures which they said showed a Mosul market on Friday. It showed a crowd of people and a stall selling vegetable oil and canned food but no fresh produce.

They also said they carried out several counter attacks in the last 24 hours against Iraqi troops in eastern Mosul and the mainly Shi'ite Popular Mobilisation forces who have taken territory to the west of the city.

Amaq news agency, which is close to Islamic State, said they

retook half of the Shaimaa district in southeast of the city on Friday, destroyed four army bases in the eastern al-Qadisiya al-Thaniya neighborhood and seized ammunition from fleeing soldiers in al-Bakr district, also in the east.

A source in the Counter Terrorism Services, which are spearheading the army offensive, said Islamic State exploited the bad weather and cloud cover, which prevented air support from a US-led international coalition.

He said the militants had taken back some ground, but predicted their gains would be short-lived.

"This is not the first time it happens. We withdraw to avoid civilian losses and then regain con-

trol. They can't hold territory for long," the source said.

Amaq also said Islamic State fighters waged attacks on Saturday against the Popular Mobilisation paramilitary units near the town of Tal Afar, west of Mosul, showing footage of two damaged vehicles, one with interior ministry markings on it. A spokesman for the militias said those attacks had been repelled. "Daesh attacked at dawn to try to control the village Tal Zalaf," said Karim Nouri. "Clashes continued for two hours, until Daesh withdrew, leaving bodies (of dead fighters) behind."

In Baghdad, a car bomb blew up in a crowded market in the center of the city on Saturday, killing seven people and wounding 15, police and medical sources said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Islamic State fighters have stepped up attacks in the Iraqi capital and other cities since the start of the Mosul operations.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi launched the Mosul offensive on 17 October, aiming to crush Islamic State in the largest city it controls in Iraq and neighboring Syria.

The campaign pits a 100,000-strong US-backed coalition of army troops, special forces, federal police, Kurdish fighters and the Popular Mobilisation forces against a few thousand militants in the city. Defeat would deal a heavy blow to Islamic State's self-styled caliphate in Iraq and Syria, announced by its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi from a Mosul mosque two years ago.—Reuters

Syrian rebels tell US they won't leave Aleppo

BEIRUT — Syrian rebel groups have told the United States they will not leave Aleppo after Moscow called for talks with Washington over a full withdrawal of rebel fighters from the city's besieged eastern districts, a rebel official said on Sunday.

Speaking to Reuters from Turkey, senior rebel official Zakaria Malahifji said the message was delivered to US officials in contacts on Saturday following

the statement from Russia, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most powerful ally.

"Our response to the Americans was as follows: we cannot leave our city, our homes, to the mercenary militias that the regime has mobilized in Aleppo," said Malahifji, the head of the political office of an Aleppo rebel group.

The US officials had asked the rebels "do you want to leave,

(or) do you want to be steadfast", Malahifji said. "They listened to the response and did not comment," he said.

The rebels called on the "friends of the Syrian people" to stand by them and for the urgent delivery of food and medicine to eastern Aleppo and for the wounded to be evacuated, he said.

The Russian-backed Syrian army has captured large areas of eastern Aleppo from rebels in the latest phase of its campaign to take back all of Aleppo. The Syrian government has also been supported by Shi'ite militias from countries including Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

"We cannot leave our homes to Afghans, to Iraqis, and so on," Malahifji said. "(The US officials) were in contact with me and with some of the military and political leaders in Aleppo. We agreed on this answer," he said.

The United States has yet to comment on the proposal made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Saturday for talks on the withdrawal of all rebel fighters "without exclusion" from Aleppo.—Reuters

Iranian president slams US Senate's approval of sanctions bill

TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday slammed the US Senate's unanimous approval last week of an extension of the US president's authority to impose sanctions on Iran.

"Extension of the Iran Sanctions Act is an egregious violation of the nuclear deal and if becomes implemented Iran will show a decisive reaction," Rouhani said in parliament, broadcast live on state-run television. He referred to last year's landmark nuclear accord with world powers.

He said his government will not tolerate any violation of the accord and will give an "appropriate answer" if US President Barack Obama signs the legislation.

"Signing the bill by President Obama is against American commitments," Rouhani said.

The White House on Thursday indicated that Obama will likely sign the legislation into law, having determined that doing so

will not violate the agreement.

The Iran Sanctions Act was originally passed in 1996 to punish investors in certain sectors of Iran's economy and was supposed to expire on 31 December, 2016.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani criticized US Senate Democrats for voting in favor of the extension, which passed the chamber in a 99-0 vote.

Earlier, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the last word on country's crucial issues, said that the extension is "definitely" a violation of the deal.

In the landmark deal that Iran inked last year in Vienna with Russia, China, France, Germany, Britain, and the United States, it accepted long-term restrictions on its nuclear programme in return for an end to crippling banking and economic sanctions by the international community.—Kyodo News



A rebel fighter carries food while riding a bicycle and carrying his weapon on his back in rebel-held besieged old Aleppo, Syria, on 2 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

Taxi rams into Fukuoka hospital, three dead, seven injured

FUKUOKA — A taxi rammed into a hospital in the southwestern Japan city of Fukuoka on Saturday, leaving a married couple and a man dead and seven injured, police said.

The police arrested Tatsuo Matsuoka, the 64-year-old driver of the taxi, at the scene. The taxi slammed into Harasanshin Hospital in Fukuoka's Hakata Ward shortly after 5 p.m. and seven people were taken to hospitals.

The white-colored taxi, which did not carry a passenger, broke through a glass window near the entrance of the hospital and went inside a lounge, hitting people there. Matsuoka was quoted by the police as saying the brakes did not work.

The dead are Moriyuki Hanada and his wife Misayo, both 44, and Kazuyuki Endo, 53, the police said, adding all three were residents of Hakata Ward. The driver told the police he also tried to downshift to stop the vehicle. An eyewitness told Kyodo News that the taxi accelerated shortly before it entered the premises of the hospital.

The taxi reached the opposite wall of the lounge, according to the hospital.

The lounge floor was covered with glass fragments and parts of the crashed vehicle. Another eyewitness told Kyodo that the taxi driver appeared to be in a state of confusion after the accident.—*Kyodo News*

Niigata completes culling of 540,000 birds at flu-hit poultry farms

NIIGATA, (Japan) — Culling of a total of around 540,000 birds was completed at poultry farms in the central Japan prefecture of Niigata on Sunday as the nation continued to battle the outbreak of a highly virulent H5 strain of bird flu virus.

The prefectural government finished culling about 230,000 chickens at a farm in Joetsu that had been hit by the outbreak, having completed a similar procedure for roughly 310,000 chickens at a farm in the village of Sekikawa earlier this week.

The outbreak has prompted authorities to restrict the transport of chickens and eggs within a 10-kilometer radius of each poultry farm. But four farms in Sekikawa and two in Joetsu have since resumed shipment of eggs and other products after passing inspection tests by the authorities in accordance with the nation's epidemic prevention rules.—*Kyodo News*

Modi defends clampdown on cash economy

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday defended his crackdown on the cash economy that has left businesses, farmers and families suffering, saying it was necessary to keep inflation in check and ensure basic amenities for all.

Modi's decision last month to scrap 500 rupee and 1,000 rupee banknotes as part of a crackdown on tax dodgers and counterfeiters has caused a currency crunch in a country where most people are paid in cash and buy what they need with cash.

With a small stock of smaller notes available and new bills of 500 and 2,000 rupee in short supply, Indians are being forced to stand in queues outside banks and cash machines to change their old notes.

Addressing his party's election campaign rally in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Modi said: "Please support me in curing the disease



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks to the media inside the parliament premises on the first day of the winter session in New Delhi, India, on 16 November 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

that has been afflicting this country for the last 70 years.

"I have put you all in a queue. But this is the last queue to end all the queues."

While Modi has been praised for his intentions, he is facing flak

from political opponents as well as prominent economists such as Amartya Sen and Paul Krugman for sucking 86 per cent of the currency out of circulation virtually overnight.

Nobel laureate Krugman on

Friday said Modi's decision was "highly disruptive" and would result in "significant" temporary cost for the economy without producing major gains in the long-run.

Officials expect some illicit cash never to be returned and to expire worthless, while other money that is deposited will remain in the banking system. The government's goal is to encourage the use of cashless forms of payment, a challenge for most Indians who live and work in the informal economy.

The fallout from the decision is widely expected to impact economic growth this quarter and for several quarters to follow. Opinions, however, vary on the scale of the damage. Modi called for patience until 30 December, by when he has promised the cash situation would stabilise, and urged people to shift to electronic transactions.

"I will not let your sacrifice and hardship go waste," he said.—*Reuters*

MH370 families want investigation to focus more on debris from plane

ANTANANARIVO — Family members of those lost aboard a Malaysia Airlines flight that went missing in 2014 criticized Malaysian investigators on Sunday for not doing enough to find debris, which could give more clues about what happened.

Flight MH370, carrying 239 passengers and crew, disappeared on its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on 8 March 2014, sparking a search in the southern Indian Ocean that continues.

Grace Nathan, who lost her mother, said families wanted authorities to focus more on finding debris from the plane. The search has so far been entirely funded by well-wishers and the families of the missing, she said.

"There should not be a situation where the relatives of people on the plane have to keep funding the search," she told Reuters in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar.

Aslam Khan, one of the Malaysian investigators who arrived in Antananarivo on Sunday, said it was incorrect to suggest the inquiry was winding down.

He said criticism of the investigation team for failing to collect the debris was "fair comment."

"We are here now," he said. "Once we have had a physical examination of it (the debris) we will be in a position to say more."

Seven representatives of the families are expected to meet investigators on Monday and see the investigators take custody of six pieces of debris that have washed up on the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar over the past six months.

A total of 33 pieces suspected to be from the plane have been found so far, including parts of

the wings and tail, in La Reunion, Mozambique, South Africa, Mauritius and Tanzania.

Three pieces have been confirmed by the Malaysian authorities as belonging to MH370, including a flaperon from the tail which they said showed the pilots were not in control of the plane when it crashed.

But more suspected pieces remain with local authorities.

"The fact that in six months they haven't collected this debris reflects their lack of seriousness about the search," said Nathan.

Blaine Gibson, an American lawyer turned self-funded sleuth, has spent more than a year comb-

ing beaches across the region where the plane disappeared.

He found part of a wing in Mozambique that authorities confirmed was probably from MH370 and more than 10 pieces of debris in Madagascar, including a seat back.

The wreckage could reveal how the plane was downed, he said.

"They can test for traces of explosive or any sort of shrapnel, if it was a high-speed forceful impact, which is what it looks like because the pieces are small and shredded," he said.

For the past two years, the search for the body of the plane

has focused on a deep sea area of more than 120,000 square kilometers (46,300 square miles) in the Indian Ocean.

Ghislain Wattrelos, a Frenchman who lost his wife and two teenage children in the crash, said the families wanted more focus on debris.

"We are spending quite a big amount of money trying to find a plane (in the sea) where it is not," he said. "I don't know why they are spending so much money doing this when it's easier to try and find the debris."

"It's been 1,000 days and we still have no clue what happened to my family." —*Reuters*



Relatives of some passengers of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, carrying 239 passengers and crew, that went missing more than two years ago hold hands at the Gassy Country House Hotel in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on 4 December 2016; ahead of a search of the country's beaches for debris from the missing plane.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Opinion

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Religion is not a tool for politics

Aye Min Soe

Members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have agreed to abide by the group's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) which declares that in their relations with one another, the High Contracting Parties should be guided by the following fundamental principles:

- The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- Settlement of differences or disputes in a peaceful manner;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
- Effective cooperation among themselves.

The treaty has not allowed any ASEAN country to interfere in the internal affairs of other member countries.

However, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib, the deputy prime minister and the foreign minister led protests in Malaysia yesterday against the northern Rakhine conflict using religion as a political tool.

The protests came following Malaysian media coverage on the Maungtwaw issue based on unreliable sources and fabricated and exaggerated news.

Apparently, the protests might have been used for gaining support in the political realm and in the election as well.

However, those who organized such kinds of protests should not forget that the resultant effect would be like adding fuel to an already very sensitive situation causing further divisions among the two different communities.

These protests were held in tandem with the visit of the Rakhine State Advisory Commission led by Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, to areas where border police outposts were ambushed by violent attackers in which nine policemen were killed.

The commission will submit its report to the Union Government based on their findings on the ground within 12 months, with a view to easing tensions between the two communities.

While Myanmar is trying to find the best solution for solving the conflict, it is regrettable that these protests were led by the Malaysian Prime Minister using religion as a political tool. Such protests can escalate the tension between the two communities in the conflict area rather than improving the situation or helping in the search for a peaceful solution.

Malaysia, as a member of the ASEAN group, should approach the issue through diplomatic channels to obtain a clearer picture of such a sensitive issue in another member country instead of relying on unreliable sources.

In fact, religion should not be used in politics because it can put a government in a tight corner while it is trying to settle the issues involved by different communities in a peaceful manner.

The Najib-led protests in Malaysia could be seen as an act of instigation for extremism and terrorism, breaking ASEAN's fundamental principles in which all member countries agree not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other.

We welcome cooperation from countries in the region and in the world at large, in working together for maintaining peace and stability and making progress in improving relations between the two communities in the Rakhine state.

Just concentrating on the negative side of the situation would not in any way help solve any form of conflict.

ENTERPRISING RIT ALUMNI

Myo Myint Sein, AIA

RECENTLY we have been hearing more often than ever regarding the quality of Technological Education in Myanmar. Good to know that someone is trying to assess the merits of teaching and learning, and how their graduates fit into the real world of 'SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY'.

At this momentous time of 'The Grand Saya Pu Zaw Pwe' & Reunion of RIT/RTU/YTU alumni, I write this message of 'suasion' to all our friends and colleagues of RIT/RTU/YTU/ + to convey my thoughts and experiences gathered from the past fifty plus years as a Student, teacher, an architect and a peer reviewer.

The Current reports appear to indicate that the *Technological Education System* Myanmar as being weak, and needs to be upgraded and develop the RIT/ Technological Educational Systems into a 'world class' Institute! I wonder what would be the right definition of the "World Class": as far as the teaching and learning requirements are and upon completion of this process, how would they fit into the real world. Each time I hear about 'upgrading' of the educational systems it seems that we almost want to rely on foreign resources, experts, specialists etc., the question is, are we void of resources? We believe that there are many excellent and bright resources (Myanmar) can offer. Equally we believe that we have the experts and intelligent resources that can match the foreign resource in our Country if we make an effort to locate them and given the right tools and they will perform!

Approximately 100 years of Engineer Education in Myanmar have gone through many "Institutions" such as The University of Rangoon, Faculty of Engineering, BOC College, BIT, RIT, RTU, YTU and so on! The early teaching methods at the Faculty of

Engineering at that time was simple and methodical for the course subjects in Science and Technology!

However, the teaching of the 'subjects' that comprise 'Science & Technology' were simple. The subjects were taught to master the essentials in the basic courses of

Sciences & Technology, mastering the course subjects within the curriculum was adequate to earn a Bachelor's degree in Engineering. Such was the teaching and learning methods. The concept of teaching and learning appears not to be different to the basic education (high schools) levels. Example: simply based on the text book, such as (4+4=8 or 16x6=96). This is to master all the basic elements in Science &

Technology required to understand and acquire all the knowledge of engineering and technology, which concludes with the terminal tests and examinations! That was basically the curriculum of engineering courses.

It is very obvious that the University Council and Senate members, are very knowledgeable in Arts & Sciences, however, lack expertise in the academic engineering aspects. The curriculum of course was selected and adopted from Engineering Schools and Institutions from other advanced countries. Therefore it is considered more than adequate. Most of the Engineering Faculty members and lecturers were foreign staff mostly from India or UK, etc., They were very good in teaching and making the students understood what have been taught and the students were able to master the engineering courses acceptable to many well-known Engineering Institutions from all over the world. The product was high quality engineering education, and many Myanmar engineers contrib-

experienced broad and had sacrificed professionally & financially to return home for the love of their Institution and the Country, very highly motivated and eager to push themselves 150%. All still eager to learn and take on the challenges ahead.

The Institute Council and the Senate, the guiding forces for the faculty in administration and the curriculum development, to renovate/upgrade and to align with the needs of the country. Motivational teaching methods were introduced, such as some courses requiring yearly tests were eliminated. Term papers and year end theses were introduced. Students were required to select their own realistic topics in coordination with the various Departments in the country to find out their strengths, weaknesses and their needs for research and analysis. The Government Departments became very much involve with the student activities and became an eye opener for the departments. An example: Top choice, the Ministry of Health Services. One of the Officers

Let us take a look at how our RIT/YTU alumni's stand in the real world. Does the six years in RIT/YTU gave them what they needed to step into the professional world or do they lack the basic qualities to achieve their goals in the development process, for the well-being of mankind? I believe that most of our alumni have proved that they can stand up to the call of the time.

uted towards the development of the country.

Let us now take a look at the Rangoon Institute of Technology. It was created around the year of 1963. A separate 'Science & Technological Institution/University' with its own University Council and Senate to oversee the Administration and Academic systems. The faces of the 'FACULTY' changed dramatically and the departments have increased to include many allied professions. It has now become a separate independent professional higher learning educational institution, with its own Rector, Registrar, Professors, Head of the departments and its own Institute Council and Senate, which became the guiding force in the development of professional Technological Education System!. The Head of the Departments were all Myanmar, with still some foreign specialists assisting the faculty.

The faculty members, mostly young motivated Myanmar group that went abroad to pursue further studies to equip themselves, scored high honors from the top Universities & Institutions, and came back well equipped to take on the responsibilities. The average age of the Faculty members from Professors to Assistant Lecturers were approximately 35 years old, too young? most of the faculty members had gained

the 1970-90 period and when the call came in the nineties, they took on the challenge, the achievements accomplished within a short decade plus time, upgrading our country from 'scratch' into cities, highways, bridges, dams, irrigations, mines etc. to mention a few with a minimal help from the outside world are enormous. Most of them were linked to the Science and Technological Educational systems in Myanmar. We are proud of the Institution and all the alumni.

Not only in Myanmar, our RIT alumni have journeyed throughout the world to seek greener pastures or experience and have become enterprising 'technologists' spread over the world. Many cases in point: Out of the many to the call of time, I have selected four diverse situations.

1. A 1961 graduate from the Faculty of Engineering (electrical) migrated to Australia with his family in the seventies. At that period of time it appears 'lucky' to be accepted in an advanced country. Actually the luck stops there. He desperately needs a job but could not get one. So he had to take what was offered. Delivering 'pe-pin-pauk' (bean sprout) to the market and restaurants. He was not disheartened! He analyzed the produce and found out he was delivering 90% of water. He felt that with his engineering knowledge he may be able to produce a better quality bean sprout. His experiments proved to be worthy and he embarked upon designing, building and operating a bean sprout factory. The bean baskets were placed on the start-up conveyor belt, turn on the automated system, the belt moved accordingly, the water sprinkler turned on linked to the daylight system and bingo after a week the produce is ready to be packed and delivered all 90% water. He went on to worked on 'hydro-ponding', etc. A very successful innovator, Engineer/Entrepreneur and a business man. His educational background pays.

2. In the seventies there was a call by the United Nations for volunteers to help in the development in unfortunate countries around the world. Many young Myanmar graduates applied. Among them was a husband and wife RIT alumni Architects. Both were sent to Botswana in Africa. Very courageous indeed, not knowing what the outcome would be. However, very motivated, he put his all-out effort assisted by his wife to help develop the Architectural program for their country. The Botswana government was amazed and loved by the locals. He became the chief of the architectural program. Not satisfied he sent his local assistants to study abroad and on their return he trained them to become the chief. Once satisfied that they can run the office he turned the chieftainship to his local assistant. The government needed him so much that he was requested to remain as the advisor to the Government.

3. Another UN volunteer, an RIT graduate in Electrical Engineering with several years of experience working in various capacities in diverse engineering departments in Myanmar was sent to Mogadishu, Somalia where he entered the difficult and high demanding UN services in 1983. He managed to fit in and accomplished his services that the project considered him as an essential personal. His educational background and diverse Myanmar experiences were most appreciated by the project office. He was the technological expert singled out to fix broken assigned tasks in other numerous sectors apart from his responsible areas! He served in Somalia, Mogadishu and other rural towns, the war erupted in that area and he barely escaped with his family including two infant kids. A total of 6 years, 1983-1989. Again the challenges do not stop there, he was sent to Freetown in Sierra Leone from 1989 to 1992. Things appear to turn out quite well as he was rewarded a place in New Delhi, India. But not quite as he was called on to help fix problems in Kurdish areas North of Baghdad, Iraq dodging IEDs etc. Finally he lucked out by being promoted to Copenhagen, Denmark from 1998 to 2003. It appears that his educational background came into play at the most needed time. A thought to reckon!

4. When an RIT alumnus is determined to accomplish his 'ego' his background educational qualities never let him down. A young couple, both outdoorsy and a true environmentalist toured the hills of Napa County, CA, USA, and immediately fell in love with the land and without knowing anything they planned to set up a winery! With his technological background he set up a program to study the complex areas of soil conditioning for growing vineyard grapes, climatology, making wine, operation and maintenance, etc. and many more. He studied at the Robert Mondavi college of Winery at University of California at Davis and took all the relevant courses offered in the Napa area. And now he is a maker of the top premium quality wine and is popular with most upscale wine seekers! The RIT Engineering Graduate of 1983, now a top premium quality wine maker! What an achievement, Engineer to premium quality wine maker!

As I mentioned above, it is just a few handful of RIT/YTU alumni that are enterprising enough to more than deserve the title of 'World Class Achievements'. Many more could be added. We and our country are proud of their achievements. They and many other alumni is the role model for our students of the Technological Educational Systems for this generation and for generations to come, we are proud and take ownership of them. The country and the Government should take ownership of our enterprising fellows. Keep up the good work fellows.



The third party insurance compensation presentation ceremony in progress. PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHINE

Myanma Insurance pays compensation to victims' families

Myanma Insurance paid out Ks37 million on Wednesday to the families in Monywa town of 37 victims who died when the Aung Soe Moe Kyaw ferry capsized, it is learnt.

On October 15, the heavily overloaded Aung Soe Moe Kyaw-2 boat ferry capsized en route from

Homalin and Monywa when it hit a rock.

Around 230 people were on board the vessel at the time of the accident. The capacity of the ferry is only 36 passengers. Many aboard were teachers and students on their way home to enjoy the Thadingyut holidays.

Each family received Ks1 million in compensation, an official from Myanmar Insurance said.

"The insurance is in fact a preventive measure. In case of accident, Myanma Insurance pays the compensation as a third party insurer," said the official.—Aung Thant Khine

Higher demand leads to increase price for watermelon

LOCAL watermelon growers enjoy a healthy price as the Chinese demand for the fruit has increased during these days, according to merchants from Muse market.

Myanmar's watermelon, the marketable organic fruits in China mainly has been traded mainly through Muse Border Town that handles largest amount of trade among other borders.

The high price for the fresh fruit is associated with 20 November attacks by ethnic groups near 105-mile trade zone in the north of Shan State. Low watermelon production of Viet Nam this season is

one of major causes of high demand for Myanmar product. The excess demand also causes the price to increase.

Soe Min Thu Naing, a local brokerage, said "The watermelon is in high demand in the Chinese market, changing price of fruits daily."

The current price of watermelon per kilo is worth between three and four Chinese yuans while a seedless melon has been sold for around 5.5 yuans. A 16-kilo melon is worth about 1,000 Myanmar kyats.

The melon price has gradually

increased after a recent attacks, said one of grower from TadaU Township in Mandalay Region. The price before November 20 was two yuans per kilo.

The growers fetched a record price of nine yuan per kilo in the market before.

Watermelon is a warm, long-season crop and is now grown commercially in wide parts of the country. The fruit mostly cultivated for its fresh juice and sweet flesh. Among others, melon produced from Mandalay mostly goes to export partners.—Myitmakha News Agency



Watermelon to be exported to China. PHOTO: MYITMAKHA NEWS AGENCY

France's Left starts fightback after Hollande bows out of presidential race

PARIS — France's Left on Saturday launched a bid to re-energize supporters disenchanted by Francois Hollande's five years in power and find a candidate to unite the ranks ahead of a presidential election next year where it could face humiliation.

Hollande threw the Socialist nomination of a candidate for next spring's presidential election wide open last Thursday when he announced he would not seek a second term in the Elysee.

As leftist groups held a rally on Saturday intended to be the start of a fightback after months of disarray, all eyes were on Prime Minister Manuel Valls, widely tipped as favourite to become the Socialists' standard bearer despite having pro-business policies which have angered many in the party.

With Hollande in Abu Dhabi on an official visit, the 54-year-old Valls stayed away from the rally and, though he was dogged by journalists throughout the day, there was no formal announcement from his camp.

Media commentators expected he would declare himself soon as a candidate for the Socialist primaries in late January where his main rival for the party ticket is likely to be Arnaud Montebourg, a leftist firebrand and former economy minister under Hollande. The meeting hall of the convention by the Belle Alliance Populaire, or Beautiful Popular Alliance, which brings together the Socialists and their allies, resounded to cries of: "Unite!" from the 3,000 or so leftwing faithful who turned out on Saturday.

But the withdrawal of the deeply unpopular Hollande from the presidential race has yet to change broad expectations that the 2017 election will come down to a run-off between the center-right's candidate Francois Fillon and far-right leader Marine Le Pen next May.

Pollsters see the Socialists — whether they field Valls or another candidate — being eliminated in the first round in April.

A run-off between Fillon, a former prime minister with

free-market policies who has set his sights on slashing public spending, and Le Pen, head of the anti-immigrant and anti-EU National Front, is a nightmare scenario for the Left.

Socialist Party leader Jean-Christophe Cambadélis on Saturday made an impassioned plea to the Left to close ranks behind a single candidate.

"Rise up you people of the Left! We have to fight the Right and push back the National Front!," Cambadélis declared.

He called on two candidates who say they intend to stand as independents — veteran left-winger Jean-Luc Melenchon and Emmanuel Macron, a former economy minister under Hollande, — to join in the Socialists' primaries on 22 and 29 January in the interests of unity.

Opinion polls in the past week have consistently made Fillon, a 62-year-old racing car enthusiast, favorite to win the presidency next year with two-thirds of the vote against a third for Le Pen.—Reuters

Italy votes in referendum with PM Renzi's future at stake



Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi speaks during the last rally for a 'Yes' vote in the upcoming referendum about constitutional reform, in Florence, Italy, on 2 December, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

ROME — Italians started to vote on Sunday in a referendum on constitutional reform which will decide the political future of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who has promised to resign if he loses.

Financial markets and Europe's politicians fear victory for the opposition 'No' camp could trigger political instability and renewed turmoil for Italy's battered banks, pushing the euro zone towards a fresh crisis.

Polls opened at 7am (0600 GMT), with about 51 million Italians eligible to vote on Ren-

zi's plan to drastically reduce the role of the upper house Senate and claw back powers from regional authorities.

With all the opposition parties lined up against the reform, a victory for Renzi would be a surprise and represent an enormous personal triumph for Italy's youngest prime minister who often appeared to be fighting the campaign single-handed.

All surveys published in the month before a blackout was imposed on 18 November put the 'No' camp ahead. Private polls have continued to be conducted

in the last two weeks and bookmakers say 'No' remains the clear favourite to win.

However, in the final days of frenetic campaigning Renzi insisted the public mood was changing, focusing his attention on the millions of Italians who said they were undecided.

Pippo Nicosia, a stall-holder at Campo dei Fiori market in central Rome, said he would vote 'Yes' but had no doubt about the result. "'No' will win, everything will collapse so we might as well all go on holiday," he said.—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK plans to buy 20 new drones from General Atomics — minister

LONDON — Britain has signed a \$125 million (98 million pound) contract with privately held US weapons maker General Atomics for development of a new drone, and plans to eventually buy 20 of the new unmanned planes, Secretary of State for Defence Michael Fallon said on Saturday.

"We're planning to buy 20 aircraft that will double our current fleet," Fallon told Reuters in an interview at the Reagan National Defence Forum in southern California.

"We have 10 aircraft that still have some life in them, but we need to think ahead."—Reuters

Floods kill at least 13 people in central Viet Nam

HANOI — Floods brought by torrential rain since late November have killed at least 13 people in central Viet Nam while more heavy rain is expected in coming days, the government and state media said on Sunday.

Six people have died in floods in Binh Dinh province since Thursday and another four were killed in Quang Ngai province, while more than 10,000 homes in the two provinces were submerged, the government said.

Three children aged between four and 13 were swept away in flood waters in Quang Nam province on Saturday, the *Thanh Nien* (Young People) newspaper cited a provincial report as saying.

A cold snap now moving southward is forecast to bring heavy rain to central provinces between now and next Thursday, the government report said.—Reuters

Gun battle leaves nine insurgents dead in East Afghanistan

GHAZNI (Afghanistan) — Gun battle between government forces and Taliban has left nine insurgents dead and injured seven others on Saturday, army spokesman in the restive province Mohammad Hanif Rezai said.

"Taliban rebels attacked some security checkpoints in Andar district early Saturday triggering gun battle during which nine armed enemies have been killed and seven others injured," Rezai told Xinhua.

Security forces have also discovered a number of arms and ammunitions including 16 anti-vehicle mines, the official added.

Operations against militants to ensure security have been continuing, according to the official.

Taliban militants have not commented. —Xinhua

Nearly 200,000 punished in China's four-year frugality campaign

BEIJING — A total of 196,947 Party and government staff had been punished for violating austerity rules since late 2012, China's top anti-graft body announced.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) central leadership launched a frugality campaign in December 2012, adopting the "eight-point rules," which aimed to curb extravagance and improve officials' work style.

The disciplined people were involved in more than 146,400 cases in the past four years, about a quarter of which involved use of public vehicles and eating and drinking with public funds, the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said on Saturday.

Lavish weddings and funerals, public money spent on travel and gift-giving were also included in the violations.—Xinhua

M5.5 earthquake hits northeast South Island, New Zealand

WELLINGTON — An earthquake of moderate strength struck northeast of the South Island at 03:15:47 GMT on Sunday, according to the government's GeoNet monitoring service.

The quake measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, and the epicenter, with a depth of 12 km, was located 10 km east of Seddon town. It has been felt widely across central New Zealand, particularly in Wellington, the capital of the country.

After a 7.8 magnitude earthquake jolted just after midnight on 14 November, a great number of aftershocks have been recorded by GeoNet. —Xinhua

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INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE

YANGON TO BANGKOK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
TG-304	09:50	11:45	Daily	
TG-2302	15:00	16:55	Daily	
TG-306	19:45	21:40	Daily	
PG-706	6:15	8:30	Daily	
PG-702	10:30	12:25	Daily	
PG-708	15:20	17:15	Daily	
PG-708	18:20	20:15	3	
PG-704	20:00	21:55	Daily	
8M-335	7:40	9:25	Daily	
8M-331	16:30	18:15	Daily	
UB-017	15:10	19:20	1,3,5	
UB-017	17:50	19:20	2,4,6,7	
UB-019	8:05	9:35	7	
UB-019	6:30	8:00	1,2,3,4,5,6	

YGN TO DMK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
FD-252	8:30	10:15	Daily	
FD-256	13:25	15:10	Daily	
FD-254	17:30	19:05	Daily	
FD-258	20:05	21:55	Daily	
DD-4231	08:00	9:50	Daily	
DD-4235	12:00	13:45	Daily	
DD-4239	21:00	22:45	Daily	
SL-201	11:00	13:00	Daily	
SL-207	20:05	21:45	"Daily"	

YGN TO CAN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
8M-711	20:30	01:05+1	5	
8M-711	8:40	13:15	2,4,7	
CZ-3056	11:25	16:15	3,6	
CZ-3056	17:30	22:35	1,5	

YGN TO SIN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
8M-231	8:20	12:50	Daily	
SQ-997	10:35	15:10	Daily	
MI-515	14:20	18:50	1,5	
MI-519	17:35	22:10	Daily	
MI-522	15:45	20:15	4,6	
MI-533	13:10	20:15	2	
3k-584	19:15	23:50	2,5	
3K-582	11:15	15:50	1,3,4,5,6,7	
TR-2823	9:45	2:15	Daily	
UB-001	7:30	12:00	Daily	

YGN TO NRT				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
NH-814	21:45	06:50+1	Daily	

BANGKOK TO YANGON				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
TG-303	7:55	8:50	Daily	
TG-2301	13:15	14:10	Daily	
TG-305	17:50	18:45	Daily	
PG-701	8:50	9:40	Daily	
PG-707	13:45	14:35	Daily	
PG-703	18:25	19:15	3	
PG-703	16:45	17:35	Daily	
PG-705	20:30	21:45	Daily	
8M-336	10:40	11:25	Daily	
8M-332	19:15	20:00	Daily	
UB-020	11:00	11:30	7	
UB-018	20:20	20:50	Daily	
UB-020	9:15	9:45	1,2,4,5,6	

DMK TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
FD-251	7:15	8:00	Daily	
FD-255	12:05	12:55	Daily	
FD-253	16:20	17:00	Daily	
FD-257	18:05	18:55	Daily	
DD-4234	10:25	11:15	Daily	
DD-4230	6:20	7:05	Daily	
DD-4238	19:30	20:15	Daily	
SL-200	9:05	10:00	Daily	
SL-206	18:15	19:05	"Daily"	

CAN TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
8M-712	2:45	4:20	6	
8M-712	14:15	15:50	2,4,7	
CZ-3055	8:50	10:25	3,6	
CZ-3055	14:40	16:30	1,5	

SIN TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
8M-232	13:50	15:20	Daily	
SQ-998	07:55	09:20	Daily	
MI-522	11:00	12:20	4,6	
MI-518	15:15	16:40	Daily	
MI-516	12:00	13:25	1,5	
MI-533	11:00	12:20	2	
3K-583	17:05	18:35	2,5	
3k-581	8:55	10:25	1,3,4,5,6,7	
TR-2822	7:20	8:45	Daily	
UB-002	13:15	14:45	Daily	

NRT TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
NH-813	11:00	15:40	Daily	

YGN TO ICN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
KE-472	23:30	7:50	Daily	

YGN TO KUL				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
AK-505	8:30	12:45	Daily	
AK-503	19:30	23:45	Daily	
8M-501	7:50	11:50	1,3,5	
MH-741	12:15	16:30	Daily	
MH-743	15:45	20:05	1,4,6,7	

YGN TO KMG				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CA-416	12:15	15:45	Daily	
MU-2032	15:20	18:40	2,4,5,6,7	
MU-2012	12:25	18:40	3	

YGN TO TPE				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CI-7916	10:45	16:15	1,2,3,4,6	

YGN TO PEK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CA-906	23:50	0550+1	3,7	

YGN TO HAN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
VN-956	19:10	21:30	1,3,5,6,7	

YGN TO SGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
VN-942	12:10	15:00	2,3,4,5,7	

YGN TO HKG				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
KA-251	1:10	5:45	1,2,3,4,6,7	
KA-251	1:30	5:55	5	
UB-8027	9:45	14:15	1,5,7	

YGN TO DOH				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
QR-919	8:15	10:55	1,4,6	

YGN TO CNX				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-724	13:10	15:05	Daily	

YGN TO DAC				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
BG-061	16:15	18:00	1,3,6	

MDL TO DMK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
FD-245	12:45	15:00	Daily	

ICN TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
KE-471	18:45	22:25	Daily	

KUL TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
AK-502	6:55	8:00	Daily	
AK-502	17:50	19:00	Daily	
8M-502	12:50	13:50	1,3,5	
MH-742	13:40	14:50	1,6,7	
MH-740	10:05	11:15	Daily	

KMG TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CA-415	10:45	11:15	Daily	
MU-2031	14:00	14:30	1	
MU-2011	08:15	11:25	3	
MU-2031	13:55	14:30	2,4,5,6,7	

TPE TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CI-7915	7:00	9:45	1,2,3,4,6	

PEK TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
CA-905	19:30	22:50	3,7	

HAN TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
VN-957	16:50	18:10	1,3,5,6,7	

SGN TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
VN-943	9:35	11:10	2,3,4,5,7	

HKG TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
KA-250	21:45	23:30	1,2,3,5,6,7	
KA-252	22:50	00:30+1	4	
UB-8028	15:15	16:55	1,5,7	

DOH TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
QR-918	20:40	6:25	3,5,6	

CNX TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-723	11:40	12:35	Daily	

DAC TO YGN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
BG-060	12:45	15:30	1,3,6	

DMK TO MDL				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
FD-244	10:50	12:15	Daily	

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INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SCHEDULE

MDL TO SIN				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
MI-533	15:20	20:15	2	
MI-522	13:40	20:15	2,6	

SIN TO MDL				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
MI-522	11:00	12:50	2,6	
MI-533	11:00	14:25	2	

MDL TO BKK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-710	14:05	16:30	Daily	

BKK TO MDL				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-709	12:00	13:20	Daily	

MDL TO KMG				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
MU-2030	14:05	16:45	Daily	

KMG TO MDL				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
MU-2029	13:20	13:15	Daily	

NYT to BKK				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-722	20:25	22:35	2	
PG-722	19:30	22:30	1,2,3,4,5,7	

BKK TO NYT				
Flight no.	Dep	Arv	Days	
PG-721	18:25	19:35	2	
PG-721	17:00	19:00	1,2,3,4,5,7	

California warehouse fire kills at least nine at dance party

OAKLAND, (Calif) — A fire that roared through a warehouse dance party in Oakland, California, killed more than nine people and left at least two dozen others missing and feared dead inside the gutted building, officials said on Saturday, as anguished friends and relatives awaited word of their fate.

The cause of the blaze and precise number of casualties remained undetermined hours after flames engulfed the two-storey, structure that occupied about half a city block and housed a cluttered warren of artists' studios, craft booths, antiques and furniture.

The blaze started at about 11:30 pm on Friday in the city's Fruitvale district, a mostly Latino, blue-collar area that is also home to many artists living and working in converted lofts.

Oakland and Alameda County officials said they expected to find more victims once the burned-out ruins of the building were fully shored up and recovery crews were able to safely comb through the structure's charred interior.

City Fire Chief Teresa Deloach Reed, said the blaze marked the worst sin-



Flames rise from the top of a warehouse, which caught fire during a dance party in Oakland, California, US on 3 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

gle-structure fire she had seen in her career. Mayor Libby Schaaf called it a "devastating scene."

Shaken friends of the missing huddled at a nearby pub waiting for word on possible victims, while about a dozen others gathered at a neighbourhood sheriff's station seeking news. "I don't have high hopes," said a woman with four friends among the missing, declining to give her name. "We've

just spent the night calling hospitals and listening to police scanners.

Parents and others shared contact information on a Facebook page and asked anyone with information about the missing to call. "ANY information please!" wrote a woman looking for her son.

Nine fatalities were initially confirmed, and authorities were "expecting the worst" as they sought to account for "a couple of

dozen" people who were reported missing, Sergeant Ray Kelly, a spokesman for the county sheriff, told an afternoon news conference. He later clarified that at least two dozen people remained unaccounted for Saturday night besides the nine victims whose remains were initially found and recovered from the rubble. Those bodies were transported to the coroner's bureau for identification.—Reuters

US Navy aims to buy more Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornets: source

SIMI VALLEY, (Calif.) — The US Navy plans to divest its older model Boeing Co (BA.N) F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets in coming years and hopes to buy dozens of F/A-18E/F Super Hornets to deal with a shortfall of strike fighters aboard its carriers, a Navy official said.

The plan, which is still being finalized, could be implemented as early as part of the fiscal 2018 budget, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly.

"To decrease the strike fighter shortfall and to best prepare future air wings for likely threats we will soon divest from legacy Hornets, look to buy several squadrons worth of Super Hornets and continue with efforts to bring on the F-35 carrier variant," said the official.

The Navy also plans to field and deploy a new

unmanned carrier-based refueling plane, the official said.

Sources familiar with Navy plans say delays in the fielding of the carrier variant of the Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N) F-35 fighter jet, longer-than-expected maintenance times for older model Hornets, and higher usage rates have left the Navy facing a shortfall of about 70 fighter jets in coming years.

If implemented, the plan would provide dozens of new orders for Boeing and keep its St. Louis production line running for several more years.

"We would welcome an opportunity to develop a plan, with the Navy, that would allow us to continue providing the robust capabilities of the Super Hornet well into the future," said Boeing spokesman Todd Blecher.—Reuters

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May's Brexit plans face British Supreme Court test

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May's government launches a challenge on Monday against a court ruling that it requires parliamentary approval to start the process of leaving the European Union, a decision that could upset Britain's Brexit plans.

If the Supreme Court, the United Kingdom's highest judicial body, dismisses the government appeal it could derail May's timetable for triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and leaving the EU.

The government's legal fight comes against a backdrop of claims by some politicians and newspapers that establishment judges want to thwart the Brexit process.

It will be the most high-profile and complex case the court has considered since it came into being seven years ago and is due to last for four days. For the first time all its 11

justices will sit on the panel with the verdict due later in January.

"The case raises difficult and delicate issues about the constitutional relationship between government and parliament," Brenda Hale, the Supreme Court's Vice-President said in a speech last month.

"What is meant by the exercise of the executive power of the state? We do not have a written constitution to tell us the answer. But I doubt whether many written constitutions would tell us the answer either."

If May wins, she can proceed with her plans to invoke Article 50 by the end of March.

But if she loses, parliament could in theory block Brexit as most lawmakers (MPs) supported staying in the EU in a referendum in June, though few observers expect such an outcome. Even so, lawmaker approval could open

the process to greater scrutiny and delay.

Investors believe the greater parliament's involvement the less chance there is of a "hard Brexit" in which tight controls on immigration are prioritised over European single market access. The pound surged after November's High Court ruling.

In a sign of how thorny the process could be for May, the opposition Labour Party plans to table an amendment to any Article 50 bill to try to keep market access to the bloc, its leader Jeremy Corbyn told Sky News on Saturday. The addition of amendments could risk derailing May's timetable, although the BBC has reported that the government has prepared a very short bill which would be "bomb-proof" against changes by lawmakers who may try and add conditions to the approval.—Reuters

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Yurts, cleats, coats: Dakota protesters dig in for brutal winter

CANNON BALL, (N.D.)

— In North Dakota, winter is most definitely coming.

That does not deter Dakota Access Pipeline protesters, many of whom say they know a blizzard earlier this week was but a taste of what is to come, as temperatures are expected to fall toward 0 degrees Fahrenheit (-18°C).

Rather than retreat amidst the cold and an order from the US Army Corps of Engineers to vacate by Monday, the Oceti Sakowin camp, the epicenter of pipeline opposition, is growing in size — and quickly winterizing in expectation of harsher weather.

Dozens of insulated tipis have popped up in recent weeks, adding to those that have dotted these barren plains since last summer. Yurts, a round tent popular in the cold tundra of East Asia, have started appearing. Portable toilets are being swapped out for heated, composting commodes. Ice cleats, which strap onto boots to give stability on ice, are now in demand.

Taylor Orpin, 23, quit her job to move to the camp last month. She spends her days collating donated coats by size and gender in a tent near the camp's main



A veteran stands in front of homemade shields in Oceti Sakowin camp as “water protectors” continue to demonstrate against plans to pass the Dakota Access pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, US, on 3 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

fire circle.

“I’m very aware of what true cold is going to feel like,” said Orpin, a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba. “Here, people are able to come in and just take whatever they need to stay warm.”

Thousands of people, led by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, are protesting the pipeline, which would carry crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois en route to the Gulf of Mexico.

The route is adjacent

to the Standing Rock reservation, and the tribe and climate activists say the line risks contamination of the tribe’s water source and its construction has damaged, and would further damage, sacred sites.

While clothing, food and money have been pouring in from all over the world, the camp’s website requests more donations of wood, blankets, winter sleeping bags and propane to help weather the winter.

A division of labour

keeps many active, with campers volunteering in the four kitchens, shoveling snow, building tents and doing myriad other tasks.

The multitudes at the camp defy the predictions of state and local officials, many of whom said out-of-state protesters would flee south like migrating birds. Children can be seen sliding playfully down nearby hills while senior citizens gossip over fire pits.—*Reuters*

Brazil mourns Chapecoense crash victims at packed stadium wake



Fans of the Brazilian soccer team Chapecoense wait in front of the Arena Condá stadium to receive the bodies of the victims who died in the plane crash in Colombia, in Chapeco, Brazil, on 3 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

CHAPECO, (Brazil) — A downpour drenched thousands of mourners in this Brazilian city on Saturday as they grieved over 50 caskets flown overnight to the stadium of the local Chapecoense soccer team, which was all but wiped out in an air crash Monday in Colombia.

An arena filled with banners and team faithful

donning its green and white colours served as an open-air wake for locals. Just a week ago, they were braced to celebrate the plucky squad, which had ascended from minor leagues in recent years to reach the final of a major South American tournament.

Instead, they looked on as Air Force troops, after unloading the bodies from

cargo aircraft, ferried the caskets to makeshift tents erected on the team’s soggy home turf, where victims’ families sat in sorrow.

President Michel Temer, who flew in from Brazil’s capital at dawn to receive the caskets at a Chapeco airfield, bestowed posthumous honours on the deceased athletes.

“This event, as you know, shook the whole country,” Temer told reporters in brief comments before making the short drive to the stadium, where he remained silent for the rest of the emotional tribute. “This rain must be Saint Peter crying.”

Monday’s disaster, which killed 71 passengers and crew, shocked soccer fans the world over and plunged Brazil into mourning. A BAe146 regional airliner operated by Bolivian charter company LAMIA had radioed that

it was running out of fuel before smashing into a hillside outside Medellin, Colombia.

Only six people survived, including just three members of the club, en route to the Copa Sudamericana final, the biggest game in its history. Earlier on Saturday, the bodies of eight journalists who also died in the crash arrived in Rio de Janeiro.

Victims’ families in recent days have been outraged by reports that the plane, which circled for 16 minutes while another aircraft emergency landed, had barely enough fuel for the flight.

Bolivian President Evo Morales has pledged to take “drastic measures” to determine the cause. Bolivia has suspended LAMIA’s operating licence and replaced the national aviation authority’s management.—*Reuters*

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY NATIONAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT

Invitation for Bids

Date: 5th December, 2016

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

IDA Credit No. : 5727-MM

Contract Title: Concrete Poles for National Electrification Project

Reference No. : C1-G2

1. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the National Electrification Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards payments under the contract for Concrete Poles for National Electrification Project.

2. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for supply of spun concrete pole 10 meter and 12 meter, for the total quantities of 94,786 poles to be delivered in calendar year 2017 to multiple destinations in all Regions and States of Myanmar. Domestic preference with the margin of 15% will apply. The goods will be grouped into 10 lots and bidders may submit bid for any one or more lots.

3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank’s Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers [edition of January 2011 revised in July 2014] (“Procurement Guidelines”), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to the paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting for the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from Project Manager, Office No.(27), Ministry of Electricity and Energy, nep.pmomoep@gmail.com and inspect the bidding documents during office hours 10:00 to 16:00 hours at the address given below.

5. A complete set of bidding documents in CD with English language may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Myanmar Kyats 100,000. The method of payment will be transferred to the following account:

Electricity Supply Enterprise, account no. SEE 10316 at Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The transferred slip shall be submitted with the above application. Once the application and the transferred slip received, the bidding documents will be provided in the CD.

In case of any difficulty in purchasing the bidding documents, interested parties may contact in writing:

1. Director General

Department of Electric Power Planning

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

City: Nay Pyi Taw

Country: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Email: dep.pssp.info@gmail.com

2. Ms. Xiaoping Wang, Task Team Leader

The World Bank

Address: 30th Floor, Siam Tower.

989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Email: xwang3@worldbank.org

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 10:00 am, 19th January, 2017. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders’ designated representatives at the address below at 10:00 am, 19th January, 2017.

Director General Office, Department of Electric Power Planning

Office No (27), Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Nay Pyi Taw

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

7. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security as described in the bidding document.

8. The address referred to above para 4 and 5 are :

Attention : Director General Office, Department of Electric Power Planning

Office No(27), Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Nay Pyi Taw

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

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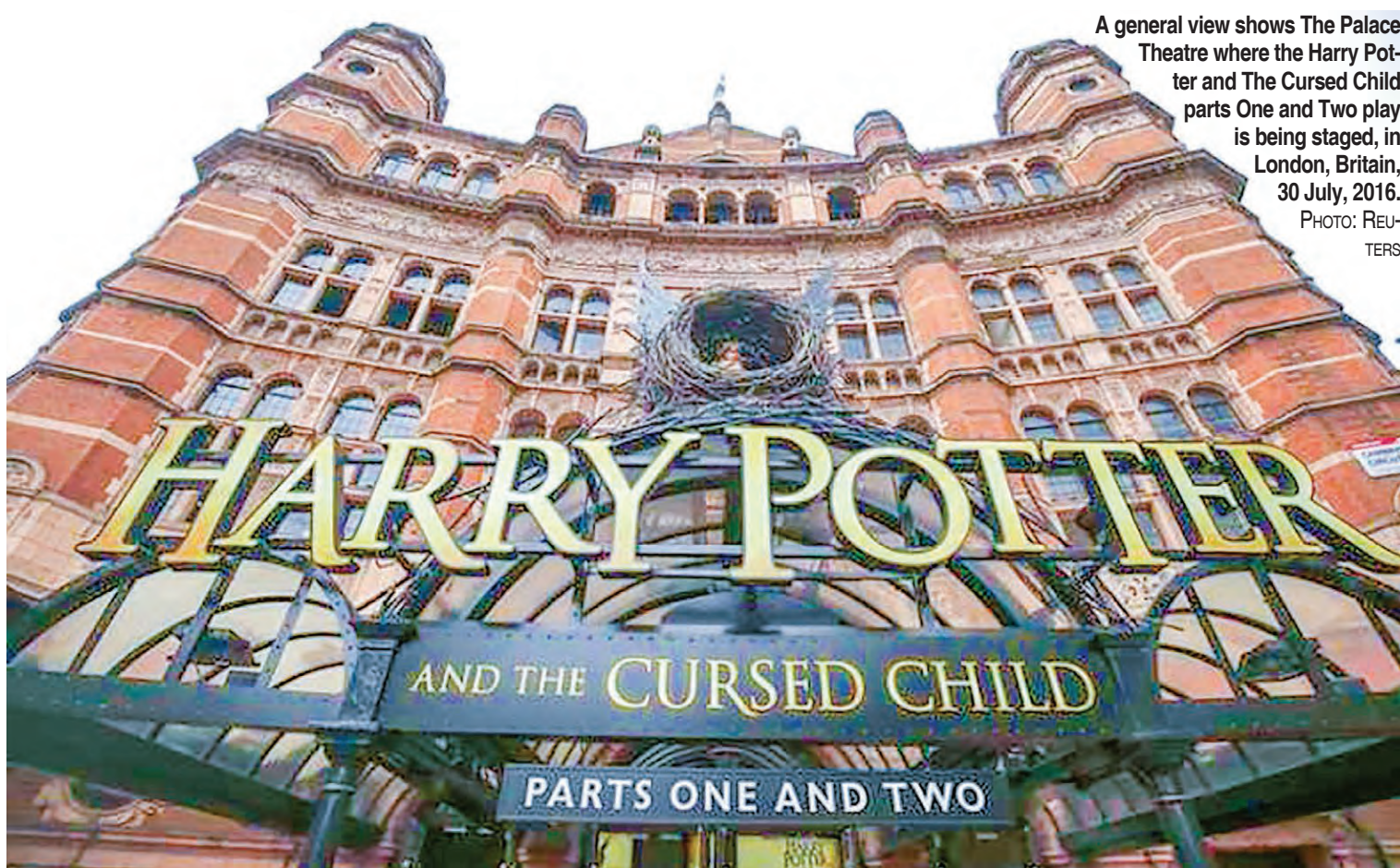
People tried to shame me for not knowing English: Kangana

MUMBAI — Kangana Ranaut, who hails from a small town in Himachal Pradesh, says she faced a tough time initially in Bollywood as people shamed her for her dressing style and speaking skills.

Kangana says she is not ashamed of where she comes from and even when people were talking bad about her, she retained her individuality.

"I do not find anything embarrassing about my born existence. People tried to shame me, coming from small town, not being able to speak English, not being able to dress up properly. But that didn't shake anything in me. "I always operated from the place of my individuality.

Even today when I work, the first reaction I get from people is 'oh she is a delicate beautiful girl' but as I go about my work, it disappears." The 29-year-old actress feels it is important for women to believe in themselves to be treated equally. "Women have to first believe in themselves as equals, only then they will get that sort of treatment. Today I can proudly say, that within five days of shooting any film, I am treated like anyone else on sets." Kangana says it is heartening that today women are voicing their opinion fearlessly and people are also keen to listen to them.—PTI



A general view shows The Palace Theatre where the Harry Potter and The Cursed Child parts One and Two play is being staged, in London, Britain, 30 July, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child' plans 2018 Broadway debut

LOS ANGELES — After a hit debut on London's West End this summer, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child" is in talks to move to New York's Broadway in 2018, producers said on Friday.

The play, based on author J.K. Rowling's popular boy wizard character, is being planned for Broadway's Lyric Theater, which will undergo a multi-million dollar revamp to house the

elaborate production, the show's producers said in a post on Rowling's website Pottermore.com.

The Lyric Theater is one of Broadway's largest venues, with nearly 1,900 seats, and has housed complex theatrical productions such as "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" in 2005 and "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," which ran from 2010 to 2014.

In preparation for "Cursed Child," the Lyric Theater will

be remodeled with a slightly reduced 1,500 seats, "to accommodate the dramatic look and feel" of the play.

"Cursed Child" is sold out at London's Palace Theater until 2018, although more tickets are expected to be released in January.

The play is set 19 years after Rowling's book series concluded the boy wizard's teen years with "Harry Potter and the

Deathly Hallows" in 2007.

The play is penned by Jack Thorne, with a story co-created by Rowling, and centers on the lives of an adult Harry Potter and his son.

A book of the "Cursed Child" script, released to coincide with the opening of play, has become a best-seller this year, with more than 3 million copies sold in the United States within its first month. —Reuters

Actors are lost, they don't have friends: Karan Johar

MUMBAI — Filmmaker Karan Johar feels people from the movie industry are "lost" with the kind of expectations they carry.

Johar says since there is "so much else" actors have to deal with, that they usually end up having temporary friendships instead of long standing ones.

"Movie people just don't have friends. They have so much else to deal with. I find that about film actors particularly, that they don't have friends. They don't have a lot of friendships and the ones they have, they are actually seasonal.

"They go from film to film. I've been a friend who has been a seasonal friend, I've also made some seasonal friends.

I do know what that feels like."

The "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" director says he doesn't know that due to this film stars are lonely but feels they are definitely lost.

"Everyone's lost in the film



Karan Johar feels people from the movie industry are lost with the kind of expectations they carry. PHOTO: PTI

says many industry people are just not equipped to carry a relationship.

"I think many of us are unequipped to handle our relationships because of who we are. Sometimes it is because of our intense megalomania, sometimes because we are delusional....," he said.

Johar hopes one change within the industry should be "the ability to nurture our friendships. We just do not know how to make friends," he said.

"It is not impossible. Every relationship is difficult. It takes working on (it) and I feel a lot of people from within the industry don't do that, because it's all about themselves.

"You cannot make life about yourself. It has to be about the people who surround you, or else you're going to be irrelevant very soon," he added.

Johar was speaking at the Times LitFest yesterday.—PTI

industry. Everyday you are combating expectations, success is always expected of you, there is so much baggage that you carry. There is daily reportage of what you wear, say, or don't say," he said.

The 44-year-old filmmaker

Singapore Int'l Film Festival concludes, attracting around 13,000 audience

SINGAPORE — The 27th Singapore International Film Festival came to a close on Sunday, with around 13,000 festival-goers from Singapore and across the region participating in its film screenings, talks, forums and masterclasses in 12 days.

This year's festival showcased a total of 161 feature and short films, of which 11 screenings, including four local productions, were sold out. There was also an increase of over 50 per cent in attendance for the masterclasses and talks, a testament to the growing support and interest towards independent cinema.

Across the 12 days, festival goers also had the opportunity to get up-close with distinguished film personalities from around the world, including US director Darren Aronofsky, veteran Hong Kong actor Simon Yam, Vietnamese-born French filmmaker Tran

Anh Hung, Hong Kong filmmaker Fruit Chan etc. Singapore International Film Festival Executive Director Yuni Hadi noted that stories bring people from all walks of life together, and remain as the cornerstone of filmmaking.

"This year, we continue to gather many diverse stories told by the region's talents, and provide a platform that allows our audiences to both enjoy the films and expand their perspectives on filmmaking," she said. As an event of Singapore Media Festival, hosted by Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), the film festival celebrated the best of Asian storytelling with its stellar line-up of excellent films from Singapore and the region, said Angeline Poh, Deputy Chairman of Singapore Media Festival Advisory Board and IMDA's Assistant Chief Executive (Content and Innovation).—Xinhua

New Zealanders experience Chinese intangible cultural heritages in Wellington

WELLINGTON — How to make sugar into an art masterpiece? Artists from Liaoning, China gave New Zealanders a unique opportunity to get a closer experience of Chinese intangible cultural heritage in the Te Papa, kiwi’s national museum in Wellington on Saturday.

Susan, a 63-year old Wellington resident, found a new teacher in the Liaoning Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop. Although they could not communicate by a same language, Susan and Zhang Bin, the master of Jinzhou Dough Modeling, successfully made a rose by a small piece of dough.

Dough modeling is done by kneading, squeezing and cutting a glutinous rice-based material into different lifelike shapes such as animals, flowers and birds. It is a folk art that has roots in the worship customs of China’s ancient agricultural society.

On the other side of the room, girls gathered around the sugar art master Li Fengyan, attracted by an edible handicraft. Li used a spoon as a “brush” and malt sugar as “ink” to make colorful patterns such as flowers, birds, fishes and insects. That is a magic skill to cast boiled syrup on a stone into art pieces by back-and-forth motions.

The traditional Chinese sugar art quickly became the new modern fashion for kiwi kids. They ran across the room, holding beautiful and delicious new toys, showing to their parents.

The workshop also invited other three masters of Liaoning intangible cultural heritage. During the interactive exhibition, they showed local people some unforgettable skills, such as Yiwulushan Manchu paper-cutting, Manchu Knots of Western Liaoning and Amber Carving.

Qu Guangzhou, the Chargé d’affaires of Chinese embassy to New Zealand, said in the workshop launching ceremony that the artists may not as popular as the pop stars in China, but they are real masters and heroes. The strong and dynamic relation between China and New Zealand is supported by people-to-people relations and cultural links of the two countries, said Qu.

The workshop is co-organised by the China Cultural Centre in New Zealand and the Department of Culture in Liaoning province. The organisers aimed to give New Zealanders a great insight of the culture diversity of China and how the heritage in art forms passed down from old to young.

Xu Hongying the deputy director general of Liaoning province department of culture, said in the launching ceremony that Liaoning province has cooperation with New Zealand in a wide range of areas and the workshop is about to give people in Aotearoa an experience with great Liaoning local characteristics.

Guo Zongguang, the director of the China Cultural Centre in New Zealand, told the audience in Te Papa that China is a country with rich resources of intangible cultural heritage, with 39 items in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage. Apart from Te Papa, the Liaoning Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop scheduled to have several activities in schools and libraries in Wellington in the following week.

—Xinhua

Pudus, world’s smallest deer, on display at Japan zoo

SAITAMA (Japan) — Four pudus, the world’s smallest species of deer, were put on display Sunday in a zoo in Saitama Prefecture, near Tokyo, their first public appearance in the country.

The pudu, native to southern Chile and parts of Argentina, is about 80 centimeters in length and weighs only 9 kilograms. Although the deer is listed as an endangered species, Saitama’s Children Zoo was given the pudus by Santiago Metropolitan Park in the Chilean capital after gaining permission to import them for the purpose of academic study, the Japanese zoo operator said.

Two 2-year-old male pudus and two female pudus — a 2-year-old and 1-year-old — showed their faces among the bushes in a section of the zoo in Higashimatsuyama.—Kyodo News



One of four pudus, the world’s smallest species of deer, is seen on display at Saitama Children’s Zoo near Tokyo, on 4 December 2016 in their first public appearance in the country. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Popular Japanese sake maker to open Paris shop

TOKYO — Asahi Shuzo Co., the maker of the immensely popular Japanese sake brand Dassai based in Yamaguchi Prefecture, will open a shop in Paris as early as next spring in collaboration with renowned French chef Joel Robuchon.

The Paris outlet will sell Dassai and operate a bar, along with a restaurant under the stewardship of Robuchon featuring the sake and French cuisine.

It is rare for a Japanese sake brewery to open a shop abroad.

During a news conference in Tokyo in October, Robuchon said Dassai goes well with his dishes and expressed hope many people will enjoy French food and Japanese sake at affordable prices.

Asahi Shuzo President Kazuhiro Sakurai said, “We want to attract people who do not have any particular interest in Japan.

We hope to expand the scope of Japanese food and blend it with local culture.”

The Paris shop will be jointly managed by Asahi Shuzo, based in Iwakuni in the western Japan prefecture, and Robuchon.

The sake maker originally planned to open a shop in Paris in 2014.

—Kyodo News

mitv

Myanmar International

Programme Schedule

(5-12-2016 07:00 AM ~ 6-12-2016 07:00 AM) MST

07:03 Am

News

07:26 Am

Myanmar Delicate Artistic Handy Creations-Lacquaware Making

07:52 Am

Myanmar Puppet

08:03 Am

News

08:26 Am

A bike Ride in pursuit of Mural Art (Episode-1)

08:45 Am

The Caves

09:03 Am

News

09:26 Am

A Journey for Healthy Future (The 36th Geumsan Insam Festival) Day-1

09:44 Am

A Journey for Healthy Future (The 36th Geumsan Insam Festival) Day-2

10:03 Am

News

10:26 Am

Continuation In Rural Tradition

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Sunday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03 Pm

News

07:26 Pm

Food Trip (EP-4)(Part-2)

07:49 Pm

Amazing: Sayargyi Nyein Chan Aung

08:03 Pm

News

08:26 Pm

Myanmar National Poet And Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-4) Political Life & Remembrance Temple Stalls

08:53 Pm

(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)- Sunday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

MRTV

(5-12-2016, Monday)

6:00 am

- Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:35 am

- People’s Talks

7:50 am

- Documentary

8:35 am

- Women in Myanmar Society

9:35 am

- Life Struggles

9:50 am

- Documentary

10:35 am

- Documentary

11:15 am

- Documentary (ASEAN)

11:35 am

- MRTV’s Youth Programme

12:35 pm

- Teleplay

2: 10 pm

- Teleplay

4:15 pm

- University of Distance Education(TV Lecture) Second Year (Psychology)

4:35 pm

- Socio Economic Scenes

5:15 pm

- This Week’s Special Interest

5:35 pm

- Yes or No Talk Show

8:00 pm

- News/ International News/ Weather Report

8:35 pm

- Documentary

9:00 pm

- News/ Weather Report

- TV Drama Series
- MCN Debate

Note/Hourly News Bulletins (Local + International)



Supporters who gathered in downtown Yangon near the Sule Pagoda (in background) cheer for the Myanmar team as they faced Thailand in the Suzuki Cup semi-finals yesterday. The crowd gathered to watch the match at a giant screen set up in Mahabandoola Park. Thailand defeated Myanmar 2-0 in the match. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Favourites Thailand triumph in Yangon

YANGON — Thailand got the job done in the first-leg, with two goals from Teerasil Dangda giving them a comfortable lead on aggregate.

The War Elephants did it without breaking much sweat as well, as they showed that they are certainly a level or two above their hosts. Teerasil broke the deadlock in the 23rd minute with an explosive finish after he was played in by Chanathip Songkrasin. He doubled it 10 minutes into the second half, this time with a simple finish after dancing past two defenders.

Myanmar will now have it all to do in the second leg, and it's a task that look almost impossible given how strong the Thais are looking.

Goals

23' (0-1) Thailand breaks the deadlock after Chanathip slips Teerasil through and the Thai captain smashes it into the top corner.

55' (0-2) Teerasil does it again, this time a fine finish. Latching onto a through ball from Theerathon, he turns away from one marker and skips past another before slotting it into the bottom corner with his left foot.

Match Highlights

Thailand send out warning —

An early free-kick for Thailand in the third minute whipped in by Theerathon Bunmathan was touched just wide by Pokklaw A-Nan, with no Myanmar players picking the midfielder up.

Flowing move from Myanmar —

The home side work the ball around the static Thai defence in the 10th minute and

the chance falls for Kaung Set Nainag, but the angle was too acute for the forward to trouble Kawin Tamsatchanan in goal.

Should have done better —

A smart dummy from Pokklaw allows Kroekrit to get the ball right outside the area in the 16th minute, but his shot wasn't powerful enough to trouble Myanmar keeper Kyaw Zin Phyo. *Another comfortable save for Phyo —*

Thailand keep up the pressure on Myanmar and this time Chanathip finds space to get his shot away, but Phyo reads it well.

Too unselfish from Teerasil -

An incisive pass from Chanathip sends Teerasil through, but the Thailand captain chose to pass it towards Kroekrit and over hits it when it looked easier to score.

Close from Sarach —

The Thailand midfield lynchpin goes forward on his own and his effort misses the mark by mere inches in the 22nd minute.

Massive let-off for Myanmar —

Myanmar fails to cope with Thailand once more and Kroekrit sends an effort onto the crossbar before the ball is cleared away.

Myanmar denied by the flag —

Aung Thu's moment of brilliance sees him turn his markers inside out before crossing for Mg Mg Lwin to tap the ball in, but the latter was rightly called for offside by the linesman.

Thailand keep up pressure —

Straight out of the second half, Thailand continue to test Myanmar through Sarach, Teerasil and Kroekrit in quick

succession. But on all three occasions, Phyo dealt with it comfortably.

Lacking conviction —

Myanmar finally get another chance after Nanda's cross reaches Aung Thu, but the striker's volley is a tame one.

Good hit from Sarach —

From a free-kick 20 yards out, Sarach hits it well and gets it over the wall, but puts too much curl into it and it lands into the side netting.

Pokklaw goes close —

The midfielder decides to go for goal from range in the 65th minute and almost beats Phyo in the Myanmar goal after the ball took a bounce, but the goalkeeper reacted quick enough to palm it away

Kawin stays alert —

Myanmar work the ball from right to left and Mg Mg Lwin's effort troubles Kawin, who had to tip it over at full stretch.

Aung Thu can't find the breakthrough —

The pacy striker once again makes full use of his speed to get behind Thailand's defence in the 69th minute, but found Kawin too hard to beat. *Sirod almost had the perfect introduction —*

Sent on for Kroekrit in the 69th minute, the striker carved out a chance for himself within seconds and Phyo had to dive at full stretch to push it wide.

Theerathon denied once again —

In a similar situation from the first half, Theerathon goes for goal from the free-kick, but once again Phyo reads it well and saves comfortably. —AFF

Late Ramos header denies Barcelona in Clasico

BARCELONA — Sergio Ramos again proved Real Madrid's last-gasp hero by heading a 90th-minute equaliser to force a 1-1 draw at champions Barcelona and preserve his side's six-point lead at the top of La Liga on Saturday.

It looked as if Real's 32-game unbeaten run in all competitions may be coming to an end when Luis Suarez climbed highest to head in Neymar's free kick in the 53rd minute of a 'Clasico' that failed to live up to its billing early on.

Neymar then curled a shot just over the bar after a breathtaking run into the box while Andres Iniesta and Lionel Messi narrowly missed the target for the hosts.

Real captain Ramos earned a point that could prove decisive in the title race by powering in Luka Modric's free kick, just as he had done in the 2014 Champions League final against Atletico Madrid. "We did everything we could to take the three points. We were the superior team but if you don't take your chances this is what happens," Suarez said.

"We have to stay strong, keep going and hope Real drop points here and there. There's still a long way to go."

Barca coach Luis Enrique picked the same team that he said produced the worst display of his tenure to draw 1-1 at Real Sociedad last week and they struggled to prise open an organised Real side.

Visiting winger Lucas Vazquez had a penalty appeal waved away in the third minute when he went down under a challenge from Javier Mascherano while Barca called for a spot kick at the other end when Sergi Roberto's shot was blocked by Raphael Varane.

Suarez's header opened up the game and Barca went all out to try and kill off their rivals.

Neymar sliced open the Real defence but put too much power into his shot while substitute Iniesta shot into the side

netting after magnificent play from the Brazilian.

Real took their time to offer a response but upped their pursuit of an equaliser as the game wound down. Ramos headed over the bar and Cristiano Ronaldo had an effort cleared off the line by Jordi Alba.

Just as Barca thought they had got away with it, Ramos had the final say.

"We had more chances in the first half and lacked effectiveness but hard work is always rewarded and we still have a big advantage," said Ramos.

Real coach Zinedine Zidane hailed the fighting spirit of his players.

"I have to recognise the heart of this team once again. We kept believing right until the end. We got a draw that is important for us," said the Frenchman.

"Sergio has this special capacity to do things like this. In games like this, he is always there, encouraging the other players and never gives up."

Real are top with 34 points from 14 matches while second-placed Barca have 28. Sevilla are third on 27 after suffering a shock 2-1 defeat at Granada who recorded their first league win of the season. Atletico, fourth on 25 points, failed to take advantage of the 'Clasico' stalemate as they were held to a goalless draw at home to Espanyol.

Former Atletico coach Quique Sanchez Flores, now in charge of Espanyol, was given a hero's welcome on his return to the Vicente Calderon.

Gerard Moreno and Leo Baptistao squandered one-on-one opportunities for the visitors.

Antoine Griezmann fired just wide for Atletico from an almost impossible angle and has now gone seven games in the league without scoring.

Leganes, who are 15th, drew 0-0 with fifth-placed Villarreal in the day's other match. —Reuters



Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos scores a goal during the 'Clasico' at Nou Camp Stadium, Barcelona, on 3 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS