Commander-in-Chief says Armed Forces responsible for “safeguarding constitution” as 69th Armed Forces Day is marked with parade

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 March—Myanmar’s Armed Forces performed drills and displayed their military hardware during the 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday, with Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivering a speech on the role of the Armed Forces. He said that according to the Commander-in-Chief, the Armed Forces are responsible for safeguarding the constitution as the country celebrates the 69th Armed Forces Day.

Rakhine State Govt to conduct investigation into riots targeting offices, residences of int’l aid groups

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 March—The Rakhine State government will carry out a probe into riots that took place on 26 and 27 March targeting offices and residences of international aid organizations in Sittway town, Rakhine State, the Ministry of Home Affairs said on Thursday.

In the first incident on March 26 at around 8.30 pm, around 50 locals surrounded a facility rented by the humanitarian organization Malteser International, hurling stones at the house. The attack came in response to the removal of a Buddhist flag hoisted at the house, with officials saying that Mrs Yvonne Dunton, project coordinator of the organization, had taken down the flag.

Following the incidence, Mrs Yvonne Dunton and her husband fled to the house of a man identified as U Aye Tun Sein located in Gaukshi Road.

Photo shows damages at a building caused by riots in Sittway of Rakhine State.

Media Accreditation for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Council Meeting from 2 to 4 April

Nay Pyi Taw, 27 March—Local and foreign journalists have been informed to register for media accreditation from 15 to 27 March for the 11th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council Meeting and related meetings which will be held in Nay Pyi Taw from 2 to 4 April.

The 11th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council Meeting and the press conference will be held only on 4 April, and accreditation cards will be issued to journalists before the morning session of the meeting on that day at Grand Amarla Hotel in State Guest House Area of Nay Pyi Taw.
Water supply system nearing completion in Yuzana Garden City

YANGON, 27 March—Over 40000 people are residing in blocks A, B and C of Yuzana Garden City in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, Yangon East District of Yangon Region.

The local people have been using unclean water for many years.

On Wednesday, Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe and regional ministers, Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee Mayor U Hla Myint and officials inspected water tank and water pumping station near Padauk Road in the city.

Head of Engineering Department (Water and Sanitation) U Myint Oo reported on laying of water pipelines and plans of supplying water to the dwellers with the use of charts.

The Chief Minister and party viewed progress of building water tanks and completion of water pumps and gave instructions on supply of water to the people as soon as possible.

U Kyin Maung, Head of Yangon East District Electricity Supply Board U Phone Myint explained new rates of electric meter bill to the people in Wards 13, 15 and 16 of Yankin Township on 24 March.

Medical treatment given to locals with traditional medicines

MONYWA, 27 March—A squad led by Medical Superintendent U Nay Aung of Monywa Traditional Medicine Hospital made a field trip to Nyaungbingan Village of Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region for providing health care services to the local people with the use of traditional medicines on 23 March.

The whole day, they gave medical treatment to 205 locals.

Head of Sagaing District Traditional Medicine Department U Soe Kyi cooperated with them in medical treatment. Later, the medical superintendent gave health educative talks to the people and donated 300 copies of journals to the library of the village.

Po Chan (Monywa)

Legal trade route, the safety way for merchants

MYEIK, 27 March—A meeting on trade promotion was held at the hall of Myeik District Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Myeik of Tanintharyi Region on Tuesday.

At the meeting, U Myo Min, Assistant Director of Border Trade Department (Myeik) stressed the need to carry out legal trade route for trade promotion and exceeding the target of trade and explained plans and actual works of export and import trading.

Vice-Chairman of Myeik District CCI U Kyi San and entrepreneurs discussed progress of trade in their respective sectors.

Departmental officials participated in discussion of trade promotion and replied to queries raised by merchants and entrepreneurs. The assistant director reviewed the discussions for trade promotion.—Khaung Htoo (Myeik District IPRD)
NATIONAL

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife host dinner to mark Armed Forces Day

NAY PYI TAW, 27 March — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla host ed a reception and dinner in commemoration of the 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day on the lawns of Zeyathiri Beikman, here, on Thursday evening.

Before and during the dinner and reception, Myawaddy music band presented songs to the guests. After the dinner, Myawaddy Anyeint troupe and mobile public relations companies performed entertainments to them.

On Thursday morning, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Thayay Sithu Hla Hay Win made a speech at the ceremony to honour artists who participated in the tele-plays in honour of the Armed Forces Day.

Adjoint-General Lt-Gen Thiri Pyan Thi Khin Zaw Oo and Chief of Armed Forces Training Lt-Gen Thiri Pyan Thi Yar Pyae presented certificates of honour to the artists.

At 9.35 am, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Thiri Sithu Hla Hay Win presented best awards in camp, military song, military disciplines, parade and first, second and third awards for model companies to respective companies.

Adjutant-General Lt-Gen Thiri Pyan Thi Khin Zaw Oo also gave prizes to respective award winning troops.

MNA

Commander-in-Chief says...

(from page 1)

to the constitution, the Tat madaw—the Armed Forces—is mainly responsible for safeguarding the constitution, which can only be amended in conformity with chapter 12.

According to chapter 12 of the 2008 constitution, the constitution can only be amended with the prior approval of more than seventy-five percent of the representatives of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the Union Parliament.

The Commander-in-Chief also called for respect to be given to the 92.48% of voters who cast their ballot in favour of the constitution during a referendum in 2008.

Back then, 27.28 million out of Myanmar’s then population of 57.3 million was eligible to vote in the referendum, with 24.76 million of the 26.7 million people who did cast their ballot, voting in favour of the constitution, he said.

The Commander-in-Chief called on all people to cooperate with the Tatmadaw as the Armed Forces are assisting the police in the enforcement of rule of law.

The need for the Armed Forces to continue their role in political negotiations in order to find solutions to the political issues in Myanmar was stressed by President U Thein Sein on Wednesday in his address to parliament. He did, however, say that the role of the Armed Forces will be gradually reduced as the country matures in democracy.

Regarding social problems, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said the country has to solve problems caused by different nationalities who were brought to Myanmar by British colonialists.

He said the Armed Forces are committed to strengthening the friendship and unity among the peoples as the divide-and-rule policy of the British colonialists caused disharmony. —NLM
Opening of new library marks 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

As a gesture of honouring the 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day, a new library namely “Helping Hands” was opened in Nyantheikdi Ward in Zabuthiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on Thursday. A newly-opened library was funded K 4 million of the parliament’s development fund. The one-storey building was donated 2000 publications. Locals are enjoying the benefits of reading thanks to the library.

Myanmar Passport Office (Hpa-an branch) packed with passport applicants

Hpa-an, 27 March—Passport applicants queue up in front of Myanmar Passport Office (Hpa-an branch) in Hpa-an Township of Kayin State.

The branch office of Hpa-an was opened on 2 January. Passport applicants have been increasing up to 547 from 1 to 19 March, said in-charge of Myanmar Passport Office (Hpa-an branch).

For passport applicant’s convenience, list for the related documents are displayed at the branch office of Hpa-an including the total cost of passport. As the government has opened passport offices in more regions and states in Myanmar, local applicants may easily get passports in a short period.

Local passport applicants thank to great efforts made by the government.

Myanmar Passport Office (Hpa-an branch) is facilitated with the strength of seven members of Special Branch of Myanmar Police Force and two of Immigration and National Registration Department.

Taunggyi District IPRD opens PSM course

Taunggyi, 27 March—Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) of Taunggyi District, southern Shan State, opened the public service media-PSM course at his office on Wednesday.

This course that was run up to 30 March covers library service, internet media service, democratic reform and public service sector, making interview, writing news and articles, taking photo and video, and editing.

The staff members from Taunggyi, Loilem and Langkho District IPRDs attended the five days PSM course.

Dragon fruit plantations thriving in Thabeikkyin Tsp

Thabeikkyin, 27 March—Dragon fruit plantations are cultivated on a commercial scale in Thabeikkyin Township in Mandalay Region.

U Aung Than Oo, a plantation owner, said, “Dragon fruit plants begin to bear fruits in the month of Waso in Myanmar lunar calendar (August). Cost of purchase for fruit sapling is K 800-K 1000.”

The owner continued, “The fruit is sold at K 1000-K 1200 in Mandalay Market on average. Last year, about 50 dragon fruits plants were grown and sold at K 80,000. At present, a total of 300 plants have been cultivated for this season.” “This region has favourable condition for agriculture. Dragon fruit plantations are mushrooming across the region,” U Maung Win, another plantation owner, explained.

“A total of 600 plants have been grown for this season. I think those plants would benefit to me surely,” he said.—Soe Naing Win (Thabeikkyin).

Knowledge about gender equality shared in Pathein

Pathein, 27 March—Three-day workshop on gender equality and knowledge about Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was held at the Social Welfare Department in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region on Wednesday.

Speaking at the workshop, Head of region Social Welfare Department U Thet Hlaing Tun said that Myanmar has signed convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in 1997 and the department has been disseminating knowledge about gender equality and CEDAW starting from 2010.

He highlighted that emphasis should be placed on gender equality and development of women’s status to keep abreast with other countries.

Kyonpyaw residents get free eye care

Kyonpyaw, 27 March—As part of efforts for eye health of the people, eye specialist of Cakkhupala Free Eye Team performed the eye surgical operations at 145 eye patients on 23 and 24 March at the People’s Hospital of Kyonpyaw Township in Pathein District, Ayeyawady Region.

Dr Khin Shwe, Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw (National Parliament) Relief and Victims Care Committee, sponsored all cost of eye operations and care.

The specialists daily provided free eye care to over 100 patients from 23 to 27 March.

Applicants waiting for their turns to take out passports at Passport Office (Hpa-an) Branch.
India arrests two suspected Pakistani terrorists in northern state

NEW DELHI, 27 March — Indian police had arrested two suspected Pakistani terrorists and seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition from them in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, a senior police official said on Thursday.

The arrests were made following a revelation by Indian Mujahideen chief Tehseen Akhtar during interrogation by the intelligence agencies, the official said, adding that the two terrorists entered the district through Nepal which shares border with Uttar Pradesh.

Two days back, Akhtar, who is a mastermind, was arrested from a place close to the Indo-Nepal border.

Nepal plans free SIM cards to help hikers in distress

KATHMANDU, 27 March — Nepal plans to distribute free SIM cards to trekkers visiting remote areas alone, officials said on Thursday, after several foreign hikers were attacked or went missing in recent years.

Home to eight of the world’s 14 highest mountains including Mount Everest, Nepal hosts thousands of foreign climbers and trekkers every year. But the killing or disappearance of solo trekkers have raised concerns about the safety of tourists.

“When a trekker is lost, it becomes easy to find out the location by tracking the SIM card,” said Sharad Pradhan, a senior Nepal Tourism Board official, told Reuters.

“Trekking in distress can also call us on some specified numbers for help or rescue.”

Mountain climbers and group trekkers are accompanied by local helpers. But thousands who trek alone to remote Himalayan foothills or national parks make emergency rescue or help difficult when they are in distress, authorities said.

Free SIM cards will benefit about 30,000 independent trekkers who go to the remote areas every year. The cards will be handed over to them with their permits.—Reuters

Egypt’s Sisi to run for president, vows to tackle militancy

CAIRO, 27 March — Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the general who ousted Egypt’s first freely elected leader, declared his candidacy on Wednesday for a presidential election he is expected to win.

Sisi toppled Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood last July after mass protests against his rule and has emerged as the most influential figure in an interim administration that has governed since then.

“I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt,” Sisi said in a televised address to the nation. “Only your support will grant me this great honour.” A Sisi presidency would mark a return to the days when Egypt was led by men from the military, a pattern briefly interrupted by Morsi’s one year in office after his 2012 victory in Egypt’s first democratic presidential election.

Among his supporters, Sisi is wildly popular. Many see him as the kind of strong man needed to stabilize a country in crisis. But he is reviled by Islamists that have spiraled into protest against his rule.

Before his address, state TV broadcast montages including footage of Sisi jogging with troops. He has been lionized by privately owned and state media that are hostile to the Islamists.

Son of China’s ex-leader eyes visit to Japan to mend bilateral ties

BEIJING, 27 March — The eldest son of late Chinese reformist leader Hu Yaobang is making arrangements to visit Japan from later this month to early April, a source familiar with Japan-China relations said on Thursday.

The envisioned trip by Hu Deping, who is known to be close to Chinese President Xi Jinping, is hoped to “explore the possibility of improving Japan’s relations with China by getting in touch with Japanese politicians and civilians,” the source said.

The 71-year-old Hu’s visit, if realized, would come at a time when ties between Tokyo and Beijing remain soured over differences in perceptions of wartime history and tensions over the Senkaku Islands, controlled by Japan and claimed by China. —Kyodo News

Bangladesh sets Guinness World Record in chorus national anthem singing

DHAKA, 27 March — Tens of thousands of Bangladeshis on Wednesday sang the national anthem in chorus on Independence Day in a bid to breach Guinness World Record. Organizers said 254,681 volunteers from the Bangladesh Army, educational institutions and the general public sang the national anthem in chorus at about 11:00 am local time.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by a large number of her cabinet members, also sang in unison to the national anthem.

— Reuters

— Reuters

— Xinhua

— Reuters

— Xinhua

— Xinhua

— Reuters
Japan, S Korea eye senior officials’ talks in April

Tokyo, 27 March — Japan and South Korea are considering a meeting of senior officials in April to lay the groundwork for a summit, diplomatic sources said on Thursday.

Foreign Ministry officials from the two countries will step up preparations for the so-called director general-level meeting, including coordination on the issues to be discussed, the sources said.

South Korea has been insisting that the talks exclusively focus on the issue of South Korean women forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers before and during World War II. But Japan argues the two sides should discuss a range of bilateral issues.

If the two sides fail to narrow their gaps on the agenda, they may delay the timing of the envisaged meeting, according to the sources.

The two governments agreed to hold a senior officials’ meeting after Vice Foreign Minister Akikata Saiki floated such an idea to South Korean Ambassador to Japan Lee Byung Kee on 17 February, they said.—Kyodo News

Pakistani govt., Taliban hold first round of direct peace talks

Islamabad, 27 March — A Pakistani government’s negotiation team held first direct peace talks with Taliban militants and agreed to continue talks to find out a peaceful solution to the conflict in the country, negotiators said on Wednesday.

Head of the Taliban intermediaries Maulana Samiul Haq told the media that the talks were “productive” and that both sides showed willingness to continue the dialogue process.

He said both sides listened to each other’s views in the seven-hour talks in a “cordial atmosphere.”

Five members of the Taliban political council attended the talks. Qari Shakil Haqqani led the Taliban delegation in the face-to-face talks in Tull, Hangu District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

Both sides did not issue any formal statement at the conclusion of the talks. However, the Taliban intermediaries said they were satisfied with the outcome of the talks.

“The direct talks and agreement to continue talks are big achievements,” said Maulvi Yousaf Shah, who also attended Wednesday’s talks.

He did not reply to query if the Taliban agreed to extend their month-long ceasefire they had declared on 1 March.

“The understanding is the ceasefire will continue during the talks,” Shah said, adding that the Taliban and the government negotiators will apprise the leadership of the details of the talks.

In a positive response to the Taliban ceasefire, the government had also suspended airstrikes against Taliban hideouts in Waziristan tribal region.—Xinhua

UNDP chief stresses climate change, recovery issues after Haiyan

Manila, 27 March — United Nations Development Programme head Helen Clark underscored on Thursday climate change and the pressing need for recovery in Haiyan-affected areas in the Philippines after seeing for herself the damage left by the world’s strongest typhoon to hit land.

Speaking to reporters a day after inspecting Tacloban City in the central Philippines that bore the brunt of super typhoon Haiyan last 8 November, Clark said, “Livelihood is a very big issue for the whole UN team” since it is a key element to human development following the humanitarian response phase.

She also pointed out the “compelling need for people to be moved out of tents into transitional housings” as part of the permanent recovery phase, adding typhoon season is once again approaching.

“I personally have been impressed by the planning that I see. What I bring is the commitment of the UN system to align itself behind the plans the government is developing and to work with the government to support its capacity to do it,” Clark, a former prime minister of New Zealand, said.

She added that during her meeting with Philippine President Benigno Aquino, she told him about the climate change summit UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon will convene for world leaders in September in New York.

“I think this is a very important platform for President Aquino and the Philippines because you bring such direct experience of what a wild climate does to people and to their lives...we have to act. We need a new international agreement which will support countries like the Philippines with adaptation and support all countries on sustainable pathways to less polluting, less damaging developments,” Clark said.—Kyodo News

Ukraine, Russia dominate EU-US Summit

Brussels, 27 March — The leaders of European Union and United States vowed on Wednesday to support Ukraine and “intensity sanctions” on Russia if things “further escalating.”

“If the Russian leadership thought the world would not care about Ukraine, they clearly miscalculated,” Obama said at a press conference after the EU-US summit meeting.

“There is still a way for Russia to work with Ukraine,” Obama added.

“We support Ukraine”, and in case of further escalation, the EU and the US are ready to “intensify sanctions,” said European Council President Herman Van Rompuy in the same conference.

US President Barack Obama (L), European Council President Herman Van Rompuy (C) and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso hold a joint press conference during the EU-US Summit at the EU Headquarters in Brussels on 26 March, 2014.—XINHUA

Teachers participate in a national teachers march outside the Education Ministry in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, on 26 March, 2014. The march organized in defence of public education and salary, is carried out in the framework of a strike which has lasted 15 days by the teachers in Buenos Aires Province.—XINHUA

UN Security Council to meet Thursday on North Korea missile launch

United Nations, 27 March — The UN Security Council will hold closed-door consultations on Thursday to discuss a possible condemnation of North Korea’s latest ballistic missile launches, UN diplomats said. The request for a special session on North Korea came from the United States, council diplomats told Reuters on condition of anonymity on Wednesday.

The meeting of the 15-nation council was scheduled for 4:30 p.m. EDT (2030 GMT) on Thursday.

The UN mission of Luxembourg, which holds the presidency of the Security Council this month, announced on its Twitter feed that UN political affairs chief Jeffrey Feltman would brief council members on developments on the Korean peninsula during the session.

In what appeared to be a show of defiance, North Korea fired two medium-range Rodong ballistic missiles into the sea at 2:35 am Japan and Korea time, both Tokyo and Seoul said. North Korea’s first firing in four years of mid-range Rodong missiles that can hit Japan followed a series of short-range rocket launches over the past two months.

In Seoul, South Korean Defence Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok called the launches “a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions and a grave provocation against South Korea and the international community”. South Korea is a temporary member of the Security Council.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s press office issued a statement condemning the latest missile launch.

Such launches are contrary to building trust in the region. The Secretary-General urges the DPRK (North Korea) to cease its ballistic missile activities and focus, together with other countries concerned, on the dialogue and diplomacy necessary to maintain regional peace and security,” the statement said. —Reuters

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un presides over a meeting of the Central Military Commission of the Workers’ Party of Korea in this undated photo released by North Korea’s Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in Pyongyang on 17 March, 2014.—REUTERS
Japan to propose 32 festivals as UNESCO cultural heritage

TOKYO, 27 March — The Japanese government decided on Thursday to propose a set of 32 traditional festivals in 18 prefectures for registration by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage.

The proposal will be filed with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization by Monday with the aim of gaining registration in 2015, the Cultural Affairs Agency said.

The 32 Yamahoko float ceremonies and parades around the country include two in Kyoto and Ibaraki prefectures that are already on the UNESCO heritage list. The proposal aims to integrate them with 30 other festivals.

“The proposal is aimed at demonstrating the diversity of Yamahoko culture, which has been strengthening people-to-people links through generations,” a government official said.

Hong Kong delegation to attend International Summit on teaching profession

HONG KONG, 27 March — Hong Kong’s Secretary for Education Eddie Ng on Wednesday led a delegation to attend the International Summit on the Teaching Profession 2014, in Wellington, New Zealand.

According to the city government, the two-day event, on 28 and 29 March, will bring together education ministers and teaching profession members from top-performing countries and regions in the Programme for International Student Assessment 2012 to discuss building and supporting teaching excellence.

Hong Kong students performed in the top three in the world for reading, mathematical and scientific literacy in the programme.

The summit will consider the best practices worldwide for strengthening the teaching profession and raising student achievement. Education ministers from Singapore, Finland, Britain, the United States and Canada will also participate.

Ng will meet and exchange views with New Zealand key education officials, including the minister for tertiary education, skills and employment, the minister for education, and the secretary for education.

N Korea conducting drills with mock-up targets of S Korea

SEOUL, 27 March — North Korea has been conducting military drills with mock-up targets of South Korean frontline bunkers, Yonhap News Agency reported on Thursday, citing a senior South Korean military source.

“The North Korean military has openly carried out the drills with very specific targets to make surprise attacks or infiltrate into GPs or GOPs,” the source was quoted as saying. The report surfaced after tensions hiked on the Korean Peninsula by North Korea’s test-firing of two mid-range ballistic missiles on Wednesday.

Iran fuel price hikes will be big test for Rouhani

ANKARA, 27 March — Looming fuel price rises in Iran will be the first major test of President Hassan Rouhani’s ability to retain public support in the face of attacks from his hardline rivals. Since he was elected in August, Rouhani has faced many Iranians by reaching an interim agreement with the United States and the European Union on his country’s nuclear programme, and pursuing a deal that would end economic sanctions against Iran.

He has promised more social freedoms and repaid some of the economic damage of the sanctions, the rial currency has stabilized and sky-high inflation has started to come down.

But this could be threatened if Rouhani’s government mishandles planned cuts in the massive state subsidies which keep domestic prices of gasoline and other fuels far below global levels.

The cuts are a key part of Rouhani’s efforts to reform the economy after years of erratic management under his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But they will be painful for many Iranians and therefore will cut dramatically into Rouhani’s political capital, which he needs to overcome domestic resistance to a nuclear deal. “People voted for Rouhani in the hope that he would decrease their living costs, not increase them,” said Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the United States.

India’s PM Sushil Koirala: the poorest head of state in entire world

KATHMANDU, 27 March — The Greek philosopher, Plato, once said that a true leader should be “truly rich, not in silver and gold, but in virtue and wisdom which are the true blessings of life.” Nepal’s Prime Minister Sushil Koirala seems to fit Plato’s definition of a genuine leader.

Koirala has amazed not only Nepalis but the international community as well with his austere lifestyle and unpretentious way of running a country. According to the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM), which disclosed last week the assets of top government officials including Koirala and members of Council of Ministers, Koirala does not own a house, a car, or real properties. He does not have a bank deposit or jewellry nor has any sort of financial transactions with others. The only assets of the prime minister are an iPhone and two mobile phones and one is not even working.

With just three sets of electronic gadgets, Koirala is probably the poorest head of the state in the entire world. The details of Koirala’s assets have been uploaded in the OPMCM’s official website.

The Nepali government has earlier directed the prime minister and all ministers to disclose their assets following the formation of the current government. “This was shocking to all of us who went through the property details of PM Koirala as we found that he listed only three cell phones as his possession,” an official at OPMCM told Xinhua on Wednesday preferring anonymity.

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani speaks during an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society in New York on 26 Sept, 2013.

Xinhua

Venezuelan opposition Congresswoman Maria Corina Machado (C) delivers a speech during a rally at Brion de Chacaito Square, in Caracas, Venezuela, on 26 March, 2014.

Xinhua
Census Taking

Census, this term itself comes from Latin word. A census is the procedure of systematically acquiring and recording information about the members of a given population. It is a regularly occurring and official count of a particular population. The term is used mostly in connection with national population and housing census as; other common censuses include agricultural, business and traffic censuses. In the latter cases the elements of the 'population' are farms, businesses, and so forth, rather than people.

The United Nations defines the essential features of population and housing censuses as “individual enumeration, universality within a defined territory, simultaneity and defined periodicity”. It also recommends that population censuses be taken at least every 10 years.

The census can be contrasted with sampling in which information is obtained only from a subset of a population, sometimes as an intercensal estimate. Census data is commonly used for research, business marketing, and planning, as well as a baseline for sampling surveys. Census counts are necessary to adjust samples to be representative of a population by weighting them as is common in opinion polling. Similarly stratification requires knowledge of the relative sizes of different population strata which are derived from census enumerations. In some countries, census data are used to apportion electoral representation.

An important aspect of census enumerations is deciding which individuals to include within a national boundary. Broadly, three definitions can be used: de facto residence; de jure residence; and permanent residence. This is important to consider individuals who have multiple or temporary residential arrangements. Every person should be counted exclusively as resident in on place but over the course of time.

Sann Ni Lar Winn

As the mob moved to the house of U Aye Tun Sein to demand the handover of the woman, police arrived to escort her and her husband to a guesthouse owned by the local police force.

Later, around 300 people destroyed the offices and residences of international aid worker—house of U Pan Tha on U Utama Road, Malteser Office at the house of U Kyaw Than on Gaukshi Road, MSF office at the house of U Tin Hlaing on Gaukshi Road and Malteser Office at the house of Daw Than Thau Myint on U Utama Road. The security forces had to fire about 100 warning shots. The crowd dispersed around midnight.

Thursday morning at around 10.45 am, around 200 local people surrounded a residence of ICRC workers in Sittway, throwing stones at the house and damaging windows as well as breaking the windshield of a car. The crowd dispersed around 11.50 am as the security forces fired five warning shots and the crowd dispersed.

The office of UNHCR was attacked the same day in Sittway by a mob which hurled stones, with the OCHA office and a garage used by the WFP also targeted. Security forces fired 15 warning shots.

A total of 71 aid workers, including 32 foreigners, have been evacuated and are now staying at the guest house of the local police force.

Local authorities and monks have called on all people to abide by the rule of law, with the local police force saying it is providing security to the international aid workers.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has announced that it will carry out an investigation into the incident and that actions will be taken against those who got involved in the incidents.
PHOTO GALLERY DEPICTING IMAGES OF 69TH ANNIVERSARY ARMED FORCES DAY

A military helicopter bearing State Flag at Armed Forces Day ceremony.—MNA

Defence Attaches of foreign countries enjoy observance of 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day on 27 March, 2014.—MNA

Servicemen marching into Parade Ground for attending 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day.—MNA

Armoured vehicles driving to parade ground at 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day ceremony.—MNA

Mobile rocket launchers rolling into parade ground to take part in 69th Anniversary Armed Forces Day.—MNA
UN agencies warn of worsening humanitarian situation in Sudan and South Sudan

NAIROBI, 27 March — Seven international aid agencies warned on Wednesday of worsening humanitarian situation in Sudan and South Sudan and called on the international community to scale up response.

Operations Director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) John Ging cited an urgent need to mobilize funding for the crisis in Sudan, where some 6.1 million people currently need assistance, a 40 percent increase over this time last year.

“The people of Sudan are facing an overwhelming humanitarian crisis that has almost entirely slipped off the international community’s radar,” Ging said in a statement received in Nairobi on Wednesday.

The agencies — FAO, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, IOM, OCHA and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) — expressed deep concern about the massive and growing humanitarian needs in Sudan and the conflict devastating South Sudan and its people.

According to UN, malnutrition and food insecurity are escalating at an “alarming” rate, with some 500,000 children affected.

The situation is particularly dire in Darfur, where renewed violence is displacing larger and larger numbers of civilians – almost 400,000 newly displaced in 2013, and almost 200,000 more so far this year.

He added that the situation in Sudan requires an end to conflict and a more generous response from the international community.

So far this year, the UN and partners have only received 3 percent of the $95 million US dollars requested for humanitarian activities in Sudan.

Ging said that the emergency directors engaged in a constructive dialogue with Sudanese authorities and emphasized the need for greater access for humanitarian organizations particularly in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile States.—Xinhua

Jordan’s king reiterates support for Palestinian-Israeli peace talks

AMMAN, 27 March — Jordan’s King Abdullah II on Wednesday voiced his support for the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, the state-run Petra news agency reported.

At a meeting with visiting US Secretary of State John Kerry, the King said the peace talks should be based on the 2002 Arab peace initiative, which attempted to normalize relations between Arab countries and Israel in return for a complete withdrawal from territories Israel occupied in 1967.

Discussions between them also focused on the latest developments in the peace process, the report said. The King underlined the needs for attaining a just and lasting peace which could lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, but in a manner that also protects the top interests of Jordan.

ASEAN Culture Mini Festival launched in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, 27 March — The two-day ASEAN Mini Festival, themed “Festival of ASEAN Cultural Expressions,” aimed to showcase the regional identity of ASEAN to the world, opened at the Airport Mall, Brunei on Wednesday.

In the opening remarks, minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Hassar said “ASEAN countries share many similarities and common roots in their traditional games. The common traditional games and other traditional games in ASEAN can easily foster transnational cultural understanding which can become an effective vehicle to regional political, economic and cultural integration thus the realization of the ASEAN Community by 2015. Traditional games can be seen as added value in terms of cultural comprehension and mutual tolerance both within the community of nations and between them.”

About 40 participants from ASEAN countries, including Brunei participated in the Mini Festival which showcases the various traditional games of each ASEAN country. The Mini Festival will provide opportunities to experience the wealth of arts and culture found around the ASEAN region as well as in fostering regional development.—Xinhua

Villager stabs seven people in southern China

BEIJING, 27 March — A Chinese man stabbed seven fellow villagers in southern Guangxi province on Thursday, seriously injuring a four-year-old boy and a woman, state news agency Xinhua said.

Xinhua did not specify the motive for the attack on its official microblog. It said the man named Lu had attacked seven people, including two children, in his village on the outskirts of Quzhou city.

The suspect was taken into custody at the local police station, Xinhua said.

China is still jittery after a mass stabbing at a train station in the southwestern city of Kunming about three weeks ago left 29 people dead and about 140 wounded. The government blamed that attack on militants from Xinjiang, the far western region that is home to a large Muslim Uighur minority. Thursday’s attack occurred near two weeks after at least six people died in a knife incident in central China’s Changsha city, in what appeared to be a dispute involving market vendors from Xinjiang.—Reuters

Chinese president pays tribute to Charles de Gaulle

PARIS, 27 March — Visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping paid tribute to General Charles de Gaulle on Wednesday at the late French leader’s namesake foundation, where he also met a group of French friends.

Accompanied by French Foreign and Education Ministers Laurent Fabius and Vincent Peillon, Xi visited the former office of Charles de Gaulle and laid a wreath at the general’s bronze statue.

Addressing the French friends there, Xi said that it was the decision made by Chairman Mao Zedong and General Charles de Gaulle 50 years ago that brought China and France together, ushering in a new era in China-France ties.

As the two nations are celebrating five decades of their diplomatic ties this year, it is time to further appreciate the far-sightedness, wisdom and courage of the two late leaders, he said.—Xinhua

Three Gorges Dam not affected by tremor

YICHANG, 27 March — The Three Gorges hydropower project in central China was operating normally after a 4.3-magnitude earthquake jolted the area early on Thursday, operators said.

The epicenter of the tremor which happened at 12:20 am was in Zigui County, some 30 km from the Three Gorges Dam, according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre.

The quake was felt at the dam area but has not affected the normal operation of the project, said an administration official from the China Three Gorges Corporation.—Xinhua

UN agencies warn of worsening humanitarian situation in Sudan and South Sudan

AMMAN, 27 March — Jordan’s King Abdullah II on Wednesday voiced his support for the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, the state-run Petra news agency reported.

At a meeting with visiting US Secretary of State John Kerry, the King said the peace talks should be based on the 2002 Arab peace initiative, which attempted to normalize relations between Arab countries and Israel in return for a complete withdrawal from territories Israel occupied in 1967.

Discussions between them also focused on the latest developments in the peace process, the report said. The King underlined the needs for attaining a just and lasting peace which could lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, but in a manner that also protects the top interests of Jordan.

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How low can you go? This whale is the champion of deep diving

WASHINGTON, 27 March — If there were a gold medal for cetacean diving, it undoubtedly would go to the Cuvier’s beaked whale. Scientists said on Wednesday they tracked these medium-sized whales off the coast of California using satellite-linked tags as the creatures dove down nearly 1.9 miles and spent two hours and 17 minutes underwater before resurfacing.

Those are breath-taking accomplishments for an air-breathing creature. In fact, those figures represent both the deepest and the longest dives ever documented for any marine mammal, said Greg Schorr of the Cascadia Research Collective in Olympia, Washington, who led the study published in the journal PLOS ONE.

“Many creatures live at the depths these whales dive to, including their like-at the depths these whales and the other creatures living deep in the ocean - the fundamental requirement to breathe air at the surface,” Schorr said.

“Taking a breath at the surface and holding it while diving to pressures over 250 times that at the surface is an astounding feat,” Schorr added.

By way of comparison, the record for a person holding his breath underwater is 22 minutes, according to the Guinness Book of World Records. A person, of course, would never survive the bone-crushing water pressure at those stupendous depths.

Cuvier’s beaked whales are widely distributed in many deep-water regions from the tropics to cool temperate waters, though not in polar regions. They measure up to about 23 feet long, with stout bodies shaped a bit like a torpedo. Their foreheads slope into a short beak with a slightly upturned mouth — leaving them with a vaguely “smiling” appearance.

Their colour ranges from gray to a reddish-brown to a pale white. Some are marked with linear white scars caused by males raking other males with their teeth, perhaps while competing for females. They feed primarily on deep-water squid and some fish near the ocean floor.

“This species is highly adapted to deep diving, spending less than two minutes at the surface between dives,” Schorr said. “These are social, warm-blooded mammals that have adapted to actively pursue their prey at astounding depths — all while up to 1.8 miles away from their most basic physiological need: air.”

A number of marine mammals are known for their deep-diving abilities. The sperm whale, the largest of the toothed whales, also swims into the ocean depths to find prey. But the deep dives of sperm whales generally are less than six-tenths of a mile and are followed by much longer periods of time spent at the surface, Schorr said.

Elephant seals have been documented making incredibly long and deep dives. Until this new data about Cuvier’s beaked whales, the records for deepest and longest dives by a marine mammal had been held by elephant seals - so named because adult males have large noses that look a bit like an elephant’s trunk.

Visitors check out products at the ZTE stand at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, on 24 Feb, 2014.— Reuters

China’s ZTE says 4G phones will be 40 percent of 2014 global smartphone shipments

HONG KONG, 27 March — ZTE Corp, the world’s seventh-biggest smartphone maker, sees sales of 4G smartphones accounting for at least 40 percent of its global smartphone shipments in 2014, Zeng Xuezhong, ZTE’s global head of mobile devices, told reporters at a Hong Kong press conference on Thursday. Shenzhen-based ZTE, smaller than its cross-town rival Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, aims to ship 60 million smartphones in 2014, up 20 million units from last year.

ZTE returned to net profit last year after making a loss in 2012, it said on Wednesday. However operating revenue for the year dropped 10.6 percent, its biggest ever decline, to hit the lowest level in three years.

Judge tosses lawsuit against Facebook over use of minors’ photos

NEW YORK, 27 March — A California federal judge has dismissed a proposed class action lawsuit against Facebook Inc that had accused the company of misappropriating the names and likenesses of minors who use the social network.

At issue was Facebook’s use of minors’ names and photos in targeted advertising in a case that highlighted privacy concerns. The lawsuit, originally filed in Illinois in 2011, had sought to represent all minors that used Facebook and had their names used in an ad.

In a ruling on Wednesday, US District Judge Richard Seeborg ruled that the minors gave their consent when they signed up for Facebook under a “statement of rights and responsibilities” that governs the site.

Microsoft, Dell seal Android, Chrome royalty pact

SAN FRANCISCO, 27 March — Microsoft Corp (MSFT.O) and Dell Inc have sealed a patent licensing deal under which Dell will pay the software giant royalties on sales of devices powered by Google Inc’s (GOOG.O) Android or Chrome software. The two companies will license to each other intellectual property related to Android and Chrome devices, such as “Chromebooks”- based on Google’s Chrome operating system.

Microsoft is locked in a battle with Google to ensure that handset makers using the free Android phone operating system pay Microsoft a license fee. Most of the larger handset makers, such as Samsung, LG and HTC, have already agreed to pay Microsoft a royalty on Android smartphones that Microsoft believes may infringe its patents.— Reuters

The head of an adult male Cuvier’s beaked whale is pictured as it surfaces in this undated handout photo obtained by Reuters on 26 March, 2014.— Reuters

Samsung Galaxy S5 rollout moved forward in S Korea

SEOUL, 27 March — South Korea’s three mobile carriers have brought forward the launch of Samsung Electronics Co Ltd’s (005930.KS) flagship Galaxy S5 smartphone to Thursday, in a bid to cushion the blow from a sales suspension slapped on the operators.

Regulators have banned SK Telecom Co Ltd (017670.KS), KT Corp (030200.KS) and LG UPlus Corp (032640.KS) from signing up new customers or replacing phones for some existing customers for various periods totalling 45 days between 13 March and 19 May.

The bans coincide with the planned global launch of Galaxy S5 on 11 April, and sparked concerns that the key model could get off to a slow start in its home market.

The model already lacks sweeping hardware improvements and faces intensifying competition from smaller competitors at home and abroad. SK Telecom, South Korea’s biggest mobile carrier, said it started to offer the Galaxy S5 at 866,800 Korean won, cheaper than its predecessor.— Reuters
Philippine rebels forge peace pact with gov’t

MANILA, 27 March — The Philippines’ largest rebel group on Thursday signed a comprehensive peace agreement with the central government, ending 17 years of negotiations and more than four decades of insurgency mainly in the southern island of Mindanao.

The signing of the five-page document that sums up and formalizes the important agreements on transition, wealth-sharing and revenue generation, power-sharing and normalization was done by negotiators from both the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, as well as the facilitator from Malaysia, which has brokered the talks since 2001.

The agreement paves the way for the creation by 2016 of a new political entity called Bangsamoro in the mostly Muslim-occupied region in southwestern and central Mindanao, which will be ratified by a plebiscite among the affected residents.

“The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro brings with it the restoration of the identity, powers and resources of the Bangsamoro. These three things, which have been ours since time immemorial, unjustly taken through colonization and occupation, are now returned to us,” MILF chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim said in a speech.

Murad joined Teresita Deles, the presidential adviser on the peace process, Philippine President Benigno Aquino, and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak in witnessing the signing held at the Presidential Palace.

Kyodo News

Illegal online access doubled in 2013, Net banks targeted

TOKYO, 27 March — The National Police Agency said on Thursday police logged nearly 3,000 cases of illegal unauthorized Internet access in 2013, more than double the previous year, due chiefly to a surge in breaches of online bank accounts.

The police counted a record 2,951 cases of violations of the law banning unauthorized online access, up 1,700 from the previous year. Authorities took law-enforcement actions such as arrests in 145 cases, also a record high, and on the rise of nine, the agency said.

A sharp 14-fold increase was observed in fund transfers from Internet bank accounts after account holders’ personal computers were infected with virus programs to steal IDs and passwords, the agency said. These cases totaled 1,325.

The agency said it is difficult to track down perpetrators of these illegal fund transfers because they often use complex access methods involving overseas computer servers and software enabling online anonymity. No arrests or law-enforcement actions were made in these cases last year.

By improving technical capabilities and strengthening cooperation with investigative authorities of foreign countries, we want to crack down on these cases, an agency official said.

The second-most frequent cases were online shopping using stolen IDs and passwords, followed by unauthorized operations of social networking sites and online games, and by unauthorized modification and deletion of websites.

The law banning unauthorized access prohibits such acts as the use of other people’s IDs and passwords without consent or accessing computers through a security hole.

It carries a penalty of up to three years in prison or a fine of up to 1 million yen. Broader “cyber-crimes,” including illegal access and online fraud, or violations of the child protection and pornography law involving the Internet, totaled a record 8,113 cases, up 779, according to the police. —Kyodo News

Bad weather suspends search for missing Malaysian airliner

CANBERRA, 27 March — The search in the southern Indian Ocean for signs of missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 was suspended Thursday due to bad weather.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) said through its Twitter feed that all aircraft were returning to Perth and all ships were leaving the search area.

Six military aircraft from four countries and five civil aircraft were scheduled to join the search on Thursday along with four Chinese ships and one Australian vessel. The search area is more than 2,500 km from the southwest Australian city of Perth.

On Wednesday, the Malaysian government announced that analysts had found in satellite photos from France 122 unidentified objects floating in the southern Indian Ocean search area. —Xinhua

Australian police smash criminal gangs, seize cash, assets in Queensland drug raids

BRISBANE, (Australia), 27 March — A combined total of 7 million AU dollars (6.4 million US dollars) in cash and assets have been seized in raids across Queensland’s Gold Coast over the past two days, Queensland Police confirmed on Wednesday.

Twelve people have been charged with drug trafficking after police executed 28 search warrants at properties throughout Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Queensland police say they’ve dismantled two criminal gangs and netted 1 million AU (0.92 million US dollars) in cash linked to criminal activities in Queensland and Victoria.

Assets, including luxury cars, worth more than 6 million AU dollars (5.5 million US dollars), have also been seized during the operation.

In all, police seized 85 kilograms of cannabis in the raids, together with weapons and drug-making equipment.

Officers from Queensland’s anti-gang Taskforce Maxima, Victoria’s Police Crime Command, and Australian Federal Police from the National Anti-Gangs Squad, took part in the operation. —Xinhua

2 killed in road mishap in western India

NEW DELHI, 27 March — At least two people were charred to death in a fire which broke out when a tempo rammed into a stationary luxury bus in the western Indian state of Maharashtra on Thursday, a senior police official said.

“The incident happened on Mumbai-Pune Expressway when the tempo rammed into the Volvo bus in Talegaon region from behind. The impact of the collision was such that the tempo caught fire, killing the driver and the cleaner of the vehicle,” he said on condition of anonymity. However, all the passengers of the bus escaped unhurt, the official said, adding that a probe has been ordered into the incident. —Xinhua
Afghanistan kicks off celebration for Int’l Day of Nawroz

KABUL, 27 March — The celebrations for the International Day of Nawroz or New Year in Persian calendar kicked off in Afghan capital city Kabul on Thursday.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon and Turkmenistan Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Rashid Mamedov have arrived in Kabul to attend the ceremony held in Arg or Presidential Palace. Nawroz marks the first day of spring in Afghanistan and the beginning of the year 1393 in Persian calendar which fell on 21 March.

However, the Afghan government for some reasons celebrates it on 27 March amid tight security.

Almost all the roads in Kabul city leading to the Presidential Palace and sensitive areas have been closed and security personnel have been deployed in important buildings. The UN General Assembly in 2010 recognized Nawroz as the International Day observed in some Asian countries including Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan.

Minister Rashid Mamedov get successful or not because I have determined to quit it for about 10 times in the past but failed. "I am struggling to stop smoking cigarettes. I don’t know if minister said.

About the people who want to quit smoking cigarettes, the minister said, among the roads in Kabul city leading to the Presidential Palace and sensitive areas have been closed and security personnel have been deployed in important buildings. Separated by small distances on the main roads of the city, police officers are responsible for preventing the gathering of large crowds which can create a security risk. The government has warned that it will not tolerate this kind of gathering.

Kandahar, cradle of Afghan insurgency, torn by tribal rivalry ahead of vote

KANDAHAR, (Afghanistan), 27 March—Growing violence in the southern Province of Kandahar ahead of Afghanistan’s presidential election next week highlights a rift between Pashtun tribes that could tip the country back into civil war.

The fate of Kandahar, birthplace of the Taliban insurgency, is crucial. Some Afghans fear a loss in the vote for Zalmai Rassoul, a candidate close to President Hamid Karzai, could push Kandahar’s powerful Pashtun tribes into rejecting rule from Kabul, some 500 km (300 miles) away. Others fear the same outcome if he wins.

Such a revolt would have the potential to split the rugged nation of 30 million people, already divided by fierce loyalties beyond the Pashtuns among such tribes as the Tajiks, Uzbeks and others.

The two presidential frontrunners from Kandahar are Rassoul, backed by Karzai’s brothers, and Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official. Both are Pashtuns.

"If Kandahar is peaceful, Afghanistan is peaceful,“ provincial governor
Arnold Schwarzenegger promises ‘twists’ in Terminator: Genesis

LOS ANGELES, 27 March — Veteran actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is reprising his role as Terminator in the fifth instalment of the eponymous franchise, finds action scenes taxing, but promises to surprise the audience with interesting twists in Terminator: Genesis.

The actor was merely 37 when he first played the character in the classic 1984 movie. Now at 66, he found the action scenes taxing on his body, but he says the story still has a relevant context.

“The way that the character is written, it’s a machine underneath,” Schwarzenegger told MTV News, reports contactmusic.com.

“It’s this metal skeleton. But above that is human flesh. And the Terminator’s flesh ages, just like any other human being’s flesh. Maybe not as fast. But it definitely ages,” said the actor.

Talking about the action scenes, he said: “Sometimes it does get more difficult when you’re 66 years old and doing this kind of action, versus when you’re in your 30s or in your 40s. Terminator deals a lot with time travel, so there will be a younger T-800, and then what that model does later on when it gets reprogrammed, and who gets a hold of him. So it will be all kinds of interesting twists in the movie, but I feel so good.”

Arnold wasn’t a part of the fourth Terminator movie released in 2009, but he doesn’t plan to miss out on any more of them.

‘Unsafe speed’ caused car crash that killed Paul Walker

LOS ANGELES, 27 March — The fiery car accident last year that killed “Fast & Furious” actor Paul Walker was caused by excessive speed and not a mechanical failure, the Los Angeles County Sheriff said on Tuesday, concluding its almost four-month investigation.

The red Porsche Carrera GT sports car driven by Walker’s friend Roger Rodas, 38, was travelling at speeds of 80 to 93 miles per hour (129 to 150 kilometers per hour) before Rodas lost control of the car and crashed into trees and a utility pole in Santa Clarita, California, northwest of Los Angeles.

“Investigators determined the cause of the fatal solo-vehicle collision was unsafe speed for the roadway conditions,” Los Angeles County Sheriff Commander Mike Parker said in a statement.

Walker, 40, died from traumatic injuries and burns while Rodas died of multiple traumatic injuries in the one-car crash on 30 November, the Los Angeles County coroner’s office determined in January.

Walker was in the process of filming “Fast & Furious 7” at the time and production was halted a few days later.

Russell Crowe, Emma Watson take dance lessons together

LONDON, 27 March — Actor Russell Crowe and Harry Potter star Emma Watson took dance lessons together while shooting for their new film Noah to take their minds off the hectic shoot.

The 49-year-old Gladiator star and Emma, 23, took Viennese waltz lessons every Sunday while they filmed the film, reports Contactmusic.

“We did Viennese waltz lessons every Sunday to take us away from the brutality of what we were doing on set. And then we would go and have a cup of tea. One day we went and had a steak and a bottle of wine and then ended up at the Russian tea house and had some caviar and vodka,” Russell said.

Noah, based on the story of Noah’s Ark, has been directed by Darren Aronofsky. Russell will play the title role of Noah.

Amitabh Bachchan writing about my album is an honour: Shibani Kashyap

MUMBAI, 27 March — Singer Shibani Kashyap is honoured about the fact that Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan had asked his fans to listen to her new album. Big B praised the singer on his blog last week.

The Sajina Aa Bhi Ja hitmaker released her indie album Soneya on February 28 and the album garnered appreciation from all quarters.

“He (Amitabh Bachchan) did that on the day of Holi and I was like ‘Wow’, I’m going to play Holi even more. With more fervour and gusto. I was so delighted and thrilled. And I thanked him. I was really happy,” Shibani told PTI.

The Delhi-based singer teamed up with Mika for the album, Shibani said that even though she has known Mika for almost 15 years, this is the first time they are collaborating for an album.

“I don’t strike you that we can do a collaboration whereas we have done lots of shows together and we’ve hung out and shared a lot of musical ideas and jammed together but I guess it just struck me actually. I said why don’t I do a song and feature you in it. He loved the idea and the melody, loved the music. I told him to sing in his own style,” Shibani said.

‘Scandal’ actor Short charged in felony battery case

LOS ANGELES, 27 March — Actor Columbus Short, best known for his role as Harrison Wright on ABC’s hit drama series “Scandal,” was arrested on Wednesday for a felony battery charge, the Los Angeles County District Attorney said.

Short, 31, was involved in a 15 March incident where he was alleged to have punched and knocked out a male guest at a restaurant in West Los Angeles, the District Attorney’s office said in a statement.

‘Frozen’ hits sales high

LOS ANGELES, 27 March — The soundtrack to Disney’s “Frozen” showed no signs of slowing down four months after its release, as sales for the album hit a high note and held the top spot on the Billboard 200 album chart on Wednesday.

“Frozen,” which features the Oscar-winning song “Let It Go,” sold 202,000 copies last week according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan, its biggest sales week since its 25 November release.

“Frozen,” the Oscar-winning animated tale of two Nordic princess sisters who must save their kingdom from an eternal winter, has grossed more than $1 billion (603 million pounds) worldwide at the box office.

The spike in sales of its soundtrack was spurred by the release of the film on DVD.

Six new debuts entered the top ten of the Billboard 200 chart this week, led by rapper YG’s “My Krazy Life” at No 2 with sales of 61,000. Alt-rockers Foster the People debuted its latest record “Supermodel” at No. 3, electronic musician DJ Skrillex came in at No 4 with “Recess” and grunge rockers The Pretty Reckless notched No 5 with “Going to Hell.”

Latin pop crooner Enrique Iglesias’ latest studio album “Sex and Love” clocked in at No 8 in its opening week, while rockers Taking Back Sunday rounded out the top ten with “Happiness Is.”

For the week ending on 23 March, overall album sales totalled 4.7 million, Billboard said, down 22 percent from the comparable sales week in 2013.
Japanese beverage makers let tourists see what’s brewing

Among the companies giving a guided tour was Suntory Yamazaki Distillery in Shimamoto, Osaka.

Suntory Liquors Ltd.’s Suntory Yamazaki Distillery and Kinshi-Masamune Co’s Shintokiwagura plant in Kyoto, western Japan, have drawn tourists as “koji”-malted rice and yeast are mixed on 28 Feb, 2014.—Kyodo News

Man United’s David Moyes (L) and Ryan Giggs react during their English Premier League soccer match against Manchester City at Old Trafford in Manchester, northern England on 25 March, 2014.—Reuters

London, 27 March — After a brief ray of sunshine in a stormy season, the dark clouds were hovering over Old Trafford again on Wednesday in the wake of another humiliation for the champions.

A 3-0 home defeat by local rivals Manchester City, their third in a row against them at Old Trafford, drained away any optimism born out of victories against Olympiakos and West Ham United the previous week and illustrated once again just how far United have fallen in such a short space of time.

United manager David Moyes wore a glazed look as City’s gloating fans mocked him with chants of “five more years” while thousands of the home faithful voted with their feet, heading for the exits long before Yaya Toure put a realistic gloss to the scoreline with City’s 90th minute third against them.

“I am the one who picks the team,” Moyes, portrayed on one Old Trafford banner as the “Chosen One”, said after the latest in a series of debilitating setbacks.

“I take responsibility and always will do. It is disappointing. I thought it would be a tough year but I hoped it would be more competitive.”

Club stewards had to step in when some fans tried to haul down the “Chosen One” banner as their frustration boiled over at another home humiliation days after Liverpool thumped them 3-0 there.

This season they have lost six times at their former fortress in the league and on home form alone they would be 12th in the table, rather than the seventh spot they currently inhabit with seven games left.

While league defeats against the likes of West Bromwich Albion and Newcastle United, not to mention an FA Cup exit against Swanssea, were hurtful, it is the way they have been outclassed by Liverpool and Manchester City in consecutive home league fixtures that have been most ego-damaging.

United’s record against the current top four is equally dire with one win, two draws and five defeats the sum total of their efforts against Chelsea, Liverpool, Man City and Arsenal.

Moyes had a similarly poor record against the top four when he was Everton manager but things were supposed to be different once he was given the controls at United.

The reality is, however, that he has inherited a squad in decline, with too many players who would struggle to get a place on the bench at the Etihad, Stamford Bridge or Anfield.

England squad player Tom Cleverley, who has struggled to get a place on the bench at the Etihad, was outclassed by City’s midfield slickers Juan Mata, were outclassed by City’s midfield slickers.

While there is some sympathy for Moyes and continued support from Ferguson, who watched from the stands on Tuesday, and former players, patience is beginning to wear thin.

United look cumbersome in defence, short of guile and pace in midfield and totally reliant up front on Wayne Rooney and Robin van Persie, who missed Tuesday’s match because of a knee injury that will keep him out of next week’s daunting Champions League quarter-final against a rampant Bayern Munich side.

With no Champions League football, barring something extraordinary in the next month or so, next season Moyes faces a big challenge attracting the world’s best to Old Trafford in what will be a crucial summer of rebuilding.

The club’s name still means a lot around the world but modern-day footballers are fickle and they know only too well the dangers of missing the out on the Champions League.

In 2012 they were denied their place in the competition despite finishing fourth after Chelsea won the final. The following summer Tottenham Hotspur know only to well the dangers of missing the out on the Champions League.

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Victims on a guided tour at Japanese sake brewer Kinsh-Masamune Co’s Shintokiwagura plant in Kyoto, western Japan, watch the sake fermentation process as “koji”-malted rice and yeast are mixed on 28 Feb, 2014.—Kyodo News

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England squad player Tom Cleverley, who has become the whipping boy of the fans, was hauled off at halftime on Tuesday to single him for United’s malaise would be unfair.

Moyes’ two big signings since taking the job, Marouane Fellaini and Juan Mata, were outclassed by City’s midfield slickers while Michael Carrick laboured in United’s misfiring engine room.

While there is some sympathy for Moyes and continued support from Ferguson, who watched from the stands on Tuesday, and former players, patience is beginning to wear thin.

United look cumbersome in defence, short of guile and pace in midfield and totally reliant up front on Wayne Rooney and Robin van Persie, who missed Tuesday’s match because of a knee injury that will keep him out of next week’s daunting Champions League quarter-final against a rampant Bayern Munich side.

With no Champions League football, barring something extraordinary in the next month or so, next season Moyes faces a big challenge attracting the world’s best to Old Trafford in what will be a crucial summer of rebuilding.

The club’s name still means a lot around the world but modern-day footballers are fickle and they know only too well the dangers of missing the out on the Champions League.

In 2012 they were denied their place in the competition despite finishing fourth after Chelsea won the final. The following summer Tottenham Hotspur saw Luka Modric leave for Real Madrid and lost out on the signings of Eden Hazard and Oscar to Chelsea.

Reuters
London, 27 March — Manchester City will look to compound Arsene Wenger’s woes when they visit the Emirates stadium this weekend, knowing a win would take them close to the Premier League title and inflict a potentially fatal blow to Arsenal’s chances.

Wenger’s side have capitulated in recent weeks and a win for Manuel Pellegrini’s team in London would almost certainly leave the battle for the Premier League crown as a three-way race between City, Liverpool and Chelsea. Arsenal, humiliated 6-0 at leaders Swansea City and held to a 2-2 home draw by Swansea City after conceding a last-minute equaliser on Tuesday, would have hoped for an easier match to revive their ailing title bid.

City lie third with 66 points, three behind Chelsea but with two games in hand, and they will look to build on their impressive 3-0 win at bitter local rivals Manchester United on Tuesday. Jose Mourinho’s Chelsea travel to struggling Crystal Palace and second-placed Liverpool, only a point off the top on 68 points, host Tottenham Hotspur.

It is 10 years since Arsenal last won the title on 68 points, host Tottenham Hotspur. It is 10 years since Arsenal last won the league and they approach the match on Saturday looking not only to keep their slim Premier League title and eight double faults. The match was certainly not the same quality of the same quality of the pair showed in their Australian Open semi-final earlier this year, as Cibulkova waited until the fourth game of the second set before managing to hold serve for the first time. “I have to say I’m really glad, especially about my win today,” said Cibulkova, who will move into the top 10 of the world rankings for the first time with the win.

“It wasn’t easy at all to play today against Aga with the wind and conditions and I had to stay aggressive all the time even if I missed many shots.”

Nishikori stuns Federer to reach Miami semis

MAMI, 27 March — Slovakia’s Dominika Cibulkova fought of three match points to claim a 3-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 upset win over third seed Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland at a windswept Crandon Park on Wednesday to reach the Sony Open semis.

With both players struggling in cool, blustery conditions, the 10th seeded Cibulkova reached the final four for the first time in eight visits to Miami despite being broken 10 times, committing 51 unforced errors and eight double faults. The match was certain not to be without its share of the same quality of the pair showed in their Australian Open semi-final earlier this year, as Cibulkova waited until the fourth game of the second set before managing to hold serve for the first time. “I have to say I’m really glad, especially about my win today,” said Cibulkova, who will move into the top 10 of the world rankings for the first time with the win.

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Reuters

Nishikori stuns Federer to reach Miami semis

Kei Nishikori

MAMI, 27 March — A tireless Kei Nishikori shocked 17-time grand slam winner Roger Federer 3-6, 7-5, 6-4 on Wednesday to claim his second top five scalp in two days and reach the semi-finals of the Sony Open.

After knocking off fourth seeded Spaniard David Ferrer in a three-hour marathon on Tuesday, the 21st ranked Japanese was forced to go the distance again, surviving a two-hour battle against fellow Swissman Stan Wawrinka 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

“Tough moments, but I was happy fighting through and happy of revenge as the third,” Nishikori told reporters.

Rampant City in mood to inflict killer blow on Arsenal

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