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 Khine 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 Htet.

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

Afterwards, Mr Kofi Annan and party visited the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp.

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 Mongkoe 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.
NATPAUK Elephant Camp to appeal to visitors with ecotourism tours

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

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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 late October.

A similar case occurred on 17 November in PyintOoLwin Township, where police discovered 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 late October.

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

**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 Buthiaung—

“We assume that the commission’s present visit will benefit peace and stability of the area. As regards Buthiaung’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 Buthiaung. For peace and stability of the area, all the populace will have to try hand in hand with each other.”

U Zaw Phyoo Tun (administer, Kyikamiyin, 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 of the commission.”

U Hasang Amed of Kyetyoepin 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 problem.”

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 Mambat have recently been moved to religious buildings in Nawngkhio and Namtu due to the attacks of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Taunggyi National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDDAA) in northern Shan State, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor’s Office.

A total of 314 IDPs were moved to Shwemyinttha monastery, Kisu Temple and Kachin Baptist Church in Namtu after an incident between government troops and the joint armed groups.

—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-Buthiaung 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 near in a state of newly constructed building.

Proceeding from there, we reached the village of Shwe Yin Aye very soon, a village where local ethnic 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, 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 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 Thayay 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 villages 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 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 done 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 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 it came very clear the whole deal could roll over,” he said.

—Reuters

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 Bangladeshi delegation, said Manila “strongly recommended” Dhaka share the results of its investigation.

He assured the visitors the government was doing 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 fake 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 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 to Manila, John Gomez, 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

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

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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 Myanmar 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 experienced 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$1.7 billion. Under the first phase, the upgrading of the Yangon-Toungoo railway track will be carried out, with an estimated cost of US$200 million.

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 Condominium 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

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 necessary tourism facilities by issuing licenses for hotels and guesthouses, travel and tour agencies and tour guides after appropriate scrutiny. A total of 1,391 licenses 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

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 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 subsidises 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

THAI CENTRAL CHEMICAL PCL ESTABLISHES MYANMAR SUBSIDIARY

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

TCCM 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 agricultural 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. TCCM’s establishment will offer more agile and diverse services to farmers and distributors in Myanmar. Use of TCCM’s compound NPK fertilizer will also spread to rice and other major crops.

TCCM 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.

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

TCCC 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 Islamiasts 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.

“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 Shamara 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.

In the Counter Terrorism Services, which are spear heading 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 predict ed their gains would be short lived.

“His is not the first time it happens. We withdraw to avoid civilian losses and then regain control. 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 militia said those attacks had been repelled.

“A Daesh attack at dawn to try to control the village Tal Zalat,” 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.

Iran Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi launched the Mosul of fensive 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, 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 Malahfji 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 rebels (or) do you want to be steadfast”, Malahfji 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 Afghanis, to Iraqis, and so on,” Malahfji 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 it 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 signed 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
**Taxi rams into Fukuoaka hospital, three dead, seven injured**

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

The police arrested Tatsuo Matsuoka, the 64-year-old driv- er of the taxi, citing reckless driving. The taxi slammed into Harasanshin Hospital in Fukuoaka’s Hakata Ward shortly after 5 p.m. and seven people were taken to hos- pitals.

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, hit- ting people there. Matsuoka was quoted by the police as saying the brakes did not work.

The dead are Moriyuha 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 accel- erated shortly before it entered the premises of the hospital.

The taxi reached the oppo- site wall of the lounge, accord- ing to the hospital.

The lounge floor was cov- ered with glass fragments and parts of the crashed vehicle. Another eyewitness told Kyodo News 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 trans- port 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 authori- ties in accordance with the na- tion’s epidemic prevention rules.—Kyodo News

**Modi defends clampdown on cash economy**

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday de- fended 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 and not do enough to find de-bris, which could give more clues about what happened. The families wanted more focus on finding 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, spark- ing a search in the southern Indian Ocean that continues.

Grace Nathan, who lost her mother, said families wanted au- thorities to focus more on finding debris of 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 situa- tion where the relatives of people on the plane have to keep funding the search,” she told Reuters in Antananarivo, the capital of Mad- agascar.

Aslam Khan, one of the Ma- laysian investigators who arrived in Antananarivo on Sunday, said it was incorrect to suggest the in- quiry was winding down.

He said criticism of the investi- gation 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 in- vestigators 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 suspect- ed to be from the plane have been found so far, including parts of the wings and tail, in La Reunion, Mozambique, South Africa, Mau- ritis and Tanzania.

Three pieces have been con- firmed by the Malaysian authori- ties as belonging to MH370, in- cluding 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 a part of a wing in Mozambique that authorities confirmed was probably from MH370 and more than 10 pieces of debris in Madagascar, includ- ing 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 im- pact, 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.

Glislian Wattrellos, a French- man 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 an area) 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

**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 Ma- laysian investigators on Sunday for not doing enough to find de-bris, 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, spark- ing a search in the southern Indian Ocean that continues.

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**MH370 families want investigation to focus more on debris from plane**

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

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

**MH370 families want investigation to focus more on debris from plane**

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

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**Opinion**

**Write for us**

Recently, we have been receiving a significant number of queries regarding the quality and standards of educational institutions in Myanmar. It is important to note that there is a general sentiment among the public that the quality of education is not high enough. This is particularly true in the context of higher education, where there is a need for substantial improvements. The Ministry of Education is working hard to address these concerns, but there is still much work to be done.

We strongly believe that education is the key to unlocking the full potential of our nation. It is essential that we invest in our people and ensure that they have access to quality education. This will not only benefit the individual but also contribute to the development of our country as a whole.

We encourage readers to write to us with their thoughts and ideas on how we can improve the quality of education in Myanmar. We welcome all contributions, whether they be essays, articles, or letters to the editor. Our goal is to create a platform where we can share ideas and work towards a better future for our country.

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**Religion is not a tool for politics**

Members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are also concerned about the situation in Myanmar. The Myanmar government has been criticized for its treatment of the Rohingya population, and there is a growing concern about the use of religion as a tool for political gain.

While there are many religious groups in Myanmar, the government has been accused of using religion to propagate its agenda. This is particularly concerning in the context of ongoing political tensions in the country.

We urge the government to prioritize the well-being of its citizens and to refrain from using religion as a tool for political gain. We believe that a peaceful and prosperous future is possible for all citizens of Myanmar, regardless of their religion.

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**Myanmar: Insurance pays compensation to victims of fires**

Myanmar Insurance paid out Ks57 million on Wednesday to the families in Monywa town of Sagaing division that were victims of the fire in July last year. On October 15, the hourly all-heights' Aung Soe Kyaw fire capon rushed to the scene and helped the fire service to extinguish the fire without any casualties. The family members of those who lost their lives received Ks15 million each.

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**Watermelon to be exported to China**

Photo: MyitMAKhA news Agency

Myanmar's watermelon, the most popular crop in the country, would be exported to China in the future. Watermelon growers earned a heavy price of the crop this year, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. The price has increased from Ks200 to Ks400 per basket.

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**Higher demand leads to increase price for watermelon**

Local watermelon growers enjoy a healthy price as the Chinese market is on the rise. The price has increased from Ks200 to Ks400 per basket.

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**Myanmar economy pays compensation to victims of fires**

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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 dug in by journalists throughout the day, there was no formal announcement from his camp.

Media commentators expect 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, responded 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 cause 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

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 Renzi’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

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

Flows 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 ammunition 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
European Mars mission funding approved even after test lander's crash

PARIS — European space agency (ESA) member states have approved another 450 million euros ($479 million) in funding for the ExoMars mission to the Red Planet, even after a test lander that was part of the programme crashed in October, ESA said on Friday.

The European-Russian ExoMars programme sent a gas-sniffing orbiter and a test lander to Mars this year to search for signs of past or present life on the Red Planet and to lay the groundwork for a future rotor that is due to follow in 2022.

The ExoMars Schiaparelli lander crashed after a sensor failure caused it to cast away its parachute and then off braking thrusters more than two miles (3.7 km) above the surface of the planet, as though it had already landed.

ESA Director General Jan Woerner said ESA scientists needed to work hard now to meet the schedule for the Mars rover, especially as a delay to the mission beyond 2020 was not an option. “It’s not an easy thing, but we are confident that we will succeed,” Woerner said. The money for ExoMars is part of an overall 10.3 billion euro — close to the 11 billion euro ESA has requested — for European space programs that the member states have approved — for European science projects that involve the ISS.

The member states also approved a commitment to extend European participation in the space station to 2024, which will allow ESA to send further astronauts to the ISS. European astronaut Thomas Pesquet arrived at the ISS last month, around five months after the return of Britain’s first astronaut, Tim Peake. — Reuters

A full-size model of the European ExoMars entry, descent and landing module, Schiaparelli is seen during a press conference at the European Space Agency (ESA) Headquarters in Darmstadt, Germany on 20 October, 2016. Photo: Xinhua

Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin recovering well after Antarctic evacuation

SYDNEY — Former US astronaut Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the moon, posted photos on Twitter of his recovery in a New Zealand hospital after he was evacuated from the South Pole due to illness.

Aldrin, 86, who was visiting the pole as part of a tourist group, was flown to Christchurch, New Zealand, early on Friday local time when his condition deteriorated. He has fluid in his lungs but is responding well to antibiotics and is in a stable condition, according to his official website.

Aldrin appeared in good spirits on Saturday after receiving a visit from NASA Deputy Administrator Dava Newman at Christchurch Hospital.

“I had a surprise visitor this morning. My longtime friend,” he wrote on Twitter.

In the photos, Aldrin can be seen giving a thumbs-up sign and sitting in front of a tray of food and juice.

His manager Christina Korp, who travelled with him to Antarctica, posted photos on Thursday of the former astronaut walking over snow at the South Pole.

Aldrin was a fighter pilot during the Korean War before joining the US astronaut program. On 20 July, 1969, he stepped on the moon about 20 minutes after Neil Armstrong had taken the historic first step.

Their moonwalk was part of the Apollo 11 lunar landing that was watched by a then-record television audience of 600 million people.—Reuters

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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-story, structure that occupied about half a city block and housed a cluttered warren of artists’ studios, craft booths, antique shops, 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 single-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 neighborhood 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.

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

SIMI VALLEY, (Calif.) — The US Navy plans to diversify its order 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 Hornet jets, 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 Bleshier.—Reuters

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 delay the 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
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.

Donning insulated tips 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 composting modes. 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 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 Conda 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 as they grieved over 50 Brazilian city on Saturday sands of mourners in this banners and team faithful Brazil mourns Chapecoense crash victims at coats by size and gender in days collating donated last month. She spends her demand. Stability on ice, are now in heated, composting composting are being swapped out for of East Asia, have started popular in the cold tundra mer. Yurts, a round tent that have dotted these bar tipis have popped up in re harsher weather. In size — and quickly win camp, the epicenter of pipe Monday, the Oceti Sakowin of Engineers to vacate by from the US Army Corps amidst the cold and an order toward 0 degrees Fahren this week was but a taste of they know a blizzard earlier is most definitely coming. That does not deter Da donning its green and white unloading the bodies from as Air Force troops, after drive to the stadium, where victims’ families in 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 tribut “This rain must be Saint Peter crying. Monday’s, 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 Sudamer- Small Fire, Siam Tower. 989 Ramu Road, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330, Thailand Email: swang35@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.

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
People tried to shame me for not knowing English: Kangana

MUMBIL — 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.

“We have to first believe in ourselves as equals, only then they will get that sort of treatment. Today I can proudly say, ‘Women have to first believe in themselves’ and 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.

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Kangana says it is heartening that today women are treated like any one else on sets.” Kangana says it is heartening that today women are treated like any one else on sets.”

However, 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 ten 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

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.

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‘Harry Potter and the Cursed Child’ plans 2018 Broadway debut

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 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 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 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 says many industry people are just not equipped to handle 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 around you. 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

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

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 Chairperson of Singapore Media Festival Advisory Board and IMDA’s Assistant Chief Executive (Content and Innovation). —Xinhua

Singapore Int’l Film Festival concludes, attracting around 13,000 audience
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 the 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 workshop 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 melt 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 on 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 the 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 Zoo in Chile.

The Japanese zoo operator, Robuchon said Dassai and French cuisine.

The Paris outlet will sell Dassai and operate a shop in Paris in 2014. Finally planned to open in the western Japan prefecture, and Robuchon.

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.

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 on Wednesday, 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
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 Classico that saw both teams 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 pawing 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.

Visiting manager Ernesto Valverde 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.

Ramos took their chance 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 efficiency, but we are still a big advantage and we still have a big advantage,” said Ramos.

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

“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.

“Atletico have 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

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, so 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 looks 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 Teerathon, 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 Teerathon Burmabu 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.

Thailand send out warning – An early free-kick for 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.

Thai keep up the pressure on Myanmar and this time Chanathip finds space to get his shot away, but Phyo reads it well. Two 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 – Massive let-off for Myanmar as another chance for himself within five yards of goal.

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