

Wedding guest list revealed

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Grannies take up ballet

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### Anti-drug awareness

THE Mobile Anti-Drug Awareness Exhibition, organised by the Royal Oman Police, is attracting record number of Muscat Festival visitors at the Qurum Natural Park. The ROP is doing its best to make the people, especially the youth, to shun the habit of using drugs in any form. The unit is regularly stationed at the Qurum Natural Park from 5 pm. — *Features*



### India off to a flying start

A FLAWLESS 175 from a rampaging Virender Sehwag backed by some disciplined bowling from Munaf Patel carried India to a 87-run win over Bangladesh in the opening game of the Cricket World Cup in Dhaka yesterday. Replying to India's 370 for four, Bangladesh could muster only 283 for nine, much to the disappointment of the local fans.



MUSCAT — On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received here yesterday Saif Shareef Hammad, First Vice-President of Zanzibar. ■ Full report on page 2 (Picture by Mohamed al Rashdi)

# Raise pay sans prejudice

## Hike is in response to HM's directives

MUSCAT — Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower, has issued ministerial decision No 77/2011 fixing the minimum wage for the national manpower in the private sector at RO 200 per month.

Article No 2 of the decision states that the employers should raise the basic wage for the national manpower without prejudice to the allowances to which the employees were entitled before the issuance of the decision.

Article No 3 states that the employers may grant the employees any other allowances as per an

- ❖ Employers may provide other allowances
- ❖ Schemes to meet needs of the labour market
- ❖ Intensified follow-up plans for job seekers

establishment's work system, as approved by the Minister of Manpower and in accordance with the provision of Article No 28 of the Labour Law. The decision takes effect from March 1, 2011.

The minister affirmed that this procedure comes in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on ensuring stability and decent living for the national manpower to encour-

age them to contribute more to the service of their nation, maintain its assets, gains and resources and benefit from the available investment opportunities in private sector enterprises.

He pointed out that this step is not the only move to promote the national manpower as other steps include developing programmes and systems of technical education and training to meet the needs of

the work market from citizens. The ministry is currently implementing an intensified follow-up programme for job seekers and provides them with more job opportunities.

He added that Sanad Programme is making good progress in achieving the prospective aims, namely offering more entrepreneurship opportunities for citizens and different regions and governorates of the Sultanate.

He affirmed that the Council of Ministers is studying these aspects to develop them in the interest of all. — ONA

## Vale project to open in March

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Brazilian mining conglomerate Vale has announced that its world-scale iron pelletising plant at the Port of Sohar has now entered the commissioning phase.

In a statement issued at the weekend, the mining giant — which has a 70 per cent stake in the Vale Oman project — said the \$1.35 billion Sohar pelletising plant will commence full-scale production next month. The Government of Oman has a 30 per

cent stake in the venture.

Vale Oman's massive complex at the industrial port of Sohar consists of two pelletising trains each with a nominal processing capacity of 4.5 million tonnes per year.

The complex also includes a distribution centre with a capacity to handle 40 million tonnes of iron ore pellets per annum.

"A deepwater terminal currently under construction by Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC) will be operated exclusively by Vale. In

line with this strategy, Vale has also signed a long-term agreement with Oman Shipping Company to build four ultra-large ore carriers each with a capacity of 400,000 tonnes, which will be dedicated to the transportation of iron ore," the company stated.

According to Vale, the pelletising plant and distribution centre are currently the subject of early commissioning activities involving quantities of pellet feed, anthracite coal and locally procured limestone. ■ To page 2

## Oman committed to road safety

By Kaushalendra Singh

MUSCAT — A strong sense of commitment and determination was seen at the First Regional Road Safety Youth Assembly, which opened yesterday under the auspices of Lt Gen Malik bin Sulaiman al Maamari, Inspector General of Police and Customs.

With the participation of 36 youth delegates from 24 countries, the three-day Assembly gains international importance, as road crashes have emerged as the biggest killers with no adequate plan for combating them.



The highlight of the first-day Assembly was the launch of Awlana Project, under which children born on November 18 would be given child safety seats.

"The first lot of 40 seats has come as a gesture from a representative of British Army and the sponsor for the second lot of 40 seats is National Bank of Oman. This is how we will take the project further and spread awareness for ■ To page 2

## Innovative tech contest

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Microsoft Oman yesterday announced the launch of the 'Imagine Us' competition in partnership with the Ministry of Education in Oman and technology partners, Fujitsu and AMD by training 100 master teachers across the Sultanate of Oman to mentor high school students as part of this innovative technology competition.

Imagine Us is a pioneer-

ing technology competition aimed at developing the skills, imagination and creativity of high school students by using special computer applications in designing, graphics, web, and digital video.

The competition will encourage young high school students in Oman to apply their imagination, passion, and creativity to technology innovations that can make a difference in the world.

■ To page 4

## New refinery company named

### To manage 3 existing firms, achieve world class level

MUSCAT — Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry, has announced the founding of a new government-owned company to be called Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries (OORPI).

The minister pointed out that OORPI is a new economic entity that is formed to manage Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company LLC, Oman Polypropylene LLC and Aromatics Oman LLC.

The newly formed company has an integrated management structure meant to achieve the highest economic value to Mina al Fahal Refinery, Sohar Refinery, Aromatics Factory and Propylene Factory in Sohar.

Maqbool, who is also the chairman of the supervisory board for the restructuring of the companies, said in a statement to Oman News Agency that the government's objective for OORPI is to streamline the "integration process", to facilitate decision-making across the three companies, to improve the level of performance and to boost the commercial benefits of the plants.

Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas and member of the Supervisory Board, explained that integration of the three companies is envisaged to allow the refining and petrochemical industries in Oman to be more competitive and achieve

world-class standards in international markets.

"It is important to adopt an integrated approach in managing these plants, unify administration, follow strategic and financial planning and utilise assets and resources in order to achieve higher returns to the overall group," Al Rumhy added.

Al Rumhy highlighted the prominent role of people in the integration process as the total number of employees of the three companies will reach 1,650 with an Omanisation percentage of 69 per cent.

He added that the integration process will allow the new company to focus on providing training and offering better ■ To page 2



## New health centre, school

MUSCAT — A new health centre worth RO 1.8 million will be opened in the Wilayat of Sur. The complex, built on an area of 2,570 square metres, comprises various units, including outpatient clinics, a mother and child care unit, a vaccination unit, an emergency hall and other basic facilities.

In the Wilayat of Samayil, a new school — Somra Basic Education School — was opened yesterday at a cost of RO 834,000.

The 18-classroom building has a number of educational facilities designed to complement modern educational programmes. — ONA

## Muscat Fashion Week: Arabic, oriental designs

By Maryam Khalfan

MUSCAT — As part of the last and major activities of Muscat Festival, a unique and memorable event dubbed Muscat Fashion Week (MFW) will be staged at the panoramic view of Riyam Park from February 22 to 24, it was announced at a press conference held at Grand Hyatt Hotel yesterday.

The event, the first of its kind to mark the MFW is one of the Arab world's most pioneering initiative on the global fashion scene to date to showcase Arabic and oriental designs that are differently far from other fashions on international scale, said officials of the organising committee of the event.

Saif bin Sibaa al Rushaidy, Director-General of Muscat Municipality, presided at the event, which was also represented by designers and organisers of the occasion. The show will exclusively be open for women ■ To page 5

## New passenger ferries

MUSCAT — National Ferries Company (NFC) plans to acquire two new passenger ferries for deployment off the Sultanate's eastern seaboard. The state-of-the-art ferries will operate between Shannah on the Sultanate's east coast, and Masirah Island, a top official of the state-owned company told the *Observer*.

The new additions will bolster the company's fleet of passenger ferries to a total of 10 by 2012. This includes two high-speed ferries currently nearing completion at an Italian shipyard. Also on the anvil is a fleet of three small water taxis to serve inaccessible coastal communities along Oman's Musandam coast.

The move underscores an aggressive effort by NFC to ramp up its ability to provide a comprehensive coastal maritime service covering coastal towns, villages and communities all along the shoreline. ■ Details on page 21

## Sultanate taps education expertise from Finland

HELSINKI — The Sultanate and Finland have reviewed co-operation in education, laying emphasis on ways to benefit from Finland's experience in the designing of curricula, educational plans, assessment systems and the teaching of science, maths and information technology.

The two sides, at a session held here yesterday, also discussed means of achieving quality standards and teacher training.

The Omani side at the meeting was headed by Education Minister Yahya bin Saud al Sulaimi, while the Finnish Minister of Education and Science

headed his country's side.

Later, Al Sulaimi visited the Finnish National Centre for Education which is in charge of setting up and evaluating educational policies.

He also visited a number of basic education schools and vocational formation institutions.

Al Sulaimi also met at the University of Helsinki with the Chairman of Council of Education Quality Assessment and Finnish officials. He visited the Educational Media Centre where teachers and administrators on how to apply technology their areas of speciality. — ONA

## Reformer on the Throne launched in Spanish

MADRID — A ceremony was held here yesterday to mark the launching of the first copy of *A Reformer on the Throne* in Spanish language and a translation of a book that includes selections of Omani contemporary poetry.

Shaikh Hilal bin Marhoon al Maamari, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Spain, said at the inaugural ceremony that people of Arab and Spanish cultures share common grounds and that the two nations' contribution to international scientific and cultural

renaissance has been tangible in various areas, including poetry.

He pointed out in this regard to the Andalusia poetry composed by men of letters and poets over the ages.

The Sultanate has been very keen to give culture its due role in a bid to spread science and knowledge that raise human awareness and development, said Al Maamari, adding that the Sultanate's Renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos sought to modernise ■ To page 4

Prayer Timings Muscat		
Dhuhr	12.26 pm	
Asr	03.43 pm	
Maghrib	06.10 pm	
Isha	07.20 pm	
Fajr	05.21 am	

Weather		
	Max	Min
Muscat	27	17
Seeb	24	19
Sohar	25	16
Salalah	26	17



## League meet on schedule

CAIRO — The Arab League yesterday insisted on holding its annual summit on March 29 in Baghdad as scheduled, after Libya said it was postponed amid deadly protests across the region demanding regime changes.

"In the current circumstances, the general secretariat of the Arab League insists on the importance of holding the next summit on schedule... to face the dangerous developments in the Arab world," the league said in a statement. The summit had already been announced for March 29 in Baghdad.



ACTION in the 18.5-km time-trial fifth stage run around Muscat during Tour of Oman cycling race yesterday. — AFP

## Protesters occupy square

MANAMA — Protesters in Bahrain won a symbolic victory yesterday, Libyan security forces opened fire to disperse mourners and a new party was approved in Egypt.

In Bahrain, protesters celebrated as they poured into Pearl Square in Manama, after riot police hurriedly pulled out of the symbolically important traffic circle. Crown prince, charged by King Hamad with opening a dialogue with protesters, called for a day of mourning for the six people killed in this week's protests, and appealed for calm. ■ See pages 8 and 9

- Court warrant for Musharraf — P 08
- Ex-Indian ace athlete dead — P 10
- Devotees break own record — P 11
- 18 die in Afghan bank raid — P 13
- Dealing with situations in life — P 27



## Sultanate, Zanzibar review bilateral relations

MUSCAT — On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received here yesterday Saif Shareef Hammad, First Vice-President of Zanzibar. The guest conveyed the greetings and best wishes of President Dr Ali Mo-

ammed Sheen of Zanzibar and his government to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the Omani government and people.

The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and touched on various aspects of co-operation and developments in the African arena.

The guest expressed the greetings

of Zanzibar to the Sultanate on the occasion of the 40th National Day. He said he was delighted to visit and have a close look at its progress led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. He pointed out that his country appreciates the Sultanate's policy and its pioneering role in all areas. "Zanzibar looks forward to enhancing

economic, commercial, educational and cultural co-operation with the Sultanate", said the guest.

The meeting was attended by State Adviser Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali al Qatabi and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry. — ONA



## Youths urged to spread road safety message

From page 1

road safety among the common people," said Salah al Raisi, who is associated with the Awlanda Project.

**Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising (OEPPA), publishers of Oman Daily Observer and its sister Arabic daily Oman, is the media sponsor of the event.**

Awlanda Project is an initiative of a group of people, who are spreading the message of road safety and seeking more private-public participation to spread the message. "We are not limited only to child safety seats, any good idea on road safety, and we are ready to take up," said Salah.

Earlier, Dr Wahid Ali al Kharusi, Head of Oman Road Safety Association (ORSA) addressed the gathering and said: "Oman felt it necessary to politicise the issue of road safety. The strong political will with the forward thinking vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Oman introduced road safety at the UN General Assembly in New York and that is the reason why we all are here to discuss the issue." Dr Kharusi

is also Ambassador, Head of East Africa Department Responsible for South West and Central Africa.

"ORSA has the greatest pleasure to be a partner with the Omani UN Road Safety Youth Ambassadors to prepare and host this first of its kind Assembly here in Oman. We are also privileged to be partners with all the stakeholders in road safety both nationally and globally. The strategy of the Association is to cement and enhance the already available public-private partnership in the field of road safety. We at the Association encourage the youths of Oman to be proactive in this area and develop a channel of communication, regionally and globally," he said.

Dr Kharusi also paid tributes to all those who are facing road crash-related disabilities or died in road accidents, in a voice choked with emotions. He called upon the youth to spread the message of road safety across the world by telling them: "You are the youth, you are our association."

Welcoming the youth delegates, His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, CEO of Brand Oman Management Unit (BMOU), urged them to be proac-

tive and spread the message of road safety. "Please take the message of the Assembly and road safety to the countries of your residence."

He reminded the audience that in Oman about 1000 die every year in road accidents and that is the reason behind most of the physical disability cases. He termed the Assembly "very important, as it raises the issue, which is important for us and all important youth of our country."

Floor Lieshout, chief of Youth for Road Safety (YOURS) expressed commitment to the cause of road safety by charting out the organisation's mission that "YOURS is a unique global youth-led organisation that acts to make the world's roads safe for young people. It does so by advocating for youth and road safety issues and increased participation of youth."

The Assembly will discuss issues like mechanics of accidents, capacity building and other road safety issues today while it will come out with Assembly recommendations and Muscat Road Safety Regional Youth Declaration tomorrow.

## Pelletising project at Sohar

From page 1

Further, in preparation for the completion of construction of the terminal, Vale has also taken delivery of three ship loaders and a ship unloader. Adopting innovative environmental technologies, the Vale Oman project is committed to the 100 per cent reuse of water used in the operational process. Also in place is a 'wind fence' around the complex to control particulate emissions, the company said, adding that Vale Oman will be first company to adopt 'oven grate kiln' technology in the production of high-compression, low-abrasive quality pellets.

## Crafts Day on March 3

By Bader al Kiyumi

MUSCAT — The Sultanate, represented by the Public Authority for Craft Industries (Paci), will mark the Omani Crafts Day on March 3.

During the day, Paci will celebrate the graduation of craft trainees. It will also honour notable craftspeople as an appreciation of their roles and efforts in preserving traditional Omani crafts.

During the current year, Paci provides support to craftspeople from different regions and governorates of the Sultanate to enable them to purchase tools and equipment which will help them to practise their crafts.

The crafts industries sector, since the establishment Paci in 2003, has taken giant strides with a view to founding a well-established generation and providing training and employment opportunities for people operating in the sector. To this end, it implemented a number of training and marketing programmes. It also provided care programmes and implemented studies to develop the sector.

## New refinery company founded

From page 1

job opportunities for Omanis to work in the refining and petrochemical industry sector.

In 2007, the government merged Mina al Fahal Refinery and Sohar Refinery to form Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company (ORPC).

Oman Refinery at Mina al Fahal was operating since 1982 and its present refining capacity is 106,000 bpd. Sohar Refinery started operation in 2007, and its capacity is now 116,000 bpd.

Sohar Refinery is designed to maximise propylene yield, besides producing straight run naphtha (SRN), LPG, gas oil, gasoline (benzene), fuel oil and jet fuel. It is also designed to supply feedstock to Oman Polypro-

pylene Co and Aromatics Oman.

Aromatics Oman (AOL) consists of a grass-root aromatics complex in Sohar.

Commissioned in February 2010, the aromatics plant is designed to produce 818,000 MT per annum of paraxylene and 198,000 MT per annum of benzene using naphtha supplied by Sohar Refinery.

It is worth noting that paraxylene is an essential raw material for production of polyester fibres and plastic bottles.

The other petrochemical which is produced in the aromatics complex is benzene, which is used as an intermediate material for producing chemicals which are in turn used to produce a wide range of plastics, detergents and other chemicals.

Oman Polypropylene Plant in Sohar has a state-of-the-art factory.

Built to be the seed for the development of downstream polypropylene industry in Oman with a production capacity of 340 tonnes of polypropylene per annum, the plant is supplied by feedstock from Sohar Refinery.

Polypropylene is the most widely used thermoplastic in several industries due to its unique characteristics and plasticity.

Polypropylene also replaces a number of traditional materials, such as glass, paper, wood, minerals and other plastics but at a lower cost.

The polypropylene plant started commercial operation in 2007. — ONA

## Rights commission visits human trafficking victims

MUSCAT — Members of the National Human Rights Commission headed by the panel's chief Mohammed bin Abdullah al Riyami yesterday visited the centre for accommodation of victims of human trafficking.

Lt Gen Malik bin Sulaiman al Maamari, Inspector General of Police and Customs, said in a statement that the centre offers all the basic requirements to the victims who receive due attention till such a time that their cases are finalised by the

courts concerned.

The human rights commission members inspected the facilities of the centre, the services and the procedures in place, including legal, psychiatric and social counselling. — ONA

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## OMAN GAS COMPANY S.A.O.C.

### Tender Announcement

Oman Gas Company (OGC) is a Government Company responsible for managing the majority of the gas transportation network in the Sultanate of Oman and has a network comprising of 2500 Km of gas pipeline and 21 Gas Supply Stations located across the Sultanate.

OGC is pleased to invite Companies to participate on the following tender:

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Tender Title	Eligible Tenderer	Fee	Submission Date
1	OGC/07/2011	Fluid Analysis & Corrosion Assessment	Open Tender	RO.50/-	28th March 2011

Tender Document can be collected after the fee payment as mentioned above, (as non-refundable fee) from OGC, Head Office Building at Al Khuwair, Finance and Contracts Department 3rd Floor from Sunday 20th February 2011- to Monday 28th February 2011.

Tenderers shall submit with their Tender offer a Tender Bond equal to the sum of 1% of the bid price from a bank operating in Oman. The Tender Bond shall be valid for ninety (90) days from the last date of submission of the tender.

The Tenderers are required to submit their offer in the following manner:

- Separate sealed envelope for the Technical offer; the envelope shall contain one original and one copy of the bid document, which shall be marked as "ORIGINAL TECHNICAL OFFER" and "COPY OF TECHNICAL OFFER".
- Separate sealed envelope for the Commercial offer, the envelope shall contain one original and one copy of the commercial offer, which shall be marked as "ORIGINAL COMMERCIAL OFFER" and "COPY OF COMMERCIAL OFFER".

The Tender envelopes shall have no reference to the Bidders or any other markings. Tender to be submitted not later than 11:00 hours on the date mentioned in the table above. The outside of each envelope shall have the following marking:-

- Tender No. OGC/07/2011 for Fluid Analysis & Corrosion Assessment.

And it shall be addressed to:

Chairman of OGC Tender Committee  
P.O. Box 799, P.C. 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman

The Company does not undertake to accept the lowest, most economic or any bid

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09/2011	Supply and Delivery of Galvanized Pipes & Accessories and Electrical Materials to Operations Department in Wusta Region	Specialized	07/3/2011	14/3/2011	35/-
10/2011	IT Services Management Solution	Specialized	07/3/2011	14/3/2011	25/-

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the Purchase, Tenders and Contracts Department (11th Floor), Public Authority for Electricity and Water New building, Al Azaiba against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. The Tenders may be collected on any working days between 0900 - 1200 hours.

Tenders should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to H.E. The Chairman of the Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and the subject. No other marks or any reference thereto should be printed outside the envelopes.

The Tenderer should enclose a Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value and addressed to H.E. The Chairman of the Tender Committee.

The completed Tenders should be delivered to the Tender Section, PAEW Main Building, Al Azaiba, on or before 10 AM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

Preference will be given to the companies or institutions which comprise the required percentage of Omanisation and possible purchase of Omani National Products.

For more information contact Tel: 24611256

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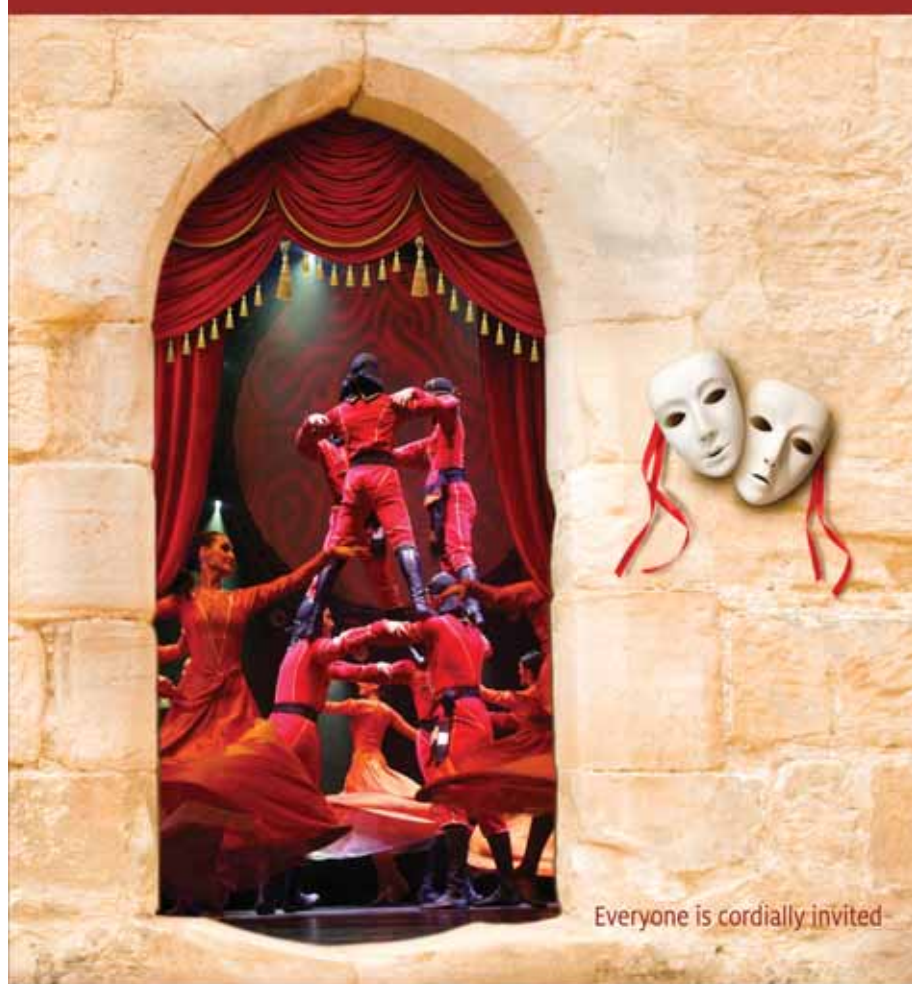




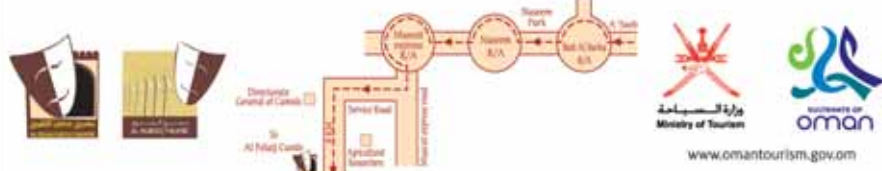
## Witness a magical performance from Georgia

8:00 pm Monday, 21 February 2011  
Al Felajj Castle Theatre, Barka

8:30 pm Wednesday, 23 February 2011  
Al Murooj Theatre, Salalah



Everyone is cordially invited



## 500 students graduate at Mazoon College

MUSCAT — The Mazoon University College organised a graduation ceremony recently in which 500 students were honoured with Associate, Bachelor and Masters degrees.

Guest of honour Shaikh Salem bin Nasser al Maskari

distributed the certificates.

Dr Warren Kent, representative of the Vice-Chancellor of Missouri University of Science and Technology, US, congratulated the students, wished them success and urged them to take up the job challenges in right spirit.

## Majan College welcomes new students

MUSCAT — Majan College welcomed the new students of the Foundation Programme. Head of English Studies Faculty at Majan College, Dr Ali Ellafi, met the new students yesterday and put emphasis on learning process and other skills.

He stressed on overall development of students and the importance of the right attitude, teamwork, communica-

tion and leadership skills.

Students were also introduced to lecturers of the Foundation Programme. Games and introductory activities were held to give the students a feel of co-curricular activities.

The college organises orientation programmes to familiarise new students with the new system and boost their confidence.

## Canadian college team on visit

MUSCAT — Canada's Centennial College director is visiting Oman from February 20-22 to meet potential students and their parents.

The country boasts a wide range of quality educational institutions for both degrees and diplomas in technical and professional disciplines.

## E-mobile unit visits Health Ministry

MUSCAT — The e-mobile unit to fix data on the IDs of Majlis Ash'shura voters yesterday visited the Health Ministry.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Health Minister, valued the efforts of the Interior Ministry and Royal Oman Police and their keenness for the success of the election process. — ONA

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## Job Advertisement Environmental Assistant Manager For "Omanis Only"



Port of Sohar is located within the Wilayats of Sohar and Liwa and is one of the fastest growing ports in the GCC which offers a strategic location for industries in the petrochemical, metal and logistical cluster. Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC) is responsible for developing and managing the Port of Sohar and its industrial area.

SIPC is a joint venture between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Port of Rotterdam.

In line with providing an effective HSSE Program and good standard practices for this continually expanding port and industrial area SIPC is seeking a competent, qualified and highly motivated Environmental Assistant Manager. The successful candidate will have the potential and opportunity to grow professionally to assume wider responsibilities including HSSE during his first year. SIPC is seeking an individual who wishes to grow and develop with the Company.

### The responsibilities of the job position includes but not limited to the following:

1. The Prime responsibility of the successful candidate will be to drive through the SIP Environmental Plan that he will help develop. Responsibilities will include:
  - a. Protection of the environment and local areas of population from the risks associated with industrial development as it progresses.
  - b. Contingency planning to mitigate the risk of disaster, and to retain the appropriate ability to respond to a crisis should it occur.
  - c. To work towards identified objectives over time to meet SIP's purpose in meeting internationally recognized standards in environmental protection.
2. Further responsibilities include but are not limited to:
  - a. Working in coordination with the Sohar Environmental Unit in developing standards and regulation strategies at SIP.
  - b. The provision of advice to internal clients with respect to the allocation and repossession of port sites, development of real estate, realization of public infrastructure and spatial planning.
  - c. The drafting of reports on policy trends within the area of work and the consequences of these for the department and SIPC.
  - d. Project management.
  - e. The development, management and use of information systems in order to provide optimum support for the department's work processes.
  - f. Customer relationship management.

### JOB REQUIREMENTS

1. **Education**
  - High professional and intellectual ability, with a Bachelor's degree education in the environment, spatial planning, safety or related field.
2. **Experience**
  - Work experience in the specialized field appropriate to the 'severity level' at which the job is performed.
  - Experience of project management.
  - Knowledge of port-related company, area-oriented and logistic processes appropriate to the job level.
3. **Work location: Sohar**

Applications should be sent to [recruitmentsipc@portofsohar.com](mailto:recruitmentsipc@portofsohar.com) indicating the position title within 5 working days after date of publication.

[www.portofsohar.com](http://www.portofsohar.com)

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Bait Al Zubair  
From 9:30am - 6:00pm

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## Sayyid Badr discusses ties with Italian guest

MUSCAT — Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Bu-saidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, received here yesterday Guido Crosetto, Deputy Minister of Defence of Italy, and his delegation.

They discussed bilateral relations and matters of common concern.

The meeting was attended by the ambassador of Italy to the Sultanate.

Meanwhile, the Italian guests yesterday visited the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Museum.

The delegation was briefed on the progress of SAF. — ONA



**THE Sultanate is taking part in the 24th International Unity Conference which opened in Tehran yesterday. His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, is heading the Sultanate's delegation at the conference, which takes the theme of rapprochement among Islamic sects. As many as 500 Islamic scholars and thinkers are participating in the conference. — ONA**

## Qalhat LNG funds training of school-bus drivers



**KHALID al Massan of Qalhat LNG (L) with the Education Ministry's Mustafa bin Ali bin Abdullatif at the MoU signing.**

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Within the framework of its social and community investment programme, Qalhat LNG signed here yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education to fund the training of 180 school-bus drivers under the Defensive Driving Programme implemented in collaboration with Traffic Safety Institute of Royal Oman Police.

The agreement was signed by Mustafa bin Ali bin Abdullatif, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Khalid al Massan, Vice President of Corporate Affairs of Qalhat LNG.

Welcoming Qalhat LNG's support for the initiative, the Under-Secretary said: "This programme will support the efforts of the Ministry in furthering the development of educational services.

"Qalhat LNG's gesture is in response to His Majesty's assertion that traffic safety and the reduction of road mishaps is the responsibility of all stakeholders. As we extend our sincere appreciation to Qalhat LNG on the moral and financial support for this programme, we wish them continued success."

Khalid al Massan commented: "Qalhat LNG, since its inception, has been paying special attention to initiatives that support the development of social services in general

and the local community in particular.

"This pioneering initiative embraced by the Ministry of Education is one of the sustainable social and educational programmes adopted by the company and we believe it will raise the efficiency and awareness of bus drivers which will help greatly in reducing traffic accidents on our roads."

Al Massan added: "We are very optimistic about the success of this training programme, which will be implemented in co-operation between the Ministry of Education and ROP — Traffic Safety Institute. The safety of our young sons and daughters is of paramount importance to all of us; Hence, our commitment to this initiative."

## Ed Ministry, Microsoft secondary school competition

From page 1

This is in line with the ongoing efforts of Microsoft and the Ministry of Education in Oman to disseminate knowledge and educate high school students about the importance of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

"Microsoft's Imagine Us competition is a great stepping stone for the future technology visionaries in Oman," said Tareq Hijazi, Regional Country Manager, Microsoft Bahrain and Oman.

"The natural affinity for technology that young people have when coupled with the power of this technology form a great combination to unleash creative ideas which can improve the lives of people around the world. The launch of this competition reflects Microsoft's long-term commitment to collaborating with academic institutions to contribute to socio-economic development. We commend the Government of Oman's vision of using technology to advance the cause of education and enhance IT skills development that will enable citizens to compete in to-

day's global economy."

Maimoona Humeid al Abri, the Ministry's Director of Educational Technology Department, said, "Following the Ministry of Education's commitment to improve access to and use of information and communications technology (ICT), the ministry has left no stone unturned to implement better ways to transform education for the benefit of students and communities in Oman. We take this opportunity to thank Microsoft Oman for coming forward with this kind of initiative that empowers our future generation."

High school students from all the regions of Oman, aged between 16 and 18 at the time of entry, can take part in the competition in teams of 3 to 4 students in one of three categories.

In the Web Design Category, teams will design and develop an HTML web site using Microsoft Expression® Web.

In the Digital Video category, competitors can submit a short film (5 to 10 minutes) created and edited using Microsoft Windows® Movie Maker.

The Graphic Design Category will have teams designing an original poster using Microsoft Expression Design.

Farid al Sabbagh, Managing Director of Middle East, Fujitsu Technology Solutions, mentioned, "Fujitsu has a long standing relationship with educational institutions across the Middle East, working with schools and universities across the region to provide students with the latest IT tools to help them reach their goals. Partnering with Microsoft on the 'Imagine Us Competition' gives students the opportunity to put in practice their passion for technology, and is a step in Fujitsu's vision of a human-centric society."

Teachers were trained in four sessions in Muscat, Al Buraimi and Salalah. The teams from schools across the country will be given a deadline to submit their entries which will be shortlisted for the final round. In the closing ceremony, students will present their works in front of the audience and winners will be selected by the end of April 2011 for valuable prizes from Fujitsu and AMD.

## Galfar completes 50pc of Seeb wastewater project

MUSCAT — Philip Wayne, Project Director of Seeb Wastewater Project, under construction by Galfar Engineering and Contracting SAOG, says that the company has so far completed 50 per cent of the project, which is located 30 kilometres east of Muscat International Airport to Al Manoma area and Al Mabila from the west.

The project serves 7,700 houses in the Wilayat of Seeb, he said adding that work was progressing as planned.

He said that the constraints the company faces in execution of the project included the random planning of houses and old sections at the project's area. Most houses are linked to each other with no spacious lanes for installation of main pipes or the pipes that can be installed as part of the wastewater network between the houses through ventilation vents, he added, pointing to that pipes for four houses are compiled in one vent linked to the main pipes inside the house.

For so doing, some entrances and roads leading to the house are to be constructed and some interlock has to be removed in addition to cutting of parts of the road and internal roads, he said. This may result in difference in levelling upon restoration of the roads, particularly in the presence of technical problems related to design in some areas. Restoration of such roads may also take time.

Most wastewater main lines are installed at internal roads, open areas or wadis and we have tried our level best to install them at the roadside and not at the middle of roads so dwellers may easily access to and from their houses, he said. The roads are temporarily restored and complete restoration would be upon completion of all installation works, Wayne added.

He has urged co-operation of citizens and residents at the project's area, particularly during installation of to and from their houses.

— A Staff Reporter

## SQU symposium to explore future development of Oman-India ties

MUSCAT — Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), represented by the Omani Studies Centre and the External Co-operation Office, will organise an international symposium titled Oman and India... Horizons and Civilisation from February 27 to March 1.

Her Highness Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd al Said, SQU Assistant Vice-Chancellor for External Co-operation and chairperson of the symposium organising committee, said that this symposium will affirm and address the deep bilateral relations in the economic, educational, scientific, cultural and social fields.

HH Sayyida Dr Muna noted that the themes of the symposium and the 22 working papers will discuss geography, history, culture, society, education and economy throughout history. The symposium will come up with recommendations that will contribute in pushing the wheel of co-operation, strengthening the existing Oman-India ties and enhancing bilateral interaction.

### Seminars on power transmission

The Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) Department of the College of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and the Omani Society of Engineers-IEEE Oman Section, IEEE Power and Energy Society-Oman Chapter, jointly organised a seminar on 'Facts solutions for the heavy industries and their influence on transmission and distribution grid' at SQU.

The seminar was sponsored by ABB, the leading power and automation company.

Over 90 engineers attended the seminar from different industrial sectors including oil and gas, electricity transmission and distribution companies, Public Authority for Electricity and Water, consultants and members of the Omani Society of Engineers.

In addition, over 40 participants representing academics from Sultan Qaboos University, Caledonian College of engineering, ECE post-graduate students and undergraduate students attended the event.

### Satellite data utilisation

Meanwhile, the Remote Sensing and GIS Centre at the SQU organised a seminar titled 'Satellite data for climate monitoring, disaster and environmental management'. Hans Peter Roesli, Consultant in Satellite Data Applications, European Organisation for the

Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT), Darmstadt, Germany, gave a talk on 'EUMETSAT and Climate Monitoring Activities with special focus on the Middle East'.

He explained that EUMETSAT, in accordance with its convention, makes a substantial contribution to the operational climate monitoring and the detection of global climate change.

### Workshop on metabolic awareness

The metabolic dieticians wing of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at SQU Hospital recently organised a workshop on 'metabolic awareness and nutrition' under the auspices of HH Sayyida Dr Mona.

The event was aimed at teaching the mothers new recipes for low protein food, creating opportunities for information exchange among experienced mothers on feed-

ing newly IEM (Inborn Error of Metabolism) diagnosed babies. The workshop recommended allocation of more resources for research and updates in the field of metabolic awareness, increase the number of metabolic dieticians in Oman, and to improve the laboratory services for the Inborn Errors of Metabolism patients.

Salah Salim, Head of Nutrition and Dietetics department said: "The workshop mainly targeted the families especially the mothers, as we wanted to provide them with more cooking skills, in order to be able to prepare more selection of low protein food items, that will ensure a wider horizon of food selection for the metabolic patients which in turn, will ensure better adherence to the clinical and dietetic management, will decrease the incident of acute illness in the future and hope to increase the quality of life."



**REFORMER on the Throne in Spanish language was launched in Madrid yesterday. — ONA**



**HER Highness Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd al Said at the metabolic awareness and nutrition workshop at SQU Hospital.**

## Muscat hosts Red Bull Extreme Sailing event

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT -- The Red Bull Extreme Sailing event kicks off in Muscat today.

In the first-ever Extreme Sailing World Series, the newcomers led by the two-time Olympic champions Roman Hagara / Hans Peter Steinacher (AUT) will participate against 11 teams from 9 countries, including America's Cup winners Alinghi and Emirates Team New Zealand.

After an instructive and partially successful rookie year (12 stage wins, 32 top-three finishes) for Austria's most successful summer athletes, the ultimate showdown awaits them at sea.

With personnel changes, with a new coach, and after a several-week-long winter training camp all signs are that Red Bull Extreme Sailing is ready to rumble. From today onward, the crew around skipper Hagara will appear in the Middle East, USA, Europe and Asia, finding itself next to the most successful syndicates in the world at the starting line.

The start of the World Series of the 40-foot catamaran (14 feet long, 20 meters high, up to 75 km / h) takes place in the Sultanate. Races in



Qingdao (China), Istanbul (TUR), Boston (USA), Cowes (UK), Trapani (ITA), Nice (FRA), Almeria (ESP) and Singapore will then follow.

"It will take brains and guts to make it tough for the big syndicates," says tactician Hans Peter Steinacher. New recruits Will Howden (UK) and Craig Monk (NZL) will play their part. Trimmer Howden was under contract in 2010 with one of the top teams (ECOVER).

The new Bowman Craig Monk who claims an Olympic bronze medal and two America's Cup victories as his own,

is considered a national hero in New Zealand, a country crazy about sailing.

Hagara, a year ago at the top of the rankings, was forced to go to the hospital after a capsized in Oman left him seriously injured. But he has erased the accident from his memory: "The road back was rocky, but that's behind us. We will be sailing this year at least as hard and maybe even riskier to handle the circumstances. We've got two top people, we've trained hard, and we've learned a lot. And we have a plan."

If the bookmakers are to

be believed, it will be the teams from the America's Cup competing mainly for the title in the nine races of the World Series. Red Bull tactician Hans Peter Steinacher (two-time Olympic champion in the Tornado) doesn't think much of this idea: "With us, hopefully, the ones who win will not be the teams with the most money. Which means enormous personnel."

Artemis races with 25 technicians. Team Alinghi has 17 men. This is quite a difference between us and them, and it is legitimate. I still think the best sailor will win the race."



# Muscat Fashion Week from 22nd

From page 1

on February 22 and 23 followed by a couples' day out on Feb 24. The exhibits will also be featured free of cost for public viewing on the following day of the catwalk's at Bait al Zubair and Bait al Baranda.

The participating countries include the Sultanate, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan with specific focus on recognised designers and new talents in this industry. The Omani team of up market fashion will be represented by designer Hanaa al Wahaibi, Nadra al Ajmi, Anisa al Zadjali and Nawal al Hooti. The international designers include the Lebanese stylist Robert Abi Nader, Amino al Jassim from Saudi Arabia and Shrekahnth from India. The catwalk show will be staged by Indian and Arab girls from Dubai.

In his address, Al Rushaidy said: "The MFW comprising a blend of the local and international fashion designers promises to be an attractive and unique event to be staged by recognised designers who have joined efforts with Muscat Municipality to stage such a show."

The show will also provide an opportunity for Omani designers to interact and share ideas with international designers, said Al Rushaidy adding that considerations to host similar events will be incorporated in the annual Muscat Festival activities in the fu-

ture.

Making its mark on the world's fashion map, Oman is inviting the public as well as key members of the fashion press, buyers and international fashion icons to celebrate the first-ever MFW, solely honouring designers and fashion talent based in the Gulf and South Asia.

"Arab culture enjoys incomparable expression of style. It has a proud, ancient history while remaining in constant modern development, therefore making our fashion culture worthy of a fashion week, at which it is observed on its own and in its full glory," stated Amino al Jassim, the well known fashion designer from Saudi Arabia who will be showing her collection for the first time in Oman at during the MFW. Festival.

"The demand for the inclusion of a Muscat Fashion Week into the Muscat Festival is a testament to the inimitable character of Oman. Taking place over three evenings, the event will consist of a number of boutique shows – exclusive, limited presentations – to make each night an experience. With renowned local Omani designers taking their designs to the catwalk alongside other top Arab and South Asian designers, this inaugural Muscat Fashion Week will also present the international community with an outstanding example of the beauty of Arabic influenced fashion," commented Malik bin Fahmy

al Hinai, Muscat Municipality committee member responsible for Muscat Fashion Week.

Entry tickets are available at a cost of RO 10 per person from Muscat Intercontinental Hotel, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Sabco Centre, Bait al Zubair or Bait al Baranda.

To register as press, buyer or photographer, visit [www.muscat-festival.com](http://www.muscat-festival.com) and register on the media zone.

Provisional Programme  
**Tuesday, February 22**  
**Robert Abi Nader, Lebanon**

The demi-couture of Robert Abi Nader is epitomised in the designer's distinct timeless elegance, always complemented by a dramatic accent.

**Nawal al Hootiya, Oman**

The spectacular and often surprising expressions of Nawal Al Hooti's intricate work are rooted in Oman's distinctive fashion heritage.

**Amina al Jassimiya, Saudi Arabia**

Amina Al Jassim's use of rare, exclusive textiles and materials has gained her a large fan base in Arab fashion.

**Zarit Design, Afghanistan**

Using traditional Afghan materials, the modern elegance depicted in the work of Zarif Design references classic Arab fashion.

**Wednesday, February 23**

**Anisa al Zadjaliya, Oman**

Distinguished by her way of pushing silhouettes within her aesthetic frames, the work

of Anisa Al Zadjaliya is unique and innovative.

**Shrekahnth, India**  
Shrekahnth's fascination with structure and geometry is the foundation of the designer's highly characteristic signature.

**Nadra al Ajmiya, Oman**

Inspired by traditional Arabic fashion design, Nadra shows a collection of 30 abayas for morning, afternoon, and evening wear.

**Fadi Nahle, Lebanon**

The persistently modern yet classically sophisticated signature of dressmaker Fadi Nahle is exemplified in the designer's use of colour and elaborate cuts.

**Khadija al Lamkiya, Oman**

Reflecting on traditional Omani abayas, Khadija creates elegant designs with crystal embellishments and floaty shapes.

**Thursday, February 24**  
**Fasicas, Morocco**

An emphasis on old-world glamour and extraordinary silhouettes is key to the work of Lamia Abi Nader.

**Hanaa al Wahaibiya, Oman**

Rooted in traditional Omani heritage, Hanaa Al Wahaibi designs her collections with a modern twist bridging tradition and innovation.

**Dibaj, Oman**

The two Omani sisters, Aida and Afaf, create modern, sophisticated designs rooted in Omani culture with a contemporary edge.

# Bosnia charges ex-Serb soldier for war crimes

SARAJEVO — Bosnian prosecutors yesterday charged a former Serb paramilitary known as the "Monster of Grbavica" for war crimes against civilians committed during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.

Veselin Vlahovic, 41, was indicted for "executions, rapes, detention, enslavement, physical and mental torture, robbery and looting" of victims, the prosecutor said in a statement.

The alleged crimes, described in 56-point indictment, were committed in 1992 and 1993 in the three Sarajevo suburbs of Grbavica, Kovacici and Vraca controlled by the Bosnian Serb forces during the 1992-1995 war.

It is one of the biggest war crimes cases that local justice will handle, the prosecution said.

The indictment focused on "the most cruel war crimes committed against the civilians during the war, including torture and the execution of victims in front of their family members," it added.

When the war broke out in Bosnia, Vlahovic joined a Serb paramilitary group which was part of the notorious "White Angel" units that controlled Serb-held parts of Sarajevo including Grbavica.

Vlahovic was arrested in March 2010 in Altea in eastern Spain, where he had been living, as part of an investigation into a gang carrying out burglaries in Spain.

In August, Spain handed Vlahovic over to Bosnia.

Bosnia's war left some 100,000 dead and displaced 2.2 million people. It left the country split into two semi-autonomous halves. — AFP

# Finland's Liikanen may join race to lead ECB

HELSINKI — Finland is reviewing carefully how the race for the next head of the European Central Bank is developing and has not ruled out that Finland's Erkki Liikanen could become a candidate, Finnish finance minister said yesterday.

Earlier this week Finance Minister Jyrki Katainen said Finland has no plan to put forward its central bank governor Liikanen to follow Jean-Claude Trichet as the head of the ECB, because he still saw the race as a contest between candidates from Italy and Germany.

"Of course the situation can change. We have dis-

cussed this situation carefully with Erkki Liikanen and we have a common view," Katainen said in an interview with Finnish public broadcaster YLE.

"We are reviewing the situation and we are not jumping to conclusions." Trichet's term ends in October and Italian politicians have promoted Mario Draghi for the ECB presidency, and he was the front runner in a Reuters poll of economists, in which Liikanen finished second.

German Bundesbank head Axel Weber surprisingly dropped out of the running last week. — Reuters

# Ivorian troops disperse protesters

ABIDJAN — Ivorian security forces fired live bullets and teargas yesterday to disperse protesters in Abidjan calling for incumbent leader Laurent Gbagbo to step down, wounding at least one of them, witnesses said.

His rival, Alassane Ouattara, has called for mass protests to oust Gbagbo, who has refused to step down as leader of the world's top cocoa grower after a November 28 presidential election that UN-certified results show Ouattara won.

Witnesses said hundreds of youths gathered in Abobo, a pro-Ouattara area of the main commercial city Abidjan, but soldiers and police dispersed them. Abobo has often been the scene of violent clashes between security forces and civilians. — Reuters

# Nigeria police find bomb at rally

LAGOS — Police yesterday said they had found a powerful bomb planted under one of the seats of a stand for top officials at a political campaign rally in eastern Nigeria's Enugu State.

"It would have caused tremendous havoc," Enugu police spokesman Ebere Amaraeze said,

adding that analysis indicated the effect would have been "catastrophic" for 15 metres around.

The bomb had been placed in the stand reserved for state governor Sullivan Chime and other dignitaries, he said.

The police had launched an investigation but no arrests had been made, Amaraeze said.

# Ex-Madagascar president prevented from returning

JOHANNESBURG — Former Madagascan president Marc Ravalomanana was prevented from leaving South Africa yesterday after an airline refused to give him a boarding pass citing a letter from the Madagascan civil aviation authority.

"I am going to Madagascar for peace not war, why are they stopping me here now," a visibly irate Ravalomanana told journalists at the O R Tambo airport after an Airlink flight staff member told him she could not issue him with a boarding pass.

He was shown a letter from the Madagascan civil aviation

authority which read: "Ravalomanana Marc and company are non-grata persons in Madagascar. So to preserve public order don't take them aboard."

The letter was signed by Ratsirahonana Wilfrid Mamonjisoa, the civil aviation authority's director general.

Accompanied by his wife, three sons, daughter and his staff, Ravalomanana arrived at the airport two hours before to check in.

However after he presented his passport, flight staff told him to wait as she was awaiting permission from her manager.

"I can't check you at the

moment, I am waiting for an update from my manager, please wait a few minutes sir."

After asking several times what was happening, Ravalomanana's co-ordinator Jens Thorsen showed him the letter from the Madagascan civil aviation authority.

"Many people in Madagascar are waiting for me at the airport but I am still here. Now I just received this note now only here....I am very very upset."

The letter was proof that, "they are the ones scared, not me," he said waving the letter to show journalists and shrugging his shoulders. — AFP

# Some striking truckers accept pay offer

JOHANNESBURG — Some of South Africa's truckers have informally accepted a revised pay offer but the main union has yet to decide on the deal, aimed at ending a week-long strike, the industry federation said yesterday.

Three smaller transport unions agreed to a 9 per cent wage increase this year and 8.5 per cent next year, but the South African Allied Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU), the biggest union in the industry, was still mulling the offer yesterday.

Magretia Brown-Engelbrecht, labour manager with the industry group Road Freight Association said that the three unions had informally agreed to the offer, "but nobody has signed an agreement at this point".

The association has given the unions until today to accept the offer. Otherwise, it says it will revert to an earlier offer of an 8 per cent increase for 2011 and 2012 respectively.

SATAWU first vice president June Dube said she expected to get news of her members' decision.

The strike, marred by violence, has caused a few petrol stations to run dry and raised concerns for businesses and the state power provider, Eskom. — Reuters



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## TENDERS

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Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Last Date for Submission	DCRP Grade	Tender Price R.O
DH/ BAHLA/ 66/ 2011	Extension of power supply to the Schools at Sint & Wadi Qurayat Area in Bahla at Al Dakhliyah Region	23/02/2011	27/02/2011	C & ABOVE	25
DH/ BAHLA / 70/ 2011	Extension of power supply to two houses at Al-Hoota Area & at Al-Harija Area in Bahla at Al Dakhliyah Region	23/02/2011	27/02/2011	C & ABOVE	25
DH/ NIZWA/ 73/2011	Extension of power supply to one house at Al Sad In Nizwa Area in Al Dakhliyah Region	23/02/2011	27/02/2011	C & ABOVE	25
DH/SAMAIL/ 77/2011	Extension of power supply to the various locations at Samail Area in Al Dakhliyah Region	23/02/2011	27/02/2011	C & ABOVE	25

Interested companies registered with tender board & DCRP may obtain tenders documents from Customer Services Department in Nizwaat Al Dakhliyah Region against the non-refundable payment as mentioned above per each set of document. The tenders' documents shall be issued to the firm by showing the copy of valid registration certificates. The tenders may be collected on any working days between 07:30 -16:00 hours.

Tenders should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Chairperson of the Dakhliyah tender sub-committee and marked with tender number and the subject. No other marks or any reference thereto should be printed outside the envelopes.

The tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the tender value and addressed to the Chairperson of the Internal Tender Committee, Mazoon Electricity Company.

The completed tenders should be deposited in the tender box at Nizwa Office Al Dakhliyah Region before 10:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the tender.

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DELEGATES vote on a UN Security Council resolution condemning continued Israeli settlement building at UN headquarters on Friday. — AFP

## Kosovo parties sign coalition government deal

PRISTINA — Kosovo's caretaker prime minister, Hashim Thaci, signed a coalition deal with smaller parties yesterday to form a government which is expected to start long-awaited talks on its relations with Serbia.

Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) formed the coalition with the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) party and parties representing ethnic minorities two months after an election.

PDK, which won a third of votes, turned to the fifth largest party and the ethnic minority parties after three other leading parties said they would not govern the country of 2 million people with Thaci.

The parties have agreed that Thaci should serve another term as the prime minister and the AKR leader, Behgjet Pacolli, a controversial Kosovo-born but Swiss-based construction millionaire, be the new Kosovo president.

Thaci said the coalition was "for a new Kosovo, for its development, democratic reforms, building a multi-ethnic society, creating new jobs and a European perspective".

The first parliament session is due tomorrow but it is unclear if the cabinet and president will be voted in then.

The political stalemate has already delayed the start of Kosovo's talks with Serbia, which does not recognise its independence but has agreed to discuss practicalities of coexistence, such as cross-border trade and transport. Thaci said the cabinet's first decision would be to start a dialogue with Serbia, which withdrew its forces from Kosovo in 1999 after a Nato bombing campaign to stop them attacking civilians during an insurgency by Kosovo ethnic Albanian majority. — Reuters

## Zambian minister sacked for 'ridiculing' party members

LUSAKA — Zambia's President Rupiah Banda yesterday sacked his minister of employment for comments he allegedly made to the media "ridiculing" members of the ruling party.

"I regret that I have therefore decided to relieve him of his duties as minister and I have revoked his nomination as member of parliament with immediate effect," Banda said.

Mike Mulongoti was fired after a privately owned *Post* newspaper quoted him yesterday saying that he made Banda become president after the demise of Levy Mwanawasa in August 2008, and that he was better than the ruling party Vice-President George Kunda.

"He has openly ridiculed the Vice-President George Kunda saying he was far much better than him.

"He has further attacked me that I lack gratitude for having allegedly made me president."

Mulongoti is vying for the party vice-presidency at the Movement for Multiparty Democracy national convention scheduled for April.

"He has used hostile media to pour ridicule on other members of the MMD claiming they are not real members of the party," Banda said. — AFP

## Germany to be hit by major regional train strike

FRANKFURT — German train drivers from the country's most populous region will go on strike tomorrow, union officials announced, in a stoppage that could have knock-on effects across the country.

The strike will begin early tomorrow in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the country's economic powerhouse and home to the cities of Dusseldorf, Bonn and Cologne.

The train drivers' union GDL, which announced the strike yesterday, expected them to have knock-on effects throughout the day and to impact rail transport in other states.

The union wants all 26,000 rail drivers nationwide to receive a unified wage agreement, irrespective of whether they work for the national Deutsche Bahn operator or private passenger and freight rail operators.

If no agreement is reached, the GDL has threatened further strikes in other parts of the country, including suburban rail services in Berlin. — dpa

## Deaths, injuries in Somalia as soldiers, insurgents clash

MOGADISHU — The Somali capital Mogadishu was the scene of heavy fighting between insurgents and government troops aided by African Union soldiers yesterday, with conflicting numbers of deaths reported by both sides.

A commander with the presidential guards brigade said that one government officer had been killed and six soldiers wounded, while a spokesman for the insurgent group Al-Shabaab claimed that five Ugandan soldiers and seven government troops had died.

Both sides claimed victory in the battle, even as residents of the city reported that fighting was still ongoing.

The two sides exchanged heavy fire, using artillery, mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenades. There were reports of stray mortars causing casualties beyond the fighting area.

Some of the clashes took place near the presidential palace. Al-Shabaab and its allies are trying to oust the weak Western-backed government in an insurgency that has lasted several years.

The Al Qaeda-linked rebels control most of south and central Somalia, while the government is penned into a portion of Mogadishu that includes the airport, port and presidential palace. — dpa

## Welcome to SpeedKills, please drive carefully

SYDNEY — An Australian hamlet has changed its name to "SpeedKills" to encourage drivers to slow down after a leap in road deaths.

The community of Speed with a population of just 45, has made the switch for a month, while local farmer Phil Down was also temporarily renamed Phil Slow Down at a ceremony on Friday.

"I'm happy to humiliate myself for that cause," he said. "I had no hesitation... mostly because we think the campaign is a good initiative."

The changes are part of a safety campaign in the southeastern state of Victoria after rural road deaths shot up by about 25 per cent last year.

A Facebook page set up to promote the campaign generated 10,000 supporters in just 10 hours.

SpeedKills is about 400 kilometres outside the state capital, Melbourne.

"We're trying to get people to stay within the speed limits, obey road safety rules (and) realise that when they don't, people die," said Phil Reed, a spokesman for Victoria's Transport Accident Commission.

The official Australian Transport Commission says 32,000 people are killed or seriously injured each year on the sprawling country's roads, which are often remote and unlit. — AFP

## Another hard-to-accept veto

UNITED NATIONS — The United States has vetoed an Arab-sponsored UN resolution branding Israeli settlements illegal, prompting angry Palestinians to vow to re-evaluate the entire Middle East peace process.

The Obama administration cast its first veto in the United Nations Security Council on Friday, after intense diplomacy failed to convince Palestinians to accept a non-binding compromise statement condemning Jewish settlement activity.

The row dealt a further blow to Washington's already struggling bid to forge a Palestinian state this year and risked further estranging US ties with regional leaders.

US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice said Washington was "regrettably" blocking the draft resolution and said Israel should not interpret the move as backing for settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

But she said the United States — one of five permanent Security Council members with veto power — did not believe

the United Nations was the best place to seek to resolve the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"This draft resolution risks hardening the positions of both sides," Rice claimed. "It could encourage the parties to stay out of negotiations."

Later, in a conference call with reporters, Rice added "We reject in the strongest terms the legitimacy of the continued Israeli settlement activity."

But Yasser Abed Rabbo, Secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said the US veto was "unfortunate and affects the credibility of the American administration."

As a result, the Palestinians will "re-evaluate the process of negotiations" towards peace in the Middle East, he said.

The resolution, sponsored by 130 countries, reaffirmed "that the Israeli settlements established in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

It also reiterated "its demand that Israel, the occupying power, immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

Washington, although saying it views settlement activity as illegitimate, has stopped short of declaring it "illegal" saying that doing so could add further complications to future final status peace talks.

The Palestinians balked at the US compromise despite intense diplomacy by President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The row came at some political as well as diplomatic cost to the administration as it took incoming fire from bi-partisan lawmakers who support Israel for even offering a compromise solution.

Fourteen of the 15 Security Council members voted in favour of the resolution but the US veto effectively killed the move.

Israel reacted to the veto by calling for a resumption of direct talks with the Palestinians. — AFP

## William, Kate reveal guest list

LONDON — Prince William and Kate Middleton have invited 1,900 guests to their wedding in April, palace officials said today, filling Westminster Abbey with a vast array of royals, diplomats, family and friends.

Gilded invitations issued in the name of Queen Elizabeth II were sent out by post on Wednesday and Thursday, with the monarch's EIIR cypher die-stamped in gold.

When the couple became engaged in November, Kate said that marrying into the royal family was "quite a daunting prospect" — and the list of dignitaries who will be attending the wedding ceremony on April 29 is nothing if not daunting.

In a reflection of William's position as second in line to the British throne, the list includes foreign leaders, church officials, diplomats, royals from across the world as well as their own friends and family.

However, not everyone will get to attend the party after the church service — only about 600 people have been invited to a lunchtime reception at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the queen.

An even more select group of 300 has been invited to dinner followed by dancing hosted by William's father Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace.

Although palace officials declined to name individual guests, they revealed that more

than 1,000 will be drawn from William and Kate's family and friends, including most likely friends from St Andrews university, where the couple met.

About 50 members of the British royal family have been invited — although it emerged this weekend that the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, is not among them — in addition to 40 members of foreign royal families.

A further 80 guests will be drawn from Prince William's charities, which include homelessness charity Centrepoint, the Tusk Trust conservation charity and the Royal Marsden Hospital, where his late mother Diana was also a patron.

## In a hilarious mail mix-up

SYDNEY — One is a landlocked, mountainous country in Europe; the other is a vast, island continent in the southern hemisphere. But it seems some people still confuse Austria and Australia.

In the latest sign of collective dyslexia about the countries, Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd admitted he sometimes gets his Austrian counterpart's post, and vice versa.

"Yes, we do occasionally get each other's correspondence because the rest of the world doesn't know about the extra syllable," Rudd said, during a visit by Austria's Michael Spindelegger.

## Call for Putin to resign

MOSCOW — About 300 Russian protesters took part in a rally in Moscow yesterday calling for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to step down.

They also demanded free and fair parliamentary elections in December, police reforms and a transparent budget. The demonstrators were accompanied by a large police contingent.

Kremlin opponent and former world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, said Putin was responsible for turning Russia into a corrupt police state. — dpa

## German minister rejects quitting in plagiarism row

BERLIN — Germany's defence minister said he has never considered resigning over plagiarism allegations that have prompted a criminal investigation, but new charges emerged yesterday in the scandal over his academic thesis. Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, Germany's most popular politician and a potential future candidate for chancellor, dismissed in an interview the possibility of quitting as nonsense.

Newspapers have accused

Guttenberg, a photogenic conservative, of copying parts of the dissertation he wrote for his university doctorate without correctly attributing them.

Asked by German magazine *Focus* whether he had ever thought of resigning, the aristocratic 39-year old said: "Nonsense".

However, *Der Spiegel* magazine reported yesterday that Guttenberg had used a parliamentary research service — meant to help MPs only in their parliamentary work —

to research a passage he then used in his law dissertation, with few changes and without proper attribution.

*Sueddeutsche Zeitung* reported that Guttenberg — who is married to the great-great-granddaughter of Germany's 19th century "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck — had used incorrectly attributed work from at least 19 authors.

This had been in at least 50 of the more than 400 pages of his thesis on constitutional law that he submitted in 2006.

## Rising food prices nearing danger point

PARIS — World Bank president Robert Zoellick warned leaders of the top global economies yesterday that the world is reaching a danger point where soaring food prices threaten further political instability.

"I mentioned that we are reaching a danger point," Zoellick said, adding that he had urged G20 finance ministers and central bank chiefs meeting here to "put food first in 2011."

Zoellick said rising prices would eventually result in increased food supplies but in the intervening couple of years, "there could be an awful lot of turmoil and governments could fall and societies could go into turmoil."

Soaring food, fuel and other basic costs have been one of the key factors driving political unrest across the Middle East and North Africa which has forced the ouster of long-standing autocratic rul-

ers in Egypt and Tunisia.

"We need to be sensitive and have a fingertip feel on what is happening in terms of food prices and its potential effect on social instability," Zoellick told a conference call.

He said the international community needs to be ready to act quickly to help countries such as Tunisia to cope with economic shocks as they try to manage political transition.

The World Bank warned ahead of the two-day G20 meeting that food prices rose by 15 per cent between October 2010 and January 2011, pushing another 44 million people into poverty.

France, which holds the presidency of the Group of 20 top developing and developed countries, has made reducing price volatility in basic commodities including food one of its key goals.

Zoellick said G20 ministers were re-

ceptive to some of the ideas the World Bank has proposed and that the meeting would provide further momentum for action.

"In sum, I'd say there is a list of items here that is very do-able and the best antidote to complaints that the G20 is a talk shop is to take real action. And action for the most vulnerable people is the best form of that."

Zoellick said the situation is more concerning today than several years ago as there is increased demand from emerging markets and severe weather has reduced the ability of farmers to respond.

There have been proposals to slap limits on commodity trading to discourage speculative trading and reduce price volatility but the World Bank chief said "you counter volatility with better information" about the markets.



RUSSIAN President Dmitry Medvedev (L) with the head of Russia's Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov during a meeting with representatives of the main political parties in Sochi yesterday. — AFP



NICOLAS Blancho, President of the Islamic Central Council of Switzerland (ICCS), speaks during the 2011 Annual Conference of the ICCS in Biel yesterday.



FRENCH Finance Minister Christine Lagarde (R) and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn arrive to pose for a family photo after a G20 Finance summit in Paris, yesterday where finance chiefs from the world's 20 industrialised and fastest developing nations wrestle over how to steady the economy at a two-days meeting. — AFP



AFGHAN President Hamid Karzai (R) speaks with his Croatian counterpart Ivo Josipovic (L) during a joint press conference at The Presidential Palace in Kabul yesterday. Josipovic is on an official visit to Afghanistan. — AFP



DEMONSTRATORS occupy a branch of Natwest bank and read books during one of a series of protests in central London yesterday. The demonstrators who set up a mock library symbolising a casualty of government funding cuts, are from a group called UK Uncut and highlights issue of corporate tax avoidance. — Reuters



## Davis won't be tried for espionage, Kerry assured

ISLAMABAD — Authorities have assured US Senator John Kerry that American national Raymond Davis, who is facing double murder charge, will not be tried on espionage charges, it was learnt reliably.

Senator Kerry, who had spearheaded the \$7.5 billion aid package for Pakistan in the US Congress, had a whirlwind tour of Pakistan last Tuesday to discuss the Davis issue.

This is notwithstanding the fact Davis admitted during the course of investigation that he was involved in spying in Pakistan. Sources said that the police have a recorded a confessional statement made by Davis.

Sources said Senator Kerry was also assured that Islamabad would not demand the custody of the three US nationals, who were in the vehicle which had crushed to death another Pakistani and

are now believed to be hiding in the US consulate general in Lahore.

They were in a Prado jeep trying to rescue Davis after he allegedly shot dead two young motorcyclists in a busy marketplace of Lahore on January 27.

The Punjab police and intelligence officials, however, claim they have strong evidence suggesting that the three men are also high-profile 'spies' like Davis.

"The evidence was provided by Davis in his confessional statement during investigation," a senior police official said. "We have concluded that a gang of American spies is active in Punjab and other parts of the country," he added.

The official said that "besides Davis's confessional statement we have every reason to believe that the three absconding persons were his collaborators," the police official said.

"They must be involved in spying

like Davis. If this was not the case why did they flee the crime scene in panic," the official said. "In their panic, they had crushed to death a motorcyclist under their SUV while fleeing the scene."

The official questioned why nobody was demanding diplomatic immunity for the three men, if they were members of the US mission in Pakistan. "This criminal silence on the part of the Americans shows there is something fishy," the official reasoned.

The official believed the mounting US pressure for Davis's release was aimed at covering the three 'agents'.

"None of the US officials has spoken a single word about the three US nationals believed to be hiding in the US consulate general in Lahore. Protecting the people wanted by police is a serious crime," the official said, adding that under the international laws, protectors of

criminals are considered to be collaborators in the crime. The Punjab police have requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for help in getting the custody of the three US nationals but to no avail.

The capital city police officer of Lahore has also informed the ministry about the contents of the case registered against the 'unidentified' men travelling in the consulate's Prado jeep.

The Prado jeep is said to have a fake registration number, which was originally issued to a Suzuki Cultus car.

Investigators believe that the three American nationals who had come to Davis's rescue are also US spies and they had come to the scene to take safe custody of secret documents and photographs from Davis.

"We have every reason to believe that Davis had called the three men to collect the 'material' which is now in the pos-

session of police," the official said.

The Punjab government's unflinching stance on the issue stems from the fact that it is convinced of Davis's involvement in anti-Pakistan activities, a source said.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani and Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani had a meeting at the President House where the Davis issue, particularly the mounting US pressure for his release, was discussed.

A short statement issued after the meeting did not give details of the meeting. "Issues relating to the war against militancy were discussed during the meeting," it said.

Sources, however, said the meeting focused on the Pakistan-US diplomatic spat over Davis and Pakistan's policy vis-à-vis the issue. — *Internews*

## Court reissues arrest warrant for Musharraf

RAWALPINDI — An anti-terrorism court yesterday reissued an arrest warrant for former president Pervez Musharraf over the assassination of ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto, a prosecutor said.

Musharraf, who was president when Bhutto was killed in December 2007 in a gun and suicide bomb attack, is in self-imposed exile in London and his spokesman has said he will not be going back to Pakistan for any court hearing.

"Last week the court had issued the arrest warrant but it could not be served at Musharraf's residence in Islamabad and we were told that he does not live there," special prosecutor Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali said.

"Today the court reissued the warrants and adjourned the hearing till March 5."

"We do not have his address, but we came to know through media and officials who went to serve the warrant that he is in UK. We will get his address and serve the notice on it," he added.

The former president is alleged to have been part of a "broad conspiracy" to have his political rival killed before elections, though the exact nature of the charges against him is not clear.

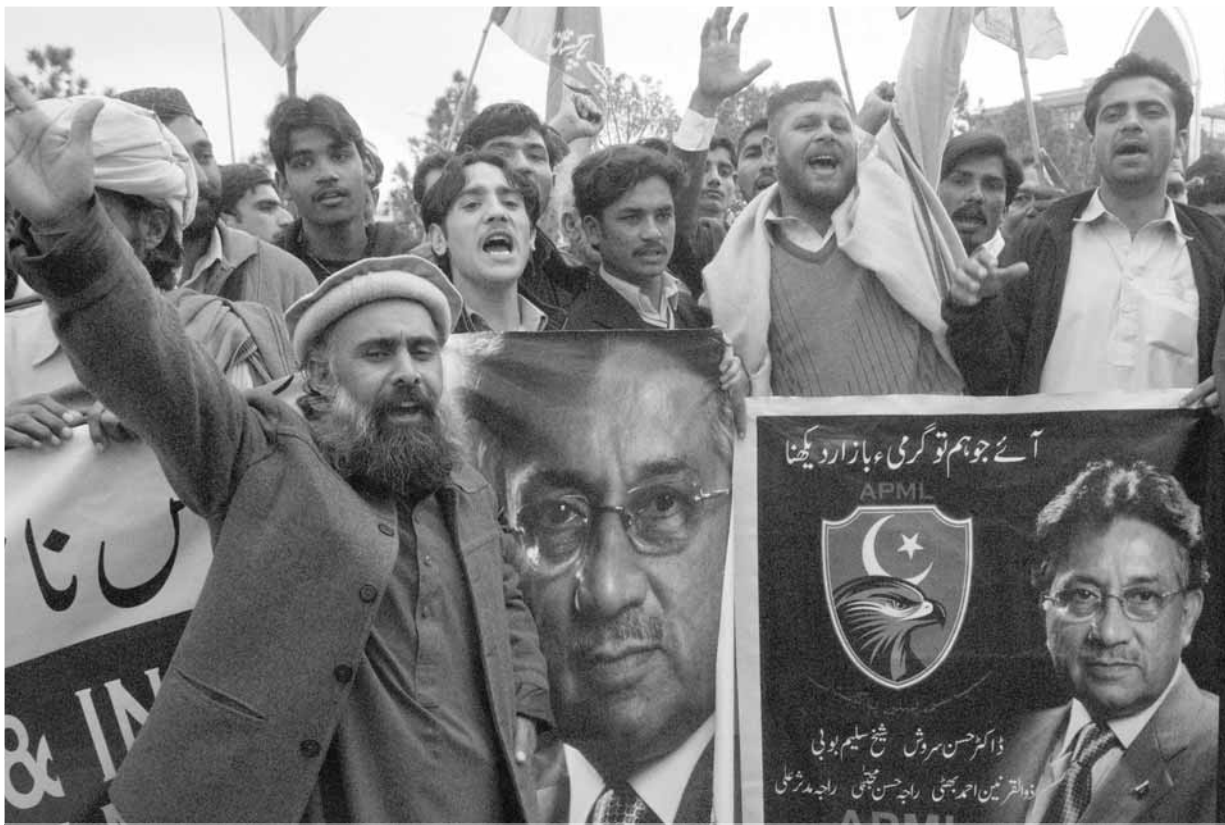
Bhutto was killed after addressing an election campaign rally in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, near the capital Islamabad, on December 27, 2007.

Her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, led her Pakistan People's Party to election victory in February 2008 and is now president.

In April, a UN panel accused the government of failing to provide Bhutto with adequate protection and said investigations were hampered by intelligence agencies and other officials who impeded "an unfettered search for the truth".

Musharraf has lived in London since he was replaced by the elected Zardari.

At the time of Bhutto's death, Musharraf's government blamed the assassination on Pakistan's Taliban chief Baittullah Mehsud, who denied any involvement. — AFP



SUPPORTERS of former president Pervez Musharraf's party All Pakistan Muslim League during a rally to support Musharraf in Islamabad yesterday. — *Reuters*

## PM's son could never buy bullet-proof jeep: Affidavit

ISLAMABAD — Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani, the prime minister's son facing allegations of making money in the Haj scam and purchasing a bullet-proof jeep worth Rs 15 million, could not have purchased this expensive jeep even if he had sold all his belongings except his land, reveals his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Junior Gilani, who admitted in media interviews of personally buying this jeep 'in the mid of 2009', had reported in his assets declaration for the elections in 2008 that apart from his immovable property, all of them gifted, the rest of the personal belongings were worth Rs 5 million.

He never paid income tax like his father, a fact confirmed from their election papers. Although 110 acres of agrarian land, gifted through two different sources, has been under his use, the agriculture tax paid from 2005 to 2008 is only Rs 5,250.

Junior Gilani did not mention any house owned by him, but his permanent contact address as shown on Punjab Assembly's website is Defence Housing Authority, Lahore, where he lives at 155-B in Phase-1.

Abdul Qadir Gilani, who is also chair of Punjab Assembly's Public Accounts Commit-

tee, has been embroiled in controversy of Haj scam and the subsequent purchase of a bullet-proof jeep worth Rs 15 million.

Although there are many reports in circulation regarding the fleet of expensive cars including Rolls Royce, they were always denied. As far as the bullet-proof jeep is concerned, this could have also been easily denied had it not been registered in the name of junior Gilani who admitted in the media interviews purchasing it in 2009.

But details of his assets declaration indicate he did not have the money to afford such an expensive bullet-proof vehicle.

As the jeep is said to be worth Rs 15 million, junior Gilani could not have purchased it by selling everything owned by him except land.

His assets declarations say he had Toyota Surf (2002 model) worth Rs 1.6 million, jewellery worth Rs 1 million, bank balance of Rs 2.1 million, and furniture articles worth Rs 0.3 million.

If all these assets are put on sale, he could fetch only Rs 5 million. His immovable property is besides these assets and that includes his land at two different places in Rajanpur (Punjab) and Khairpur (Sindh). — *Internews*

## US may increase aid by 100pc

ISLAMABAD — Washington has not only linked civil and military aid to Pakistan with the 'respectable' release of Raymond Davis, the US national and assassin of the two Pakistanis in Lahore, but also has hinted at substantial increase in the aid, may be by 100 per cent, under Kerry-Lugar Law from \$7.5 billion to \$15 billion in five years.

Pakistan has received \$300 million this fiscal year so far. After deducting service charges, the \$1.5 billion per annum under Kerry-Lugar Law stands at \$1.3 billion out of which \$650 million will be used through USAID and the remaining \$650 million will be used by the government.

This means that Pakistan's next budget will highly depend upon Kerry-Lugar Law aid, which is being linked to the release of Davis.

According to a senior official of the Finance Ministry, Washington came up with the carrot and stick policy during the visit of Senator John Kerry to Pakistan.

Now according to the reports emanating from Washington, Senator John Kerry, who is now back

to the US, is facing criticism from US lawmakers, who are exerting pressure to cut aid to Pakistan if Islamabad does not release Raymond Davis.

The US, largest single voting power in the International Monetary Fund, can also use its influence to give more tough time to Pakistan and in case it happens so all international financial institutions including World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other major donor countries may come up with defiance mode and refuse to bail out Pakistan.

"The World Bank and ADB have already linked their budgetary supports to Pakistan with the letter of comfort," unveil background interviews of some of top officials.

Pakistan, which is in dire need for massive budgetary support to make budget for the next fiscal of 2011-12, finds no space to make the budget without the external flows as the incumbent regime has failed to increase its tax base and its proposed reformed general sales tax has met with failure.

The main political parties have

not permitted the government to increase the petroleum prices from December 2010 onwards owing to which the national exchequer has absorbed the hit of Rs 13 billion.

Likewise, the power tariff subsidy, which has reached Rs 95 billion, is estimated to end at Rs 139 billion by the end of the current fiscal against the budgeted target of Rs 30 billion.

The huge amount which the government is estimated to pump into the loss making public sector enterprises are hovering around Rs 300 billion and if the government fails to take any tax measure from March 1, 2011 till June 2011, then the power deficit will certainly surge up to somewhere between 8-8.5 per cent.

The government has already slashed the development budget by Rs 100 billion from Rs 280 billion to Rs 180 billion, but the financial gurus in the Finance Ministry have decided to contain the financial releases for development projects not more than Rs 140 billion. This means that the development budget cut stands at Rs 140 billion.

— *Internews*



PRESIDENT Barack Obama prior to departing from Portland International Airport in Portland, Oregon, on Friday night. Obama returns to Washington after a two-day trip to the West Coast. — *AFP*

## House passes spending-cut bill

WASHINGTON — The US House of Representatives yesterday approved legislation to cut federal spending deeply through September, a plan that is sure to be stopped by President Barack Obama and his fellow Democrats in the Senate.

The Republican-backed bill is a challenge to Obama to show he is serious about closing record budget deficits and sets up the possibility of government shut downs if a compromise is not worked out by March 4, when current funding expires.

On a largely partisan vote of 235-189, House Republicans passed the bill to cut spending by about \$61.5 billion from current levels, marking a victory for Tea Party conservatives elected in November. It would slash spending on many domestic programmes by 14 per cent, but leave untouched some of the biggest budget items including the Social Security pension programme and the Medicare and Medicaid healthcare programmes for the elderly and poor.

House Speaker John Boehner said the legislation was part of Republican efforts "to liberate our economy from the shackles of out-

of-control spending."

But Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi said the Republican-backed bill would damage the economy.

"They have made matters worse — passing a spending bill that destroys jobs, weakens the middle class, hurts schools and young adults, eliminates assistance to homeless veterans, and diminishes critical investments in our future," Pelosi said. Obama has outlined his own plan for less severe spending cuts in 2012, and has warned that tightening the belt too much too soon could harm the slow economic recovery.

Boehner called on Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid to arrange an immediate Senate vote on the House-passed bill. "Cutting federal spending is critical to reducing economic uncertainty, encouraging private-sector investment, and generate a better environment for jobs in our country," Boehner said.

Democrats, who hold a slim majority in the Senate, oppose many of the spending cuts and provisions in the bill to deny funds for the new healthcare law as well as environmental rules.

The Senate will write its own

version of a government funding bill for this fiscal year, which ends on September 30. The two chambers will try to come together on a single spending plan as the March 4 deadline looms.

The House spending cuts reflect Republican opposition to federal regulation, which they say hampers business growth, and distaste for taxpayer dollars being used for programmes ranging from job training and food aid for the poor to NASA space exploration.

In one of the most significant moves during a week of House debate, Republicans passed amendments stopping the Obama administration from carrying out the landmark healthcare reforms enacted last year. Republicans campaigned against that law all last year, saying it places burdensome regulations on business and stifles job generation. Many Democrats defend the healthcare law's expansion of medical coverage to the uninsured and toughening of consumer protections. They pledge to defend the law in the Senate.

The Supreme Court ultimately is expected to decide the law's constitutionality and its fate.

Democrats say they also want

to begin shrinking a deficit that is projected to be around \$1.65 trillion this year, equivalent to 10.9 per cent of the economy. Senate Democrats are likely to write a spending bill for this year that cuts funds, but not as steeply as the House. This spending bill is one of three major fiscal-related measures Congress will work on this year. The others are the fiscal 2012 budget and legislation the Obama administration desperately wants to raise government borrowing authority that is projected to be exhausted in April or May.

The failure of any one of the measures could bring government shutdowns and economic repercussions worldwide. These budget fights also could have a bearing on Obama's re-election efforts next year. House Republicans, especially, offered hundreds of amendments in a move to deliver on their small government promises.

As a result, the House-passed bill relaxes some gun controls and blocks the Environmental Protection Agency from starting to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases blamed for global warming. — Reuters

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Pakistan's ruling party spokeswoman resigns

THE spokeswoman for the ruling Pakistan People's Party resigned yesterday days after backing the claims of diplomatic immunity by a US gunman who killed two Pakistanis last month.

Pakistan's ties with the United States have been strained since police arrested Raymond Davis, who confessed to killing two men in self-defence on a busy street in the eastern city of Lahore on January 27. Last Monday Fauzia Wahab said diplomats have immunity and that Davis had an official visa, in comments swiftly dismissed as personal views by a presidential spokesman.

"I have resigned because I gave that statement in my personal capacity," Fauzia Wahab said.

"I do not want to appear before Lahore High Court as an office-bearer of the Pakistan People's Party. To uphold the dignity and respect of my party I have resigned from my post," she added.

#### 150-year-old vessel unearthed by floods

THE floods, which caused massive destruction in Sindh province of Pakistan last year, appear to have unearthed a 150-year-old ship in the middle of a river.

The ship was found a kilometre away from the Raju Nizamana village of Union Council Jharak. It has two decks and is 100-foot long, 40-foot wide and 20-foot high.

The upper part, which is around five to six feet high, can be seen from a considerable distance. The remaining part is buried in mud.

Residents said they have been hearing about such a ship from their elders, who claim that it belongs to the British era. Since Jharak was a port during that era, many ships used to anchor there.

#### 1,700 human traffickers nabbed last year

PAKISTAN'S Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested 1,779 human traffickers, including 12 most wanted people, from various parts of the country in 2010. According to FIA, a special campaign for the arrest of proclaimed offenders and court absconders including 12 most wanted traffickers was launched in the country. In comparison, 1,755 human traffickers were arrested in 2009 and 1,642 in 2008.

The agency also initiated legal action on recruiting agents against whom complaints were received through the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment after scrutiny.

A total of 3,434 illegal migrants were intercepted in 2010, 5,601 in 2009 and 10,703 in 2008.

#### Elizabeth Taylor improves, but remains in hospital

ELIZABETH Taylor's health is improving following her hospitalisation last week, but the actress will remain in a medical facility for the foreseeable future, her representative said.

The two-time Oscar winner has been at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in Los Angeles for more than a week after she was admitted for symptoms of congestive heart failure, which has been a health concern for the 78-year-old Taylor since 2004.

"Elizabeth Taylor has continued to show great improvement, and her family and friends are very pleased with her progress. She will continue to remain at Cedars-Sinai for monitoring for the time being," her spokeswoman said.

#### Nasa readies for space shuttle launch

NASA will launch the first of three final space shuttle missions this week, sending the shuttle Discovery on its last flight on a long-delayed cargo run to the International Space Station, officials said.

Liftoff of the Discovery, NASA's senior spaceship, is targeted for Thursday at 4:50 pm (2150 GMT) from the Kennedy Space Centre. Problems with the ship's fuel tank have kept the mission on hold since November. An unrelated hydrogen leak forced NASA to cancel a launch attempt on November 5. Technicians then discovered a crack in the insulating foam that covers the shuttle's fuel tank, a potentially serious safety issue.

#### Cash-strapped California bans state freebies

CALIFORNIA, the most indebted US state, will no longer hand out key chains, coffee mugs, squeeze-toys and other promotional knickknacks in a bid to shrink its \$25.4 billion budget gap, Governor Jerry Brown said.

The state spent \$7.5 million on freebie "swag" items — short for "stuff we all get" — in the last three years alone, Brown said in a statement on his order scrapping the trinkets. "Not a cent of taxpayer money should be spent on flashlights or other unnecessary items, most of which likely end up in landfills," Brown said.

"Every taxpayer dollar we save by cutting waste can be used to pay for critical public-safety and social services.





BAHRAINI police vehicles deployed near Pearl Square in Manama after the army pulled out (picture right) yesterday. — AFP

# Bahrain protesters back in square as troops pull back

MANAMA — Thousands of jubilant Bahrainis returned yesterday to Manama's Pearl Square, the focal point of demonstrations, after police and troops withdrew.

After the security forces had pulled out, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa ordered that they were to stay away from demonstrators. Salman, who is deputy commander of armed forces, ordered "all security forces to immediately withdraw from assembly areas," a statement carried by BNA state agency said. It added that he had also asked the "crowds to leave" to start a "new phase of national action that would bring together all parties."

Protesters began erecting tents in the square after removing barbed wire and pouring in from three streets.

Police, who had earlier fired tear gas in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent people from getting in from one of the streets, eventually followed

the army's lead and withdrew as well.

"I am happy we are back; I told you we would be back," 23-year-old Ibrahim said in the square from which protesters were driven on Thursday and the army moved in.

But three days later, the army returned to its bases yesterday afternoon. Earlier, the opposition had rejected the crown prince's offer of dialogue saying it would join talks only after troops withdrew and the cabinet quit.

The Islamic National Accord Association, which is boycotting parliament to protest the army's response to the protests sweeping the country, said 95 people were wounded on Friday, of whom three were "clinically dead."

"To consider dialogue, the government must resign and the army should withdraw from the streets," said INAA parliamentary leader Abdel Jalil Khalil Ibrahim.

Earlier, one of the bloc's

MPs, Jamil Kadhem, said the army's withdrawal from the streets was "not enough", demanding the right to demonstrate in Pearl Square.

Meanwhile, Bahrain's main labour union called an indefinite strike from today to demand the right to demonstrate peacefully.

"The general union calls upon the workers of Bahrain to a general strike starting today, unless the army is pulled out from the streets and peaceful demonstrations are permitted without any attacks from security forces," it said.

Kadhem said the opposition has been in contact with officials to pave the way for the dialogue proposed by the crown prince.

"Making the right environment to begin dialogue necessitates the withdrawal of government forces from the areas where peaceful demonstrators gather," he said.

King Hamad announced on Friday that he had assigned his son to start a dialogue.

In a television interview, Prince Salman said, "Our dialogue must take place in a climate of total calm," adding that "no issue can be excluded from that dialogue."

EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton said it was vital that the promised dialogue "should begin without delay."

Both Britain, the former colonial power in Bahrain, and the United States, which headquarters its Fifth Fleet in the island state, have warned their nationals to avoid non-essential travel. Six people have so far died, according to the opposition and families, five according to the government.

US President Barack Obama in a telephone conversation with the king "the stability of Bahrain depends upon respect for the universal rights of the people of Bahrain, and a process of meaningful reform that is responsive to the aspirations of all Bahrainis," according to a White House statement.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague urged the authorities "to reach out to the protesters and to hold to account those responsible for deaths".

"Governments must respond to legitimate aspirations of their people rather than resort to the use of force, and must respect the right to peaceful protest," Hague said.

Meanwhile, the crown prince yesterday called for a national day of mourning "for the sons we have lost", the state news agency reported.

Prince Salman called for calm, asking citizens to unite and co-operate with all political forces in the country.

"I stress, once more, that our duty is to preserve security and stability, to ensure that there is no discord and that the situation does not worsen," the statement on the national news agency said.

"Join us to calm the situation, so that we can announce a day of mourning for our lost sons." — AFP/Reuters



PROTESTERS (back to the camera) and government backers face each other during clashes in Sanaa yesterday. — Reuters

## Students demand Kurd apology for deaths

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq — Around 2,000 university students were demonstrating yesterday in north Iraq, demanding an apology from regional president Massud Barzani after protests earlier in the week left two dead.

The rally in Sulaimaniyah, along with another protest in the same city and others in Baghdad, were the latest in a string of nationwide demonstrations that have drawn thousands out to denounce high level corruption, unemployment and poor basic services. "The authorities in the region do not understand what democracy means," said Frishta Karim, a 21-year-old student of Sulaimaniyah University. "We firmly reject the use of weapons against demonstrators."

Police at the rally refused to allow the protesters to exit the university campus, according to an AFP journalist at the scene.

One banner in yesterday's demonstration called on Barzani, whose Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is the dominant political force in the region, "to apologise to the people of Sulaimaniyah for his guards' shootings."

On Thursday, two young men were killed and 54 others were wounded when KDP guards fired into the air in an attempt to stop protesters from reaching KDP's headquarters in Sulaimaniyah, the autonomous Kurdish region's second city.

Around 1,000 people were also at Sulaimaniyah's main square yesterday demanding the release of individuals arrested in connection with Thursday's rally, and the prosecution of the head of the city's KDP office who, the protesters claimed, gave the order for security to open fire.

Barzani has called for a full investigation into the incident.

Immediately after Thursday's protests, looters attacked the offices of opposition movement Goran in Arbil and Dohuk provinces, which along with Sulaimaniyah make up the Kurdish region.



HUNDREDS of orphans and children who are victims of violence over the past years in Iraq protest in Baghdad yesterday demanding social development. — AFP

## Saleh blames conspiracy against his country

SANAA/ADEN — An anti-government protester was killed and seven injured in clashes with supporters of Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Sanaa yesterday, a day after five people died in protests against his 32-year rule.

Saleh blamed a "foreign agenda" and a "conspiracy against Yemen, its security and stability" for the string of protests against poverty, unemployment and corruption.

The protester was shot in the neck and was taken to a hospital near Sanaa University where he died, witnesses said. At one stage both sides fired pistols and assault rifles — the first reported use of firearms by demonstrators.

Four other government opponents were seriously wounded by gunfire, two of them seriously, and three were wounded when demonstrators threw stones at each other outside the university.

A Reuters photographer saw one man with his face covered in blood and another being carried away by protesters. Around 1,000 demonstrators chanted "Leave! Leave!" and "The people want the fall of the regime!", echoing the slogans of Tunisian and Egyptian protesters. Between 200 and 300 Saleh supporters called for dialogue.

"Those who want power let them come with us to the polling stations ... the Yemeni people face elements of sabotage and those who are outside the system and the law," Saleh said in a speech to representatives of civil society organisations.

In a concession to protesters, he has promised to step down when his term ends in 2013 and not to hand power to his son. A coalition of opposition parties has agreed to talk to him, but protests have continued.

In south Yemen, dozens

of men used their cars in the town of Karish to block the main road between Taiz and the southern port city of Aden, residents said.

In Aden as many as 400 protesters staged a peaceful sit-in.

The local council of Shaikh Othman, a directorate in Aden, said in a statement it resigned in protest at the use of live bullets by security forces against protesters which led to deaths and injuries in the city on Friday.

In Sanaa, the editor of Defence Ministry newspaper *September 26* was wounded when he was beaten and stabbed by protesters, a government official said.

On Friday, security forces and pro-government loyalists clashed in several cities.

Doctors said four people died from gunfire in Aden and one was killed by a grenade in Taiz, Yemen's second city. — Reuters

## Major fire in district named for Mubarak wife

CAIRO — A major fire raged for more than two hours overnight in a densely populated and run-down Cairo district named in honour of former president Hosni Mubarak's wife Suzanne, witnesses said.

No-one was killed in the blaze, which was put out in the early hours of yesterday, but several people were taken to hospital with smoke inhalation injuries. The cause of the fire was not immediately clear.

The "Suzanne Mubarak Housing Project" is part of a larger slum neighbourhood called Duweiq, and was

renovated by the former first lady.

Residents said the fire broke out in slum housing clustering around the more modern and well-built blocks developed by the first lady.

Around seven homes, two and three-storey brick shanties, were destroyed. A security official said that 40 fire engines had been deployed to fight the blaze, and firefighters were leaving the scene as this reporter arrived.

In 2008, Duweiq was the scene of a major disaster when 119 people were killed in a rockslide that crushed

a section of low-income housing.

Hundreds of Egyptians from the slum protested yesterday after the fire tore through their tightly packed homes, joining a wave of complaints about the state set off by the departure of Mubarak.

Residents of the slum affected by the fire, emboldened to speak out by their new-found freedom of speech, said they had been neglected by officialdom, witnesses said.

Protesters, who blocked off a major city thoroughfare, said the fire in Duweiq and

Manshiet Nasr district killed several people.

A security source said no one was killed but there were injuries.

The official news agency Mena said 22 were injured. "The government hasn't been taking care of us for years. Nobody cares about us, they let it burn, and they have to come in and help out," said Mohamed, 35.

"Where is the government? Where is the government?" shouted one man. "Where should these people go?" he said, referring to those people whose houses had been damaged.

Mena, which blamed the fire on an exploded cooking gas bottle, said the government would provide compensation, temporary housing and a committee had been formed to help those whose homes were damaged.

Egyptians were motivated to make demands in the wake of demonstrations that led to Mubarak's resignation on February 11. Some of the poor took part in those protests but many could not afford to stop working even for a day or two.

"This is the same place where they let people die years ago. No one cares about

the slums," said Abu Ali, 27, who had joined the crowd of up to 2,000 people blocking the road.

The ramshackle buildings of Duweiq lie at the bottom of a cliff, from where huge boulders fell in 2008 and crushed more than 100 people.

The deputy governor of Cairo was convicted of negligence but in September that ruling was overturned.

Some Cairo districts have a density of 100,000 people per square mile, with residents packed into neighbourhoods without basic services.

— Reuters/AFP

## Morocco protest today

RABAT — Morocco was on edge yesterday a day ahead of planned political protests, amid concerns of possible unrest in the wake of the popular revolts that recently toppled regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, local media reported.

Young Moroccans recently called for the kingdom-wide demonstration today demanding broad political reforms.

Ahead of the rally, Morocco promised to inject 1.4 billion euros in subsidies to soften price hikes for staples.

Human rights and civil groups as well as independent journalists joined the movement, calling for the adoption of a democratic constitution.

But yesterday, one of the Facebook organisers Rachid Antid, said he was pulling out of the rally due to inclusion of radical and far-left groups with which they share "ideological differences."

Political parties were mixed in their opinions. The youth wing of banned Justice and Charity, believed to be Morocco's biggest opposition force called for a peaceful rally. Others, including the pro-regime Istiqlal and the opposition Justice and Development, openly rejected the demonstration. — AFP





A MAN gestures towards Algerian police surrounding demonstrators in Algiers yesterday. — AFP

## Riot police clash with protesters in Algiers

ALGIERS — Riot police clashed with protesters who tried to stage a rally in central Algiers yesterday, leaving one Algerian opposition deputy seriously injured, his party said.

Tahar Besbes, of the Rally for Culture and Democracy, was hit in the stomach by a policeman and hit his head on the pavement when he fell, party spokesman Mohsen Belabbas said.

Besbes, who earlier lost consciousness and was suffering from multiple injuries, later woke up and was sleeping, said doctor Rafik Hassani of Mustapha Hospital where the activist was being treated.

Another opposition leader, Rachid Malaoui, and a protester in his sixties fainted when they were hemmed in by a strong police cordon before firefighters were able to evacuate them, an AFP correspondent reported.

Some 200 protesters managed to get into May 1 Square, where they chanted anti-gov-

ernment protests as police blockaded adjacent streets with armoured vehicles.

Nine police units were deployed on the square, an official said, with each unit comprising up to 120 officers to handle the demonstration which, like many others, is banned in Algiers since 2001.

Wearing crash helmets and wielding truncheons, police pushed back handfuls of young protesters who shouted slogans.

A total of some 3,000 people amassed in the area including protesters, police and onlookers.

Several, brandishing symbolic red cards against the regime, found themselves split up in small groups by police in adjoining streets, Hassani said.

When they tried to flee in the opposite direction, the protesters found themselves confronted by oncoming police who charged at them, witnesses said.

A score of young pro-gov-

ernment supporters arrived on the scene holding pictures of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and shouting: "Police officers, let us pick a fight with them!"

In a protest a week ago some 2,000 demonstrators succeeded in gathering in the square but were prevented from starting a planned 4-km march to Martyrs Square.

The rally was organised by the National Co-ordination for Change and Democracy (CNCD), a month-old umbrella group made up of the political opposition, the Algerian human rights league and trade unions.

Algerian demonstrators have been emboldened by protests in neighbouring Tunisia and in Egypt.

The CNCD wants the immediate end of the current regime, citing problems of high unemployment, housing and soaring costs. Overnight posters opposed to the demonstration appeared on walls across Algiers. — AFP

## Fresh clashes continue in north-east Libya

TRIPOLI — Security forces in Libya's second city, Benghazi, fired in the air yesterday to disperse a crowd mourning protesters killed a day earlier, a resident said.

Human Rights Watch said 35 people were killed in the city late last Friday, in the worst night of violence since protests started last week.

Mirroring the pattern of violence on previous days in the city, a large crowd got into a confrontation with security forces after a funeral procession to bury people killed in the crackdown, a resident said.

"They tried to attack the security forces but when they heard shots fired in the air they ran away," said the man.

The New York-based watchdog said its tally for the number of dead was now 84 after three days of violence centred on the region around Benghazi, 1,000 km east of the capital Tripoli.

Benghazi cleric Abellah al Warfali

told Qatar-based Al Jazeera television that he had a list of 16 people being buried yesterday, most with bullet wounds to the head and chest.

"I saw with my own eyes a tank crushing two people in a car," he said. "They hadn't done any harm to anyone."

The private *Quryna* newspaper, which is based in Benghazi and has been linked to one of Gaddafi's sons, said 24 people were killed in Benghazi last Friday.

It said security forces had opened fire to stop protesters attacking the police headquarters and a military base where weapons were stored.

"The guards were forced to use bullets," the paper said.

The government has not released any casualty figures or made any official comment on the violence.

In London, British Foreign Secretary William Hague said he had reports

that heavy weapons fire and sniper units were being used against demonstrators. "This is clearly unacceptable and horrifying," he said in a statement.

Away from the eastern region, Libya appeared calm.

In Green Square in the centre of Tripoli, next to the walled old city, several hundred people gathered waving portraits of Gaddafi and chanting "Our revolutionary leader!" and "We follow your path", a Reuters reporter said.

Libya-watchers say an Egypt-style nationwide revolt is unlikely because Gaddafi has oil cash to smooth over social problems, and is still respected in much of the country.

A Benghazi resident, who lives near the city centre, said there was shooting on Friday night and that protesters had attacked and damaged the state-run radio station near his home.

"I heard shooting last night until midnight," the resident said. "The radio

station has been attacked ... We do not know what we are going to do."

A security source said clashes were still going on in the region between Benghazi and the town of Al Bayda, about 200 km away, where local people said dozens had also been killed by security forces in the past 72 hours.

"The situation in the eastern area from Al Bayda to Benghazi is 80 per cent under control ... A lot of police stations have been set on fire or damaged," the security source said.

He also said: "Please do not believe what foreign radio and television are saying. Their information is not accurate."

Al Jazeera said its signal was being jammed on several frequencies and its website had been blocked in Libya.

The state-run newspaper *Alzafh Alakhdar*, or Green March, published an editorial under the title: "No leader except Gaddafi!" — Reuters



DEMONSTRATORS supporting the people of Libya at a rally in Lafayette Park in front of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. — AFP

## Tunisians reject violence

TUNIS — Hundreds of Tunisians demonstrated yesterday for a secular state following the murder of a Polish priest.

Rallied by a call on social network, they gathered in the main Avenue Bourguiba in Tunis waving placards.

"We've called this demonstration to show that Tunisia is a tolerant country which rejects fanaticism and to strengthen secularism in practice and in law," blogger Sofiane Chourabi, 29, said.

Police stood by as military helicopters circled overhead.

Earlier yesterday the Tunisian authorities and the country's main religious movement denounced the murder of the priest who was found with his throat slit.

Marek Rybinski, 34, was found dead on Friday in the garage of the private religious school at Manouba near the capital where he was responsible for the accounting.

"The Ministry of Religious

Affairs condemns this criminal act and calls on all men of religion and civil society to act with determination to prevent such acts happening again," the ministry said.

It emphasised that "Tunisia has always been a place of peaceful coexistence between races and nationalities and of dialogue between civilisations, religions and culture."

The Ennahda (Awakening) also "strongly" condemned the murder. — AFP

## EU mission to help Italy on migrants

BRUSSELS — The European Union is to send a team of border experts to Italy within 24 hours to help shore up frontier teams overwhelmed by a flood of migrants from Tunisia, officials said yesterday.

Italian authorities say over 5,000 people have landed in the tiny southern island of Lampedusa since mid-January, when an uprising forced Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali to quit office. Italy has demanded EU help to deal with the rush.

"As of tomorrow, February 20, the

Frontex mission 'Hermes' will officially be deployed to assist the Italian authorities in managing the inflow of migrants from Northern Africa," EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said.

The teams will be made up of border experts from other EU member states co-ordinated by the bloc's frontier management agency, Frontex, backed up with aircraft and patrol boats.

Beyond locating and intercepting migrant ships, the teams will assist in debriefing and interviewing migrants,

with special attention given to identifying those who may be in need of asylum, according to a Frontex statement.

Last Tuesday, Malmstrom pledged a series of EU measures to help the Italian authorities, including extra funding as yet unspecified, and diplomatic overtures to Tunisia's new government.

That came after a sharp exchange of words with Rome, with Italian officials accusing the commission of being slow and bureaucratic in providing aid, and Malmstrom retorting that that was be-

cause the Italians had rejected an offer of help.

"The mission is being launched four days after receiving the official request from the Italian authorities. This is a clear signal of European solidarity ... and a concrete proof of the European Commission's commitment to assist Italy in this difficult situation," her yesterday statement said pointedly.

It is the second recent major deployment of EU border staff to help member states unable to cope with sudden migration surges. — dpa

## G20 offers Tunisia and Egypt help

PARIS — The world's major economies yesterday pledged to help Egypt and Tunisia with economic reforms but Saudi Arabia and China prevented the Group of 20 from welcoming democratic uprisings in the two countries.

"We stand ready to support Egypt and Tunisia, with responses at the appropriate time well co-ordinated with the international institutions and the regional development banks, to accompany reforms designed to the benefit of the whole population and the stabilisation of their economies," G20 finance chiefs said in a statement after a two-day meeting in Paris.

G20 president France had urged the main developed and emerging economies to welcome change in the north African Arab states and offer resources to help their interim governments.

But delegates said the wording of the draft communique was considerably watered down to remove any reference to the popular uprisings or to democracy, but leave the offer of help.

IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn said the global lender stood ready to help if asked, but had received no request so far. — Reuters



PEOPLE hold a sign that reads: "Secular republic for dignity and freedom" during a protest in Tunis yesterday. — Reuters

## Tunisia announces general amnesty

## Egypt to free political prisoners

CAIRO — Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq said yesterday the government would soon release 222 of the country's remaining 487 political prisoners, the official MENA news agency reported.

"Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq announced that there are 487 remaining political prisoners and the government will soon release 222 of them," the agency reported.

"He said there was only a small group of those arrested during the events of the January 25 revolution, no more than a handful, and their release is being studied now," MENA reported.

The report did not clarify whether the remaining prisoners would be released

later. Their release is one of the main demands of youth and opposition groups who took part in the events.

Shafiq also said he was trying to determine the fate of young people who went missing during the event.

Gamal Eid, a lawyer who heads the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, said: "There are hundreds of detained, but information on their numbers is still not complete... The army was holding detainees."

Meanwhile, Tunisia's interim president Fouad Mebazza signed a general amnesty for political prisoners yesterday in a move to smooth the way to elections this year, state media said. The amnesty was

promised less than a week after a wave of protests forced former leader Zine al Abidine Ben Ali to step down in mid-January, but had not yet been ratified.

"The government is hoping that this law will finally end an era of repression and provide the right conditions for the election," the state media report said.

Many families have been waiting for the release of relatives, with many camping out outside the main prisons.

The government so far has released some 3,000 people imprisoned by the former regime, though most are believed to have been petty criminals serving overlong sentences, as opposed to being political prisoners. — Agencies

## Cairo court approves new political party

CAIRO — A court yesterday approved a new political party that had sought a licence for 15 years, making it the first to be recognised since Hosni Mubarak quit office.

In a move to placate reformists and strikers and distance itself from the earlier regime, the interim government will change up to four ministers in a limited cabinet reshuffle, an Egyptian official was quoted by state media as saying.

The Wasat Party (Centre Party) had tried to gain an official licence four times since 1996, but each time its application was rejected by a political parties committee chaired by a leading member of the ruling party.

"The court ruled that the party was established and legitimate as of today," Egypt's news agency said of Wasat.

The means that the Wasat Party can take part in elections that the military has promised to hold within six months and its founder Abou Elela Mady said that it had been powered by "the winds of freedom that blew with the revolution".

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which took over, dissolved parliament and suspended the constitution to amend it ahead of the elections. "The current unstable political conditions do not permit a new constitution," said the official quoted by state media.

The amendments are expected to be completed in the coming days and will be submitted to a referendum, a judge on the committee dealing with the changes said.

Egypt's military warned workers using their new-found

freedom to protest over pay that strikes must stop, in a move that businessmen said yesterday could have come sooner.

Under pressure from activists to speed up the pace of reform by lifting emergency law and freeing political prisoners, the military had adopted a softly-softly approach since taking over but is now saying labour unrest threatens national security.

The state of emergency should be lifted within six months, the official told state media. — Agencies



# Pakistani singer charged with currency violations

NEW DELHI — India charged a well-known Pakistani singer with currency violations yesterday after he and his entourage were allegedly caught with \$124,000 in undeclared cash at New Delhi's airport, reports said.

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, a nephew of late Pakistani singing great Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and his group were boarding a plane to Lahore via Dubai last Sunday when authorities alleged they found the \$124,000 cash in their bags.

Thirty-seven-year-old Khan is accused of carrying undeclared foreign currency in violation of India's Foreign Exchange Management Act and customs rules, the Press Trust of India and other media reported.

Khan's manager Maroof, who goes by one name, faces similar charges, the reports said.

The singer was stopped at the airport and his passport confiscated after performing a string of concerts in India.

According to Indian customs rules, visitors are allowed to carry only \$5,000 in cash in and out of the country.

Central Board of Excise and Customs chairman S Dutt Majumdar said the cash had allegedly been found divided among the musical troupe.



RAHAT Fateh Ali Khan (centre) is taken to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence offices in New Delhi the other day. — AFP  
Rahat, a frequent visitor to India, is rated as one country's prolific Hindi-language film industry, performing songs to which actors lip-synch the words.

He has several hit songs to his credit and won India's Filmfare Award for Best Male Playback Singer this year.

A spokesman for the Pakistan High Commission (embassy) in New Delhi said he was not immediately aware of the charges.

But the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said in Islamabad earlier in the week it was "closely monitoring the situation".

The charges were laid just over a week after nuclear rivals India and Pakistan agreed to resume peace talks suspended more than two years ago after gunmen killed 166 people in Mumbai.

Authorities could impose "heavy penalties" on Rahat and his manager, the Press Trust of India said, quoting unidentified official sources.

It was not immediately known what penalties the pair could face.

Khan's agent Yusuf Salahuddin said the singer was perhaps unaware of India's stringent foreign currency laws.

"He was in India for 10 days and did about seven concerts all across the country and this must have been some of the money which possibly was given to him at the airport," he told Times Now TV station earlier this week. — AFP

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Police officer retired for fudging date of birth

THE Jammu and Kashmir government has retired a senior police officer who was found to have fudged his date of birth and sought to prolong his service by two years. Inspector General of Police, Security, Farooq Ahmad, has been retired after he was found to have fudged with his original date of birth. As per the original date of birth, Ahmad should have retired in February 2009.

An inquiry committee of the state home department found that Ahmad had tampered with the records in a manner that would have enabled him to retire in November 2011.

Official sources said the home department conveyed its decision to the officer on Friday night.

### Boy behind Delhi's 'burgle and burn' gang held

THE kingpin of Delhi's notorious 'burgle and burn' gang — the group of minors who broke into houses and set them on fire after thefts — was arrested in New Delhi yesterday, police said. Sanjeev, a vagabond of south Delhi, was arrested from Sarojini Nagar area of south Delhi during patrolling, a senior police officer said.

"Several incidents have been reported from Sarojini Nagar, Laxmibai Nagar and other areas, where the gang used to commit burglaries and set the houses on fire," the police officer added.

Sanjeev, who turned 18 two months back, escaped from an observation home and was on the run. He led the gang of around 10-15 minors, many of whom he recruited from the observation home itself.

### Maoists kill CPM worker in West Bengal

A COMMUNIST Party of India-Marxist (CPM) worker was shot dead by Maoists in West Bengal's West Midnapore district, police said yesterday. "The locals informed about the bullet-ridden body of Bablu Mahato (a local CPM worker) lying in Beliabera village in Jhargram sub-division of the district," said West Midnapore Additional Police Superintendent (operation) Mukesh Kumar.

"Maoists' posters were recovered from the spot, which read that Bablu was killed for acting as a police informer," Kumar said over phone.

Meanwhile, two firearms, 20 rounds of cartridges and explosives were recovered from a Jharkhand party activist's house in Hansda in Jhargram sub-division. The Bihar government has asked top officials in the state's Maoist-hit districts to take all precautionary measures during their official visits to rural areas.

### CBI probe sought in NRI chef's death

A CIVIL rights group and a relative of a non-resident Indian (NRI) chef, who died in police custody, demanded yesterday that a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe be ordered into the controversial death. The Goa government has already formed a special investigation team (SIT) to investigate the death of 39-year-old Cipriano Fernandes, who was arrested by the police on January 6 and died a day later of head injuries.

"The accused are policemen. They themselves cannot be allowed to investigate the case. They will only let their guilty colleagues off. We want the CBI to probe the case," John Gomes, convenor of Utt Goenkara, told a press conference in Panaji yesterday. Gomes was accompanied by Cosme Fernandes, a cousin of Cipriano Fernandes.

### Water tank wall crash kills three kids in Maharashtra

THREE children were killed near Latur town in Maharashtra when wall of a water tank gave away, police said yesterday. "The three kids had gone to the temple at Mirgali village to attend a religious event in the morning. After they were served food, they went to the temple water tank. When one of the boys opened the tap, the wall of the tank gave away," a police official said.

The boys, all nine years old, have been identified as Rohit Kamle, Sabaniha Tirjabe and Tukaram Dhumal.

### TN's three new SEZs eye Rs 3,400 cr investments

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi yesterday said that the three information technology special economic zones (IT-SEZs) set up in the state would attract an investment of Rs 3,400 crore (around \$750 million) and generate 90,000 jobs in the next five years.

Inaugurating two IT-SEZs in Madurai district and one in Tirunelveli district through video-conferencing, Karunanidhi said: "The state government decided to set up IT parks and SEZs in second-tier cities like Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thiruchirappalli, Hosur, Salem and Coimbatore through LCOT (Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu Ltd) and took steps towards that." — IANS

## Former ace athlete Suresh Babu is dead



RANCHI — Former ace national athlete Suresh Babu, current manager of the Kerala team at the 34th National Games, died in a hospital here yesterday.

Babu, 58, was admitted to the Rajendra Institute of Medical Science (RIMS) here after falling sick and vomiting yesterday morning, according to officials.

Babu was suffering from liver problems.

Babu won the long jump gold medal in the 1978 Asian Games in Bangkok and was conferred with the 1978-79 Arjuna Award.

A national champion in long jump, triple jump, high jump and decathlon for long, Babu also achieved the rare distinction of winning medals in two different events in two successive Asian Games.

Before the Bangkok gold in long jump, Babu had won bronze in decathlon in the Tehran Asian Games in 1974.

Jharkhand Governor M O H Farook expressed condolences over the death of Suresh Babu. The Jharkhand Olympic Association also has expressed grief.

"We are very sad over Suresh Babu's death. We did our best, but he died during the course of the treatment," JOA president R K Ananad told reporters.

Babu's body will be taken to Kerala where the funeral rites will be performed.

India's star athlete P T Usha paid a rich tribute to Suresh Babu.

Usha said Babu, a fellow Keralite, will be remembered as a "great sportsperson". Babu came to the February 12-26 34th National Games as the chef-de-mission of Kerala, and celebrated his 58th birthday only nine days ago. His body is expected to arrive by air at Kochi today.

## Maoists extend deadline for release of officials

NEW DELHI — Two mediators were expected to begin talks with Maoist insurgents for the release of two abducted officials, the chief minister of Orissa said yesterday.

R Vineel Krishna, Collector of Malkangiri district, and engineer Pabitra Majhi were abducted on Wednesday as they returned from a meeting with locals in the tribal-dominated region.

The insurgents extended a 48-hour deadline for their release soon after it expired Friday.

They also named two academics based in Hyderabad, the capital of southern Andhra Pradesh state, to mediate for the release of the hostages.

The insurgents' demands included withdrawal of paramilitary troops from the region and the release of some jailed rebel leaders and supporters.

"Professor Someswar Rao and professor Hargopal will reach here today ... then we will start discussions on the

demands made by the Maoists," Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik told the legislative assembly yesterday.

Military operations in Malkangiri had been halted to clear way for negotiations, he said.

Hargopal, who arrived in Hyderabad from New Delhi later yesterday, held talks with the other mediator R. Someswar Rao and Maoist sympathiser and revolutionary writer Varavara Rao.

The trio met at Hyderabad Central University to discuss modalities for the mediation to seek the safe release of Krishna, who hails from Andhra Pradesh.

Since Someswar Rao, a retired professor of Sambalpur University, cannot travel to Bhubaneswar because of ill-health, Hargopal alone would be leaving for the Orissa capital.

Hargopal said he was also not in a position to travel to forests to hold talks with Mao-

ists. He suggested that Orissa government release Maoist Ghanti Prasadam so that he can act as an emissary.

Hargopal said he would be in touch with Someswar Rao and both would make all efforts to seek the release of the kidnapped district official.

On the Maoists' conditions for his release, Hargopal said he would be able to comment only after reaching Bhubaneswar and holding talks with the officials.

Prasadam is currently lodged in a jail in Andhra Pradesh. He was arrested four months ago in Orissa and was later shifted to Andhra Pradesh.

However, the efforts to seek the kidnapped district collector's release may be delayed as the Orissa government has to move the concerned court in Orissa for Prasadam's release on bail and the order has to be communicated to the jail in Andhra Pradesh where he is lodged. — Agencies

## Tripura on bird flu alert; central teams arrive

AGARTALA — Following an outbreak of the deadly avian influenza, Tripura yesterday sounded a bird flu alert and intensified surveillance.

Two central government teams comprising scientists and doctors arrived in Tripura yesterday to assist the state authorities. They are closely monitoring the situation, an official said.

"We have deployed 16 Rapid Response Teams (RRT) in the affected areas of west Tripura district and have asked officials to look for signs of any bird flu outbreak elsewhere," Tripura animal resource development department (ARDD) joint director Jyotirmoy Chakraborty said.

With a fresh outbreak of bird flu at the Radha Kishore Nagar government farm, 25 km north of Agartala, in western Tripura, more than 3,000 ducks have been culled till Friday.

Chakraborty said: "We will cull over 1,000 more ducks and poultry birds in three villages adjoining R K Nagar farm at the earliest to check the spread of the viral disease."

A central team from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Uttar Pradesh's Izatnagar in Bareilly

and another from the North Eastern Region Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (NERDDL) in Guwahati have arrived in Tripura to assist the state authorities.

"The Tripura government has sounded a 'red alert' across the state and asked ARDD doctors and other officials to keep a close surveillance on the death of birds. If any death is reported, samples should be sent to the laboratories immediately," Chakraborty said.

He added: "After the death of some ducks at the government-run farm, we have sent samples to various laboratories. The Eastern Region Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ERDDL) in Kolkata and the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL) in Bhopal have confirmed that the samples are positive for the H5 strain of avian influenza."

The surveillance will cover an area of up to 10 km around the stricken farm. According to ARDD commissioner Sriram Taranikant, with the culling of 3,000 ducks and destruction of thousands of eggs, birds' fodder and other materials, the estimated loss would be around Rs 800,000. — IANS

## Hema Malini to be elected to RS from Karnataka

BELLARY — Yesteryear's Bollywood actress and Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Hema Malini is set to re-enter the Rajya Sabha — this time from Karnataka.

She was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 2003 by the then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Her choice as the BJP candidate for the March 3 election was announced in New Delhi late Friday though there were several contenders from the Karnataka BJP for the seat.

Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa yesterday denied a rift in the state BJP unit over Hema Malini's selection.

"There is no rift. The party high com-



mand has taken the decision and we are all bound by it," he told reporters here, about 300 km from Bangalore.

Yeddyurappa's denial comes amid reports that he was pushing for the nomination of his confidant and former BJP central minister V Dhananjaya Kumar.

The Rajya Sabha seat from Karnataka became vacant following the death of M V Rajashankara Murthy of the Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) on December 5.

Hema Malini's victory is assured as the ruling BJP has 107 members, including the speaker, in the 225-seat assembly. It can bank on the support of one independent also.

The Congress has 71 members and the JD-S 27. The two parties have not announced whether they plan to field a nominee of their own or a joint candidate.

With numbers ranged against them, the two parties may not field a candidate. Hema Malini is likely to file her papers tomorrow, the last day for doing so.

The assembly's present strength is 206 following the disqualification of 16 legislators — 11 of BJP and five independents — for rebelling against Yeddyurappa in September-October last year.

The other three vacancies were caused by the resignation of Congress and JD-S members. — IANS

## Indian students have highest transition rate to work in NZ

WELLINGTON — Students from India have the highest rate of transition to work in New Zealand after completing their studies, followed by their Chinese counterparts, a minister has said.

While 72 per cent of Indian students who come to New Zealand get job, the corresponding figure for China is 43 per cent, Immigration Minister Jonathan Coleman said on Friday.

Similarly, students from India also have the highest rate of transition to permanent residence (47 per cent), again followed by pupils from China (23 per cent).

According to a research conducted by the department of labour, around one-third of international students who come to New Zealand stay on following their studies to contribute to the country's economy and workforce.

"Not only does New Zealand gain from the fee-pay-

ing students, many of them stay on providing long-term benefits by contributing their skills to our workforce and economy," Coleman said.

"The research shows that New Zealand is an attractive place to study because of the quality and cost of education in an English-speaking country."

"Another plus for fee-paying foreign students is the recent introduction of interim visas which allows them to continue studying while applying for visas to further their studies.

"This will smoothen the enrolment process for education providers."

The research also found 68 per cent of former international students were in fulltime employment 18 months after gaining permanent residence.

"This research report confirms what we are actually seeing in the marketplace," said Richard Howard, a licensed immigration adviser. — IANS

## After attacks, Dalits flee two Rajasthan villages

JAIPUR — In two Rajasthan villages, atrocities against Dalits take place over the flimsiest of reasons — a hen being run over, or a goat straying into the house of another community. The Dalits are now fleeing their homes.

Dalit families of Husheypura village in Alwar district and Chandpur in Bharatpur district fled en masse when they were attacked by members of another community over petty disputes.

Rajasthan is tagged in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as sec-

ond in the country in terms of atrocities against Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

While in Husheypura, violence erupted on January 19 after a hen came under the wheels of a tractor being driven by a Dalit farmer, the houses of Dalit families were stoned in Chandpur after a goat strayed into the farm of another community member on Wednesday.

Husheypura, with 800 Dalits, and Chandpur, with 700, are nearly 100 and 115 km, respectively, from the

district headquarters in Alwar and Bharatpur.

"A team of National Human Rights Commission has visited Husheypura. Many families have fled the village, and despite our assurances to them only a few have returned," a senior district administration official said on condition of anonymity. He added that they are providing all possible assistance to the victims.

Ramsahay, a resident of Chandpur said: "They stoned my house for two hours.

I sustained injuries on my head. I had to take shelter in my relative's house in a nearby village. After I was assured of safety by the police, I returned on Thursday night. But many others have not returned."

The two incidents have brought to the fore the pathetic condition of Dalits in the state which has reported maximum number of atrocities registered with the police surpassed by only Uttar Pradesh.

According to latest NCRB report, as many as 6,168 cases under the Scheduled



# NC vows to take on 'anti-peace' forces

JAMMU — The ruling National Conference (NC) will take on the "anti-peace" forces in Jammu and Kashmir and push for a result-oriented India-Pakistan dialogue while simultaneously seeking an end to the era of confusion on Kashmir, a top committee of the party resolved yesterday.

Holding its first Central Working Committee meet in months, the National Conference leadership gave clear hints that it would steer the state out of all sorts of crises.

The National Conference leaders, including its president and union New and Renewable Energy Minister Farooq Abdullah, and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah began the meeting at their party headquarters here, party sources said.

A unanimous call was given for "strengthening the party and taking on all those who have worked or continue to work against peace in the state", the sources said.

Farooq Abdullah, who presided over the meeting, told the party leaders that an opportunity has re-appeared with India and Pakistan resuming their dialogue.

"This is a good sign," he said.

"The NC will continue to plead for sustained dialogue between the two countries and also with Delhi holding substantive talks with all sections in Kashmir, including those who of late have not been responding to the invitation for talks," he said.

But Abdullah said the NC as a premier party of the state has its role and it would continue to play it effectively.

His stress was on putting the NC as a protagonist of dialogue and peace and exposing the "designs of those who have been disturbing peace in Kashmir", the sources said.

While the party's central working committee said the "party stands for autonomy", sources within the National Congress said that there was a strong sentiment among the party leaders that the issue should be taken up at every level and with much greater vigour.

The leaders felt that the party was raising the issues only in spasms while there was need for greater intensity to highlight them.

The National Congress leaders at their CWC meeting said that since autonomy was the basic demand on which the party launched its

campaigns in 1996 and 2008, it should not be seen that the leadership was waking up to the issue now only as a reaction, sources said.

Meanwhile, the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) said that it would continue to fight for the resolution of the Kashmir issue and asserted that its self-rule document was the perfect way forward.

Addressing a one-day convention of the senior leaders of Jammu province, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said that the "resolution of Kashmir problem is the core issue for the party and PDP will continue its on-going campaign through democratic means."

In another development, after a deluge of protests on social networking websites against the proposed Jammu and Kashmir Police Reforms Bill that was to be tabled in the budget session, the state government has deferred the move, an official said.

The bill will not be presented in the coming budget session of the state legislative assembly beginning on February 28, government sources said. — IANS



TIBETAN spiritual leader the Dalai Lama arrives for a function in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

## Pak team to visit Jammu

JAMMU — A three-member team of Pakistani officials dealing with the Indus Water Treaty is arriving in Jammu today to inspect the design and the site of a proposed artificial lake here.

The lake is to be constructed by using the waters of river Tawi, which is a tributary to river Chenab. — IANS

## Former army general held in ration scam

JALANDHAR — Army authorities at the 11 Corps have put a former top general under formal arrest after he was convicted of professional misconduct and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment by a general court martial (GCM) in a multi-million ration scam in this cantonment city on Friday.

Lt Gen S K Sahni, who had been under custody of the army authorities ever since the GCM started against him August last year here, is one of the highest ranking army officer to be sentenced and arrested.

The former top general was also cashiered by the GCM which held him guilty on six counts of professional impropriety, intent to defraud (the army) and acts prejudicial to military discipline.

The GCM's order of cashiering would mean stopping of retirement benefits, including pension and gratuity, to him.

Sahni, who retired in 2006 and was facing corruption charges and allegations of gross irregularities in the ration scam that hit the army in 2005, was the seniormost army officer to be facing a GCM.

The GCM was headed by another Lt Gen ranked officer, Jatinder Singh.

Sahni, who was from the Army Service Corps (ASC) and served as Director-General for supplies and transport, was indicted by a probe

by the army authorities for allegedly supplying sub-standard meat and dry rations to troops stationed at high altitude areas, including the highest battle-field in the world, at Siachen glacier.

The officer has been accused of allowing the purchase of expired rations for troops during his tenure as Director-General of the ASC. He was also accused of reversing the tendering process for procurement of pulses, over-looking recommendations of stock sampling, failing to ensure timely completion of supply contracts and over-looking other procedural formalities.

The ex-general was under virtual house arrest since August last year. He had got himself admitted to the military hospital here soon after the GCM commenced against him and he was taken into custody.

He was attached with the 11 Corps here after a court of inquiry (CoI) found him guilty of the charges levelled against him.

Sahni had pleaded not guilty of the charges levelled against him. His case went through legal wranglings owing to pleas filed by him in the Delhi High Court and the Armed Forces Tribunal earlier.

Sahni's conviction and sentencing comes just weeks after another top Army officer, Lt Gen P K Rath, was convicted in a land scam by a court martial last month. — IANS

## Retire ageing monkeys, Anderson urges AIIMS



NEW DELHI — International celebrity Pamela Anderson yesterday wrote a letter to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) director N C Deka, asking him to free the ageing monkeys at the premier health institute's central facility.

Anderson sent the letter on behalf of People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India after watching video footage taken secretly inside AIIMS.

"It broke my heart to see the suffering that is documented in the enclosed video. But the animals suffering behind closed doors at AIIMS must endure this nightmare every day," the actress wrote.

"I was shocked to see that rabbits are forced to live in wire-floored cages; the sharp wire digs into their sensitive footpads and can cause their feet to become stuck," she added.

In the letter, the former *Baywatch* star who recently also made a brief appearance at *Bigg Boss* pointed out that many of the monkeys at AIIMS have been languishing in cramped, rusty cages for more than a decade and that one monkey has been suffering in these conditions for nearly 20 years.

According to the legal framework, laboratories in India are required to rehabilitate animals after three years of biological use.

The video shows horrifying conditions under which the animals have been caged, including rabbits suffering from an infectious skin disease and rats with wounds being denied veterinary care.

"Please, won't you at least agree to retire the animals who have been at AIIMS the longest to a sanctuary?" Anderson asked Deka in the letter. — IANS

## Kashmiri youth swarm army recruitment rally

SRINAGAR — Over 8,000 enthusiastic local youth yesterday thronged an army recruitment rally at Manasbal Sainik School in north Kashmir's Ganderbal district.

Braving rain and sleet, the youth reached the recruitment venue early yesterday morning not to miss their chance to join the Indian army.

"Recruitments are being held today for Srinagar and Anantnag districts and in the coming days we would also be holding recruitment rallies for the other districts in the Valley," said a recruiting official at the rally.

The youth jostled with each other to make it to the rally.

"I have been waiting outside the gate since 5 a.m. to join the rally," said Sajjad, 20, who had come to Manasbal, 34 km north of summer capital Srinagar, from his south Kashmir Anantnag home.

Another youth Ishfaq, a graduate from Anantnag, said: "Joining the army has been a passion for me. There is a lot of unemployment here and the army can give me the chance to earn a decent living."

The enthusiasm of the local youth to look for a career in the army is a far cry from the past. — IANS

## Meet calls for commitment to poor countries

NEW DELHI — A day after India announced a \$500 million aid package for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the global community was yesterday urged to show its political commitment in addressing extreme poverty and other developmental challenges of such nations.

Issuing a joint statement at the end of the two-day India-Least Developed Countries ministerial conference, the two sides said "key development challenges of the LDCs" were extreme poverty, productive capacity through structural transformation, economic growth, participation in international trade and resilience against vulnerabilities.

The joint statement called upon the international community to "express its highest political commitment in support of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to the successful and ambitious outcome of the 4th UN-LDC conference".

The Istanbul conference to be hosted by Turkey during May 9-13 this year will be the fourth in the series of the UN-LDC conferences held so far. The first two in 1981 and 1991 were held in Paris and the third was in Brussels in 2001.

The conferences are organised by the UN for developmental initiatives in the LDCs and the actions required at international levels to respond to challenges effectively.

The Delhi conference, organised to underline India's commitment

to South-South co-operation, asserted that "the interconnected and globalised world has made it essential for the international community to accord its highest priority to the cause of LDCs to ensure global peace, security and prosperity."

The statement said that the upcoming "Istanbul conference must galvanise global action in support of the development needs of LDCs, whose progress would bring greater global growth and opportunities for all. The LDCs' perspective must be taken into account while making decisions on global economic governance".

Underlining its commitment to South-South co-operation, India on Friday announced \$500 million aid for a host of projects in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and offered to share its developmental experience with them.

External Affairs Minister S M Krishna, while inaugurating the two-day ministerial conference on Friday, announced a raft of additional contributions for LDCs, including another five scholarships every year under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme for each LDC and a special fund of \$5 million over the next five years for the follow-up to UN LDC Four to be held in Istanbul in May.

Around 35 ministers and 40 Permanent Representatives to the UN from the LDCs participated in the conference. — IANS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Youth stabs two fellow female students in Delhi

TWO young women studying medicine were critically injured in New Delhi yesterday after a fellow male student who lived with them but had been asked to leave stabbed them following a row, police said. The three, in their early 20s, lived in Gautam Nagar in south Delhi. They had apparently returned from abroad and were preparing for a Medical Council of India examination.

Two or three days back they fought over some issue after which the women asked the man to leave their house, a police officer said. Yesterday morning, the man returned to the house and stabbed the unsuspecting women when they opened the door.

The women were taken to a hospital where their condition was initially said to be critical. "The cause of the incident will be known after talking to the women. We are trying to trace the man," the officer said.

### Indian drowns while surfing in New Zealand

AN Indian national drowned while board surfing yesterday on Ohope beach in the eastern Bay of Plenty. The 22-year-old was boogie boarding, a surface water sport, with friends when he and another man, in his early 20s, got into difficulty in the surf just off the beach, TVNZ.co reported yesterday.

The name or other details of the Indian national were not released, as officials said his kin were yet to be informed.

Located on the northeast coast of the North Island of New Zealand, Ohope beach is a popular holiday destination during the New Zealand summer, and features several kilometres of safe swimming beaches.

Ambulance services were called in from concerned members of the public, saying two people were in trouble in the water and that one man had been face-down for some time.

### Woman hacks off daughter's body parts

A WOMAN killed her 26-year-old daughter and then hacked off her head and other body parts in a bout of anger in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said yesterday. The accused, Rajratna Nadar, 50, is a mental patient and resides in Virar township with her daughter and husband.

"Rajratna used to get angry every now and then. Her daughter, Almamary, used to take care of her while her husband, Selvaraj, was away at work," Senior Police Inspector Y R Bhagwan said. Selvaraj lodged an FIR late on Friday in which he mentioned that his wife not only killed their daughter but also chopped off her head, hands and legs.

"He came to know about the incident when he returned from work on Friday night," Bhagwan said.

### Massive fire in Uttar Pradesh carpet factory

RUGS and carpets worth several lakhs of rupees were destroyed in Bhadohi town in Uttar Pradesh yesterday after a fire broke out in a manufacturing unit, police said. The fire broke out in RB Sons' Carpet on Mashal road that housed a manufacturing unit along with warehouse.

"The fire was massive and soon started spreading to nearby establishments. With several fire tenders pressed into service, the situation was brought under control after nearly two hours," police inspector Ajai Kumar told reporters in Bhadohi, some 250 km from state capital Lucknow.

### Fishermen freed by Sri Lanka reach home

ALL the 136 Indian fishermen released by Sri Lanka reached Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam district in 25 boats to a rousing reception yesterday. The relatives of the freed fishermen shed joyous tears while receiving them.

The fishermen were detained by the Sri Lankan Navy early this week for straying into their waters and were released by a Jaffna court on Friday. They were escorted by Sri Lankan Navy till the international maritime boundary line (IMBL) from where the Indian Coast Guard escorted them to the district.

### Four of family commit suicide in Uttar Pradesh

A COUPLE and their two teenaged daughters allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison here, police said. Vijay Singh, 45, who owned a small grocery shop, consumed poison late on Friday, along with his wife Madhu and two teenaged daughters — Babita and Anita — inside his home in Azadnagar locality.

"While investigations are on to ascertain why the four committed suicide, we have come to know that Vijay and his wife were in depression for the last one year as their other daughter Sarita was not happy with her in-laws," police inspector R P Shahi told reporters in Sitapur, some 80 km from Lucknow. — IANS

# Kerala women devotees break their own record

By Ashraf Padanna

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM — More than three million women swarmed the Kerala capital yesterday to offer 'pongala' to a Hindu deity in what is billed as the largest congregation of the female devotees in the world.

According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, 2.5 people had participated in this women-only event in 2009. The temple authorities put this year's figure at around three million.

Devotees from the southern districts of Kerala as well as the bordering districts of Thirunelveli and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu state visit the city on the culmination of the 10-day annual festival at the Attukal Bhagavathi temple here and cook the 'pongala' offering for deity Kannagi.

The offering is prepared using rice, jaggery and coconut on makeshift hearths along the city roads in rows without a break and it takes around three to four hours to complete it. Then, the priests sprinkle sacred water on the cooked rice, and the women begin their return journey.

The sacred fireplace at the temple



WOMEN light the traditional hearth to prepare 'pongala' in Thiruvananthapuram yesterday.

was lit by the chief priest around 11 am from the fire of the sanctum sanctorum and it was soon spread several directions.

The women devotees, who were

lined up across the city roads marked by the authorities, exchanged the fire and thousands of hearths were lit with the rice boiling up and spilling over as they prayed with folded hands.

Cricketer Shreesant's mother Savitri

Devi, who came all the way from Kochi the previous day and ensured her slot, was among the celebrities squatted the roadside forming a row leading to the temple to prepare the offering along with film and television stars including



# Shocking defeat

By Takehiko Kambayashi

LANDSLIDE victories for independent candidates in local elections in central Japan earlier this month shocked the nation's two major parties and revived public doubt about the nascent two-party system. "It is the beginning of the collapse of the two-party system," Minoru Morita, a veteran political analyst, said.

The independents, Hideaki Omura, and the Nagoya Mayor Takashi Kawamura, who campaigned for tax cuts, defeated candidates endorsed by the big parties in the Aichi gubernatorial election and the mayoral race. Omura, who was ousted from the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Kawamura, a former Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) member, took advantage of the public's frustration with the two parties, analysts said.

"Those who support Ichiro Ozawa also voted for Omura and Kawamura as the DPJ has been divided over infighting," Morita said, referring to the scandal-tainted former DPJ leader, one of Japan's most influential political figures.

"Many Japanese have been repulsed and furious over the DPJ as they voted for the party (in 2009) expecting that it could bring about major changes to the nation's politics," Morita said. The DPJ's victory in 2009 ended more than a half-century of almost uninterrupted rule by the LDP. Critics said while the DPJ has yet to seriously address employment, pensions, healthcare and the ailing economy, Prime Minister Naoto Kan is talking about tax hikes and free trade.

Unlike Junichiro Koizumi, a popular reform-minded LDP premier from 2001 to 2006, Kan fails to connect with the electorate. For the DPJ, a first indication of things to come were the November municipal polls in Matsudo, a Tokyo suburb. Of the 11 candidates the party fielded, only two won. Another crushing defeat seems almost inevitable in upcoming nationwide local elections in April.

In the latest Kyodo News agency opinion survey, 19.9 per cent of those polled supported Kan's cabinet, down 12.3 points from mid-January, and 63.4 per cent disapproved of the cabinet, up 9.5 points. However, Kan's unpopularity did not translate into opposition gains.

Support for the ruling DPJ edged down to 20.9 per cent while the LDP stood at 23.7 per cent, little changed from the previous survey. The LDP seems to spend more time attacking the DPJ while failing to bring in new ideas or constructive discussion, analysts said.

"The LDP still sides with the finance ministry, that is, they are also in favour of tax hikes," Morita said. The LDP had dominated Japanese politics since it was founded in 1955, leading to criticism that it lacks the accountability factor seen in many other developed countries.

Many analysts, journalists and lawmakers had long argued a two-party system was what a parliamentary democracy ought to be, but the reality seems to fall short of expectations. "But you have to face up to reality as more voters identify themselves as independent," Akikazu Hashimoto, a political science professor at J F Oberlin University in Tokyo.

Hashimoto has maintained that a two-party system would not take hold in Japan and now that emerging system is already crumbling as the two major parties had lost public trust. "We will continue to see chaotic situations in Japanese politics as more rivalries among unaffiliated voters are expected to emerge," Hashimoto said.

Your Party, the most popular small party, is expected to increase its influence, taking advantage of the unpopularity of the major parties. And as more Japanese are disenchanting with politics, election turnout is likely to go down. That means New Komeito, which is backed by Japan's largest lay Buddhist organisation, could gather strength as it is the only party that can expect consistently high turnout, Hashimoto said.

# Strange facts

By Stuart Grudgings

IN the hit sequel to the Brazilian movie *Elite Squad*, Rio de Janeiro's police steal weapons, kill their own colleagues and set up a parallel state with the backing of their political bosses. For viewers unfamiliar with Rio, it may seem a stretch to believe that a web of corruption could have spread so thickly through a city's security forces.

But the arrest of 30 police officers last week and the fall of one of the city's top security officials have proven that reality is as strange as fiction when it comes to law and order in Brazil's second-largest metropolises.

The federal operation, code-named "Guillotine," exposed deep links between the police and illegal gangs, which include militias made up of off-duty police as well as the drug traffickers who dominate many of the city's slums.

Police are accused of taking bribes from drug gangs in exchange for information, skimming money from illegal gambling and collaborating with militia groups that rule some communities through violence and extortion.

The arrests threatened to spark a police civil war recently when investigative police chief Allan Turnowski ordered a raid on the anti-organised crime squad, led by his rival Claudio Ferraz, who played a leading role in Guillotine.

Turnowski, whose former right-hand man was arrested for taking drug bribes, quit recently and has been accused by a former informant of receiving 500,000 reais (\$300,000) a month from militias. He denies the accusation. "When all these stories come to light it may be necessary to make 'Elite Squad 3'," Fernando Gabeira, a federal deputy for Rio, wrote in a blog post.

As it happens, Ferraz, who has helped jail several high-profile militia bosses, helped write a book that formed much of the basis for "Elite Squad 2." He told an internal police inquiry last Monday that he "put all of the facts he had lived through in a fictional form," according to a copy of his statement obtained by iG, a local news Website.

In the movie, a group of corrupt police invade a slum under false pretences to claim the territory for their militia. Ferraz told the inquiry that police had allowed one of its helicopters and several armoured cars to be used to help a militia take over a slum in the west of Rio last year.

The book details a federal police operation to catch a drug boss being called off because of an information leak. That happened in real life in 2009, prompting police to start the investigation that led to last week's arrests.

The federal raid is the latest sign that Brazilian authorities are getting serious about cleaning up Rio's police force as the beach-side city prepares to host the soccer World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics Games two years later.

The state's murder rate has fallen to its lowest level in 20 years and a new policy of occupying slums with specially trained community police has been hailed as a success.

But it also shows how far Rio, a hub of finance and Brazil's new oil wealth, has to go. Security analysts say the police are heavily involved in illegal activities ranging from brothels to abortion clinics to supplement their low salaries.

"Some militia members were jailed, but the political and economic structure of the militias hasn't been cut," said Marcelo Freixo, a Rio state deputy who travels in a bullet-proof car and has around-the-clock bodyguards because of his efforts to expose militia activities.

# Republicans snub demand for tax referendum

By Jim Christie

CALIFORNIA Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's plan to close the state's huge budget gap is running into a wall of Republican opposition over a proposed referendum on extending tax increases.

If Republicans hold firm and withhold votes for a tax ballot measure, they could force Brown and his fellow Democrats who control the Legislature to seriously consider a budget plan relying almost exclusively on spending cuts to tackle a deficit that may top \$27 billion.

Putting a measure on the ballot requires a two-thirds legislative majority, which Democrats lack. They could try to put tax increases on the ballot on their own through procedural manoeuvring, a worst-case option given that they want bipartisan

## Brown unveiled his budget plan last month after being sworn in to his third term

support for a measure.

The political struggle over the budget in America's most populous state comes as state finances garner attention in the US Congress, where some have called for legislation to allow financially troubled state governments to declare bankruptcy. State finances also are weighing on investors. They have fled US municipal bonds recently, spurred by some analysts predicting a wave of defaults.

Brown unveiled his budget plan last month after being sworn in to his third term — he was also governor in the 1970s and 1980s — and Republicans are showing no interest in his proposal for a ballot measure on tax increases until their demands for spending cuts and regulatory reform are met.

Some analysts had expected Republicans would propose talks with the governor to strike a deal on a tax measure in exchange for reforms aimed at the state's pension system. But Republicans have yet to draft a plan on pensions and are hewing to their traditional anti-tax stance.

"Further increasing taxes will hurt the economy and put more people out of work," Jann Taber, spokeswoman for state Senate Republican leader Bob Dutton, said on Friday.

Brown wants lawmakers to approve a budget framework by next month along with a tax measure to put on the ballot in June.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg said Democrats would press ahead with Brown's plan, adding they were endorsing many of

its spending cuts, which should appeal to Republicans. "We've already made several billion dollars of cuts," Steinberg said. "We need to get voters the opportunity to have a say," he added. "We'll get this done hopefully with Senator Dutton. But with or without him, we'll get this done."

Brown's budget plan pairs \$12.5 billion in cuts with a referendum on extending tax increases expiring this year to plug the state deficit. California's leaders got a sense on Monday of how the state government would look minus revenue from tax extensions in a budget scenario based on spending cuts.

The scenario by the California Legislative Analyst's Office outlined more than \$13 billion in cuts on top of Brown's proposed cuts from an \$86.6 billion general fund budget. Additional cuts would fall hard on schools and public safety, largely spared in Brown's budget plan.

While California's budget politics are fuelling broader concerns about the finances of state governments, muni market professionals such as Alexandra Lebenthal, whose family name has been synonymous with munis since the 1970s, say fear of defaults is overblown. They point to legal requirements for municipal bond issuers, including nearly every state, to balance budgets and meet all their debt obligations to bondholders.

Investors holding California's general obligation, or GO, debt have a call on state payments second only to schools, worth keeping in mind amid glum headlines about the state's budget politics, said Herb Morgan of Efficient Market Advisors.

"If you actually get a sell-off in Cal GOs because of a headline, I'll be the first guy in line to start buying," said Morgan, whose firm in Del Mar oversees \$180 million in assets for high-net worth individuals.



MEXICAN President Felipe Calderon (L) visiting the new General Electric plant in Queretaro, Mexico, recently. — AFP

# Caution in drugs battle

By Robin Emmott

THE shooting of two US agents in Mexico last week puts fresh pressure on Washington to help stem spiralling drug violence on its doorstep but Mexican resistance to a bigger US role leaves it with limited options.

Suspected drug hitmen killed an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent and wounded another in the state of San Luis Potosi on Tuesday.

It was one of the worst attacks on US officials in Mexico and the latest sign of growing lawlessness despite a Mexican army crackdown.

The US government responded on Wednesday by announcing a joint task force from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to help track down those behind the assault on the agents, who were shot as they travelled on a major highway between Mexico City and the violent north.

Washington needs to respond to protect its agents in Mexico and its strong support for President Felipe Calderon's drugs war over the past four years means the United States has some credibility at stake. Mexico is also a top US trade partner and oil supplier, and it is in US interests to help maintain stability south of the border.

But even as Mexico's drug war worsens, Washington cannot throw troops and billions of dollars into Mexico as it did in Colombia to weaken drug cartels there. Mexico is fiercely protective of its sovereignty after a 19th century war with the United States in which Mexico lost half its territory.

"I'm not optimistic, I don't see drastic US action and Mexico doesn't want US intervention," said Fred Burton, a drugs war expert at the US security consultancy Stratfor.

US State Department spokesman P J Crowley said Mexico would continue to lead the drug war on its own soil. "This is a shared challenge," he said in Washington.

Deeper co-operation between Washington and Mexico

City since Calderon took office in December 2006 could allow US agents in Mexico to help mount a major operation on the cartel deemed responsible for the attack.

Early suspicions centre on the brutal Zetas gang, who hold sway in San Luis Potosi and are blamed for a surge in violence across Mexico's northeast since early last year.

"If they could get the two leaders of the Zetas, that would be a major blow," said George W Grayson, a Mexico expert at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, referring to Heriberto "The Executioner" Lazcano and Miguel Trevino-Morales, known as Z-40, both army deserters who founded the gang.

Believed to be hiding out near Texas in Tamaulipas state, the two drug lords went to war with their former employers of the Gulf cartel at the start of 2010 and their fight is spreading lawlessness across the region.

The FBI will send a team to help investigate last week's attack, but US officials do not expect the kind of response

that followed the murder of undercover US Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena in 1985.

Back then, relations between the two countries were much worse and US agents kidnapped two men in Mexico accused of involvement in Camarena's murder, taking them back to the United States to face trial.

When former Gulf cartel kingpin Osiel Cardenas detained and threatened two US agents at gunpoint in Tamaulipas in 1999, Washington took the threat seriously and was the driving force behind the investigation that ended with Cardenas' extradition to the United States in 2007.

Now, US officials insist they will work closely with Mexican security forces.

Some experts believe the war could eventually wear down Mexico's anti-Americanism and allow a bigger role for the United States, including some troops.

For now, Washington could speed up its delivery of \$1.3 billion in drug war aid, as well as increase aid sums.

# Concern over rare whales plan

By Adrian Addison

BELUGA whales are majestic, sociable creatures that live in small pods mostly in the icy waters around the Arctic circle. They chat loudly with each other in elaborate clicks, clangs and whistles, have a big seemingly friendly smile and are, for a whale, relatively small — meaning they can be easily kept in a large tank.

And that's exactly what's planned for up to a dozen of the rare mammals at a new attraction at an aquarium in Hong Kong. "We want to use these iconic animals to deliver a message of conservation and education to our guests," Tom Mehrmann, chief executive of Ocean Park, said. "And we want to make sure that the pod is large enough for proper social dynamics to take place."

But outraged conservationists say the park's plans have highlighted the issue of aquariums "robbing the world's oceans" of already threatened species just to have a gimmick to sell to the paying public.

Ocean Park says it will try to source already captive belugas from other aquariums around the world but, if they can't find a pod that way, they admit they will look at getting them from the wild.

Yet the beluga, or white whale, is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) "red list" of near endangered species and the US and Canada have effectively banned their capture and export from their waters. Not so with the other big Arctic power.

"Capture of wild belugas still occurs in Russia, so that would be the likely source for this aquarium," says Brendan Cummings, a lawyer at the US Centre for Biological Biodiversity that campaigns for Arctic environmental issues.

"Whales and dolphins have regularly been injured or killed in the act of capturing them, usually with nets. They panic, mothers may get

separated from their young, and some may drown. "So the capture of the animal often results in harm not just to the animal brought into captivity but also other animals in its group."

"Moreover, once in captivity, mortality is often quite high — belugas have died in even the most modern facilities. "Given these ice-associated animals will likely decline as global warming transforms the Arctic, we really should not be removing any of them from the wild, even from the healthier populations."

Ocean Park, which is a not for profit organisation owned by the Hong Kong government, has ambitious plans for the aquarium — largely driven by the increasing number of tourists from mainland China.

The aquarium is making major additions. As well as the new Polar Adventure attraction, which is scheduled to open next year and will be home to the belugas, the park is also opening a new zone in May called The Rainforest.

Over five million people visited the aquarium last year, around 60 per cent from mainland China. The park wants to increase the numbers through the gate to eight million by 2017.

"China is helping drive demand for rare marine mammals for aquariums," Dr Samuel Hung, chairman of the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society, said.

"There are at least 17 mainland aquariums with over 60 beluga whales imported — so far. "People do not need to gawp at these beautiful creatures going round and round in a big fish tank to know they're endangered. Robbing the world's oceans of rare species just reduces their numbers further. It makes no sense."

"Russian waters have never been studied sufficiently to really understand beluga numbers. And they don't breed well in captivity, so the chances of Ocean Park getting a pod from another aquarium are very, very slim."

# Haiti town struggles to emerge from the rubble

By Emily Troutman

RESIDENTS of the seaside Haitian town of Leogane, which was largely destroyed by the January 2010 earthquake, would love to rebuild, but first they have to get past the mounds of rubble.

The good news, if you can call it that, is that engineering assessments conducted by the government and the United Nations show only about 50 per cent of Leogane's buildings collapsed, unlike the 80-90 per cent some feared.

The bad news: three-storey houses are waist-high, flattened into the ground. Thirteen months after the quake, concrete and cinder blocks still lurk around every corner.

Removing the rubble in Leogane has been easier than in the congested, teeming capital Port-au-Prince, but even here, it's taking much, much

longer than anyone expected.

Alexis Santos, the larger-than-life local mayor, said that reconstruction money is finally starting to arrive. "I'm hoping that pretty soon, Leogane will be better," he says. "It won't be California. But, you know, it will be better."

Last Monday, he met with Rebeca Grynspan, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. UNDP recently launched a rubble removal project in Leogane, after other high-profile rubble projects in Port-au-Prince met long delays.

Grynspan told Santos, "In many places, it's difficult to organise. You had the local organisation to make the decisions." Municipal support has turned out to be the key issue for rubble removal. Organisations need legal approval to tear down houses, as well as land for the rubble once it's been removed.

Grynspan is also the UN representative to the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, which holds the purse strings to international aid money offered after the catastrophic January 2010 quake that killed over 220,000 people.

In August, the commission approved a \$17 million UNDP rubble removal project in and around Carrefour Feuille in the capital. They will only start clearing rubble tomorrow.

For months, the programme could not secure land to move the debris. Funding was slow to arrive. Legal issues also dogged the initiative. Removing rubble is not as simple as identifying a collapsed house and carrying it away. Some renters were on public land.

"That's why the progress is slow in itself, you have to deal with the legal issues. We are bringing in experts from Gaza and Lebanon, now,"

explained Grynspan.

Buildings across the earthquake-affected area are being labelled red, yellow and green by government engineers, who make safety assessments. "Red" means a house is too dangerous to enter, "yellow" means the building is damaged and access should be very limited, "green" means safe.

Building owners and residents are fearful that when trucks arrive, organisations will tear down houses based on the labels alone. Kit Miyamoto, a structural engineer and president of Miyamoto International, Inc, worked in conjunction with the Pan-American Development Foundation to launch the housing assessments, ultimately training hundreds of Haitian engineers.

In an email, Miyamoto noted, "From our field experience, about 50 per cent of yellow houses are occupied for 24 hours a day." The other

50 per cent are occupied during the daytime. "They have nowhere to go," he said. "And people don't like camps because of the security and disease risks."

International organisations tread carefully and make a legal agreement for every house they demolish. For now, nothing is being demolished without permission.

In Leogane, collapsed buildings are torn apart with a mix of manual labour and heavy machinery. Hundreds of local workers in the Cash-for-Work programme wield pickaxes and sledgehammers.

Young men do most of the hard labour, and women shuttle back and forth, filling up one plastic bucket at a time. Trucks crisscross town and dump hundreds of cubic metres of concrete in an ever-growing landfill, which has a high fence around its perimeter to prevent people from dumping trash.



# At least 18 killed in Afghan bank attack

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — Gunmen and suicide bombers dressed as border police killed at least 18 people and wounded more than 70 in an attack on a bank in the main city in Afghanistan's east yesterday, government officials said.

A witness reported hearing blasts soon after the attack began and gunfire could be heard coming from the branch of the Kabulbank in Jalalabad, which handles salaries for the Afghan police and armed forces, for several hours.

Gul Agha Sherzai, Governor of Nangarhar province, of which Jalalabad is the capital, said 18 people had been killed, with civilians and members of security forces among the dead and wounded.

He said seven insurgents had attacked the bank, three of them detonating explosive vests inside the building.

Ahmadzia Abdulzai, a

spokesman for the Nangarhar government, said fighting had gone on for hours and described the scene as "chaotic".

The motive for the attack was not immediately clear, although co-ordinated assaults by insurgents against government buildings and military bases have increased in recent years, especially in eastern provinces near the Pakistan border.

The Taliban later claimed responsibility, saying three suicide bombers had entered the bank when Afghan security forces were collecting their salaries. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a text message that "many" members of the security forces had been killed and that fighting was continuing.

Violence across Afghanistan reached its worst levels last year since 2001.

Both civilian and military

casualties hit record levels, despite the presence of about 150,000 foreign troops.

"I was inside the bank when seven gunmen attacked," said a man who identified himself as Salman and was wounded in the attack. "My brother was killed by them," he said.

Another witness, Sediquallah Momand, said: "They shot the bank tellers first. I saw dead and wounded people inside the bank." Afghan President Hamid Karzai condemned the attack.

Traffic from Jalalabad to the capital, Kabul, was blocked by Afghan police and Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops, witnesses said.

An ISAF spokesman in Kabul said the coalition was aware of an incident in Jalalabad and was investigating. Kabulbank, is Afghanistan's politically well-connected top private lender. — Reuters



**SMOKE rises from the area where three Taliban suicide bombers burst into a branch of Kabulbank and detonated their devices yesterday in Jalalabad. — AFP**

## Manila to investigate corruption in military

MANILA — Philippine President Benigno Aquino vowed yesterday to fully investigate alleged corruption in the military, where officers were accused of pocketing millions of dollars.

"I fully support efforts to find out the truth behind this controversy," Aquino told a ceremony at the Military Academy.

"We are not going to let this pass," he added. "Those who are found involved in the anomalies would be punished." Aquino said the controversy had damaged the morale of soldiers and cadets of the country's premier military academy since some of its alumni were the ones accused of corruption.

Separate committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives were conducting investigations on the allegations against former senior officers and comptrollers.

Earlier this month, former military chief General Angelo Reyes apparently committed suicide after he was accused by a former armed forces' budget officer of pocketing more than 1 million dollars. Other military chiefs denied accusations that they took millions of dollars of military funds.

Two former military comptrollers were also facing investigations for allegedly amassing millions of dollars in unexplained wealth. — dpa

## Separatists free Philippine cop, ex-soldier amid talks

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines — Communist separatists holding peace talks with the Philippine government have freed a police officer and a retired soldier taken hostage ahead of the negotiations, the army said yesterday.

The New People's Army (NPA) handed over retired army sergeant Mario Veluz to an intermediary late on Friday while police officer Jorge Sabatin was separately turned over yesterday, Lieutenant-Colonel Joshua Santiago said.

Their physical condition was not immediately known, said Santiago, regional military spokesman who added the group was still holding another police officer and a soldier hostage.

The releases were announced separately by the 4,700-member NPA, which is observing a week-long ceasefire amid peace talks hosted by Norway in Oslo.

"The order to release prisoner of war Police Officer 3 Sabatin was also issued as an act of goodwill for the formal resumption of the peace talks," the rebel group said in a statement.

Sabatin was captured on February 6 during a guerrilla raid on a police outpost in the village of Pulang Lupa. Peace talks between the rebels and the government that resumed on Tuesday last were scheduled until tomorrow. — AFP/dpa

## Korea suspends operations at four more banks

SEOUL — South Korea suspended operations at four more savings banks yesterday after runs developed as customers rushed to get at their money despite official assurances the financial sector was secure.

The move came just days after two other institutions had their activities suspended and state-owned finance groups joined forces with commercial banks to pledge billions of dollars in liquidity for a sector beset by souring property loans.

The Financial Services Commission (FSC) said yesterday it was suspending three affiliates of Busan Savings Bank — Jung-gang Busan Savings Bank, Busan II Savings Bank and Jeonju Savings Bank — as well as Bohae Bank for six months each.

"Considering recent waves of deposit withdrawals, available liquidity, remaining deposits and capacity to borrow, the FSC concluded that they might face a situation where they are unable to pay customers," the FSC said. The freeze may be lifted if the banks recoup their liquidity, it said.

The FSC said on Thursday that 94 of the country's 105 savings banks meet capital adequacy standards and it did not expect any more suspensions in the first half of the year.

It was not clear if the three institutions suspended Saturday were among the 11 the FSC deemed to have inadequate capital. — AFP

## Macau says Nepalese are best security guards

KATHMANDU — Macau has resumed hiring Nepalese workers, eight months after it stopped in order to generate more job opportunities for locals, media reports said yesterday.

China's Macau Special Administrative Region recently recruited 200 Nepalese security guards, saying that no one could do the job as well as the "Gorkha Force," the Republica daily wrote.

It is the first time such a large number of workers from Nepal was called in at once to work in Macau.

Macau had stopped granting visas to Nepalese workers in mid-2010 after facing pressure from the trade unions to reduce the foreign labour force. Some 600 Nepalese lost their jobs at that time.

Around 2,000 Nepalese are employed in Macau as security guards. The island territory is considered the biggest casino hub in Asia. — dpa

## US in direct talks with Taliban: New Yorker

WASHINGTON — The administration of President Barack Obama has entered into direct, secret talks with senior Afghan Taliban officials, *The New Yorker* magazine reported on Friday.

The talks were characterised in the story as an attempt by the Obama administration "to assess which figures in the Taliban's leadership, if any, might be willing to engage in formal peace negotiations, and under what conditions."

Journalist Steve Coll wrote that several sources, which were not identified, briefed him about the talks.

Earlier on Friday, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that only a political solution will end the war in Afghanistan.

"We will never kill enough insurgents to end this war outright," Clinton said during a speech in New York.

Clinton voiced hope for splitting off rank-and-file Taliban from Al Qaeda extremists in Afghanistan.

Clinton said the surge in US-led troops over the past year was part of a strategy to "split the weakened Taliban off from Al Qaeda and reconcile those who will renounce violence and accept the Afghan constitution."

The late Richard Holbrooke, who served as Washington's special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, was a leading advocate for a political settlement. Holbrooke died December 13. — AFP

## 3 German soldiers shot dead

BERLIN — Three German soldiers were killed and six others wounded when a man in Afghan army uniform opened fire at a Nato base in northern Afghanistan, authorities said.

The shooting at the base in the Puli Khumri district of Baghlan province occurred on Friday as troops carried out maintenance on a vehicle, the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said.

A man in Afghan uniform shot at the troops and they fired back, injuring the man.

German Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg earlier said in Berlin two German soldiers were killed and seven other injured. — AFP



**NEPALI soldiers march during the Democracy Day celebrations at the army pavilion in Kathmandu yesterday. The day is celebrated throughout the nation which includes prayers in memory of those martyrs who shed their lives to bring democracy in the country. — Reuters**

# Suu Kyi must say sorry for sanctions: Myanmar media

YANGON — Myanmar state media yesterday demanded Aung San Suu Kyi and her party apologise for opposing the lifting of Western sanctions.

"They have to mend their ways, begging public pardon for the acts they have breached in their interests, at the expense of that of the nation and the people" said an opinion piece that ran in several state newspapers.

It is the latest in a string of anti-sanctions columns after a statement from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) said punitive measures helped pressure the authorities and had not affected the economy significantly.

"If the people of a country are in dire straits in conse-

quence of economic sanctions, that is the worst human rights violation," the piece said.

The NLD has reacted cautiously to the week's commentary, saying it had not received any official response from the authorities to its statement.

"Daw Suu didn't say anything about these articles. We have no comment," said party spokesman Nyan Win. Daw is a term of respect in Myanmar.

Suu Kyi's release reignited debate over the effectiveness of the financial and trade blocks, enforced notably by the United States and the European Union.

In its statement issued last week, the NLD stressed that any end to sanctions on Myanmar should be linked to an

improvement in the junta's human rights record, notably the release of political prisoners.

The remarks came days after Washington said it was premature to ease sanctions on Myanmar and urged the regime to take more concrete steps.

A new parliament convened for the first time in January, but it is dominated by retired generals and critics accuse the country's political system of hiding the army's power behind a civilian facade.

Suu Kyi's party has no voice in the legislature as it was disbanded for opting to boycott the November vote because the rules seemed designed to bar its figurehead from participating. — AFP

# Central Asian countries brace for impact of global food crisis

ALMATY — Faced with soaring global food prices, Central Asian governments are resorting to market intervention to control consumer prices.

"Central Asia is a region where these food prices have increased quite substantially," World Bank president Robert Zoellick said last week.

"And given the poverty levels, people have a large percentage of their budget, 50 percent or higher, that will go to these purchases," he said, adding that the situation was aggravated by a fall in remittances from Russia.

"So there is a real stress point that could have social and political implications across Central Asia," he said.

The region is strongly dependent on imported foodstuffs, and therefore suffers from the growing global prices, which hit a historic record in January, according to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization.

The trend has not made Central Asia's shoppers happy.

"You come back to a shop after one or two days, and the prices have already gone up. It's outrageous!" complained Sofia Mukhazhanova, 63, a pensioner, as

she shopped in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

"Take buckwheat. It cost 360 tenge (\$2.46) two weeks ago and now costs 420 (\$2.87). They put up our pensions and we were happy, but now it has all gone down the drain," Mukhazhanova said.

In neighbouring Uzbekistan, rising prices are also noticeable.

"Three or four years ago, my salary was OK. But with this speed of inflation, it feels like throwing money out the window," said one Tashkent resident, who earns \$600 per month and supports a family of six.

Even more critical is the situation in Tajikistan where the average monthly salary is \$70 and the price for a 50 kilogram sack of flour has risen from \$22 to \$32 since end of December.

President Emomali Rakhmon last week advised families to "stock up enough essential products to last for two years, especially wheat, given this global food crisis."

In an attempt to address the problem, Tajik authorities organised markets in capital Dushanbe and all the main towns with subsidised food prices.

Other governments in the region are

also intervening to lessen the impact of inflation.

Uzbekistan's authorities have called for regular inspections of markets to cap the prices. In Kyrgyzstan, the state has the right to intervene if prices suddenly jump by more than 10 per cent.

Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov recently called price stabilisation of staple foods a "key issue for the government."

Askar Beshimo, a Kyrgyz political analyst and former deputy foreign minister, blamed "irresponsible" new government policies and corruption, saying that prices were growing five times faster than elsewhere in the world.

"The ground is prepared for mass discontent," he said.

Kyrgyzstan and its economy were ravaged by last year's regime change and subsequent deadly ethnic clashes that led to a humanitarian crisis. Some residents have already tightened their belts.

"It feels like a time of war," said Amina Tairova while shopping at a market in Bishkek. "I don't even remember when I ate enough meat, and I've now started economising on bread and milk too." — AFP

# Vietnam to act after boat tragedy

HANOI — Vietnam will prosecute anyone responsible for the sinking of a tour boat in Halong Bay that killed 12 people, officials said yesterday, as relatives arrived to take home the victims' bodies.

Visitors from the United States, Sweden, Russia, Britain, Japan, France and Switzerland died when their boat sank while they slept before dawn on Thursday.

"It's the deadliest Vietnamese tourism accident until now, and is a sad lesson," Nguyen Quy Phuong, a deputy director of the Vietnam National Tourism Administration, told AFP.

"The people who caused the sinking of the ship will be properly judged under the law. There will be no exception," he added.

Relatives of some of the victims travelled to Halong Bay to receive the bodies of their loved ones yesterday.

"The bodies of four foreigners — two Swedes, a Japanese and a Briton — are going to be returned directly to their relatives at the site," Phuong said.

An Australian of Vietnamese origin and a tour guide from Vietnam were also among the victims, the official Vietnam News Agency (VNA) said.

Dang Huy Hau, deputy head of the Quang Ninh provincial government, which includes the bay, said authorities would "seriously" punish anyone found responsible for the boat sinking, according to the Truoi Tre newspaper website.

Local police said yesterday that no one had been arrested but the crew were being questioned.

"We are waiting for the investigators' final conclusion on the causes of the accident," Phuong said. The tragedy has highlighted safety issues at one of the country's most popular tourist spots.

Many of the tall-masted tour boats, which resemble Chinese-style junks, have dining facilities and cabins for visitors to sleep while they anchor overnight.

Vietnam has temporarily suspended all night boat trips in Halong Bay, and the strick-

en craft has been salvaged as part of investigations.

"We recovered backpacks, documents and personal items like clothes and shoes of the victims," Phuong said.

Initial information from the crew suggested the boat, "Dream Voyage", sank because of a break in the lower hull, police said.

It took on water so fast that sleeping passengers had almost no time to escape the torrent that filled their cabins.

Nine tourists and six crew survived.

Vietnam has described the accident as rare but there have been other deaths on the bay and officials have pledged to improve safety enforcement in the tourism industry in the area. In September 2009 three foreign tourists died along with a local guide when their vessel overturned during heavy rain.

Jonathan Galaviz, a tourism sector economist at Galaviz & Co consultancy, said the latest accident was an indication of a continued lack of attention to safeguards.

Families of the dead will

each receive compensation of 20 million dong (\$909) from the government of Quang Ninh province which includes Halong Bay, VNA reported.

Each survivor will get 10 million dong, it said.

Vietnamese media reported that the sunken boat was owned by Truong Hai Co Ltd and had been in service since 2008. No one at the firm was available to speak to AFP.

The once closed communist country began opening itself to the outside world 25 years ago and has become a popular stop on the tourist trail, although the five million visitors it attracted last year is far behind some regional neighbours.

Halong Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its stunning limestone cliffs, about 160 kilometres east of the capital Hanoi.

Official data show that in the first 10 months of last year more than 2.3 million tourists visited Halong Bay, evenly split between local visitors and foreigners, with almost 200,000 boat trips during the period. — AFP



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**FLATS Al Khuwair,  
 Wadi Kabir, Mumtaz  
 (with excellent furniture  
 & without) offices &  
 shops (Al Khuwair).**  
 96596348.

**FLAT for rent MCT area.**  
 94009088.

**ONE room + hall/  
 no kitchen, Qurum.**  
 97773175.

**FLAT near Ruwi, store  
 100m 99025635**

**AVAILABLE at Salalah  
 for Rent: Flats/Shops/  
 Offices at Camp-5  
 Area & Showrooms/  
 Flats/Offices/Labour  
 Accommodation  
 at Senaiya, New  
 Industrial Area. Contact**  
 99093163/ 99098303.

**LUXURY villa in Al  
 Ansab No 3, with 6  
 bedrooms with all  
 attachments.**  
 99418989.

**TWO bedroom flats at Al  
 Athaiba main road**  
 24592333.

**3 FLATS of 2 bedrooms  
 in Bareeq al Shatti, fur-  
 nished and unfurnished  
 with private underground  
 car park. RO850 and 800  
 each. 99333479 or  
 95215360.**

**A HOUSE in Wadi al  
 Kabir 98813620,  
 99343397.**

**2 BEDROOM flat +  
 a sitting room at Al  
 Khuwair 33 next to Said  
 bin Taimour Mosque (Al  
 Maha building). Air-  
 conditioners are available  
 and security. Contact**  
 92557903.

**3 BEDROOM flat in Al  
 Khuwair opposite Ibis  
 hotel, 3 toilets, living  
 room, dining, kitchen,  
 full split units (RO  
 500) no agents allowed**  
 95488448/  
 92813443

**NEW flat in Muscat area,  
 two bedroom, two toilet,  
 one kitchen, behind flat,  
 small garden, including  
 water and electricity**  
 RO 350/- only  
 95392792

## VEHICLE SALE

**FORD Edge for sale, YR  
 2008 accident free, single  
 driver, fully automatic very  
 good condition. For further  
 details please contact**  
 92227281.

**TOYOTA Corolla 1.3,  
 2007 model, 73,000 kms,  
 warranty up to 10,000  
 kms 95323752**

## LOST

**ABUL Kasham  
 Abul Khair has lost  
 Bangladeshi Passport  
 No: B - 1507473. Finder  
 please handover to ROP.**

**MELBA**  
**DEBT RECOVERY**

بحلول الخبراء إلى ارباح  
 MELBA  
 Converting Loss into Profit

**We are specialized in  
 converting loss into profit**

For further information:  
**Call: 99357404**

**AL HARTHY**  
**REAL ESTATE AGENTS**

TALK TO OUR INTERNATIONAL  
 SALES TEAM FOR ALL YOUR REAL  
 ESTATE REQUIREMENTS

**24695023**  
**24695025**

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION,**

## Office space for Rent

**Open  
 Office Space  
 on the Main Highway  
 at Wattayah**  
 (Opposite Toyota Showroom)  
 Contact  
**99338220/99263443**

## Urgently required

**QUANTITY  
 SURVEYOR ENGINEER**  
 Civil with minimum eight  
 years experience in the  
 field of consultancy compa-  
 nies. Fluent in English both  
 speaking and writing and  
 knowledge in using Soft-  
 ware, Autocad, Word and  
 Excel. Interested candi-  
 dates should send their CV  
 with the copies of educa-  
 tional and experience cer-  
 tificate. Write immediately:  
**P O Box: 2966,  
 PC: 211, Salalah,  
 Sultanate of Oman,  
 Fax: +968-23297748**  
 e-mail: almanarah\_salalah@  
 yahoo.com,  
 amecomani@yahoo.com

## CLASSIFIED SECTION

**VACANCY**

An International EPC Co requires following position  
 for its water pipe line projects in Nizwa. Please note  
 that the position is based in Nizwa only.

S.No.	Position with vacancy	Experience
1.	Finance Manager	5 years

**Send CV to: Tajamiri@aronab.com**

**Experienced  
 Employee Needed  
 Oman - Muscat**

Desert Adventures Tourism, a leading International DMC in the  
 Arabian Gulf region providing ground handling services to its  
 international partners in UAE, Oman, Jordan is expanding into  
 Oman and looking for the following team members:

* Reservation Staff	3-5 years experience
* Reservation Manager	3-5 years experience
* German/ French/ English speaking Hotel Representative	2-3 years experience
* Italian/ French speaking Sales Manager	2-3 years experience
* German/ French/ English speaking Customer Services	2-3 years experience

Applications may be submitted by e-mail no later than 28  
 February, 2011 to  
**Jamal@desertedventures.co.om** **Good Luck**

**GOOD PRICE!!! GOOD PRICE!!!**

**Available on very GOOD prices**  
**HP F1050**  
 3 in 1 Printer  
**RO 13.500 only**  
**HP J4500 4 in 1 Printer**  
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**RO 44.000 only**  
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**RO 21.200 only**

All HP, Eoson, Canon, Lexmark, Samsung  
 Cartridges also available.

**COMPUTER SUPPLIES**  
**Ruwi: 24 792-792**  
**Sohar: 2684 2420**

**GOOD PRICE!!! GOOD PRICE!!!**

## SERVICES

**HOOPOE Smartcard  
 Services near Gulf  
 Transport Co, Ruwi.**  
 Typing of all Labour  
 Agreements for Omanis  
 & expatriates & all  
 documents related to  
 Ministry of Manpower,  
 Immigration & ROP.  
 24793331, Ruwi.  
 GSM: 95959838.  
 Al Fahad Translation  
 Services  
 Near Gulf Transport  
 Co, Ruwi, Translation  
 of all kinds of  
 documents.  
 24794286 Ruwi,  
 GSM: 99231500  
 Landrail Smartcard  
 Services  
 Dohat Al Adab Street  
 Near Used Car  
 Showroom  
 Typing of all Labour  
 Agreements for Omanis  
 & Expatriates &  
 All documents related  
 to Ministry  
 of Manpower,  
 Immigration, ROP etc  
 24487759, Al  
 Khuwair. GSM:  
 96777170  
 Landrail Trading &  
 Services Co.  
 Near Gulf Transport  
 Co, Ruwi  
 Typing of all Labour  
 Agreements for Omanis  
 & Expatriates & All  
 documents related to  
 Ministry of Manpower,  
 Immigration, ROP etc.  
 24789117,  
 Fax: 24780244  
 GSM: 99231500  
 Website: www.  
 brightplanettrading.  
 com, E-mail:  
 bptland@gmail.  
 com/salim@  
 brightplanettrading.com

**MAINTENANCE:**  
 1. AC, fridge & washing  
 machine servicing &  
 repairing. 2. Painting,  
 plumbing, electrical  
 & carpentry works  
 97014234, 24504281

**2 BEDROOM flat  
 Muttrah Cornich above  
 Samrat Restaurant.**  
 99414644.

**FOR all your household  
 maintenance including  
 plumbing, electric-  
 ity, painting, laying of  
 interlock, marble, ce-  
 ramic etc. 99333479,  
 95215360.**

**MARBLE  
 CRYSTALLISATION,**  
 restore the original shine  
 of your marble  
 24792998/99314807.

**MARBLE polishing and  
 crystallisation building,  
 cleaning floor, floor  
 polishing, carpet, sofa  
 shampooing, pest  
 control, anti-termite,  
 shifting, maintenance.**  
 99504275.

**CARPET, sofa  
 shampooing,  
 GUARANTEED  
 CLEANING**  
 24793614/99314807

**P.C.O. (PEST  
 CONTROL OMAN  
 CO. LLC)**  
 Professionals who  
 specialise in all types  
 of Pest Control  
 Services & Snake  
 control and  
 Guaranteed Termite  
 Control. Also  
 available Gel  
 treatment for  
 Cockroaches.  
 Suppliers of UK  
 Pesticides Chemicals,  
 Snake Repellent,  
 Cockroach Gels and  
 Peripet treated  
 Mosquito Nets.  
 24787606,  
 24787503,  
 Fax: 24787607.

**WALLPAPERS,  
 wooden floor, Vinyl  
 Floor, Fixing, carpets,  
 curtains, sofa, Arabic  
 Majlis, All kinds  
 of Blainds making,  
 upholstery, furniture  
 remove and fixing  
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 Contact Yousuf  
 Ali 99834373/  
 97102699. Fax:  
 22018293**

**LOGISTIC Services  
 — Transportation,  
 shifting, cargo  
 services. All kinds of  
 transportation  
 available 92118538,  
 99332771.**

## FOR RENT/SALE/INVT

**INDUSTRIAL land for  
 investment extended  
 for (14 years) in Jufnin  
 (Rusayl). 99323957,  
 96554668.**

**INDUSTRIAL and  
 commercial land at Al  
 Maabala, Rusayl, Barka,  
 Al Amerat and Quriyat.**  
 95113217, 95490842,  
 99323957, 24453352.

**al-haditha  
 centre**  
 for vehicles repairing

High quality maintenance and repairing for  
 all kinds of light and heavy vehicles  
 (A certified workshop from ROP, Grade A)

Telephone: 24595951, 95306257.

## SAMA MUSCAT REAL ESTATES

● We are doing all kinds of  
 mediation  
 ● Sale and purchase of  
 lands, villas and buildings  
 ● Renting the flats and villas  
 ● Management and  
 maintenance of the  
 buildings.

## FOR SALE

**Two storeys villa +  
 two apartments**

The villa contains:  
 4 bedrooms, living room, two  
 kitchens, servant room and  
 dining room.  
 Each apartment contains:  
 3 bedrooms, a living room,  
 dining room and a kitchen.  
 The area of the land is 907  
 square metre.  
 24560040, GSM: 98789228,  
 Fax: 24560070

## SITUATION VACANT

**LOOKING for account-  
 ant with Gulf experience  
 and valid Omani driving  
 licence. Contact hr@  
 petrohouseinternational.  
 com**

**REQUIRED for leading  
 design office, Site  
 Engineer or Structural  
 Engineer (3 to 5 years  
 experience at least)  
 E-mail: ghimar42@  
 yahoo.com 968  
 24600024/ GSM: 968  
 99318112/ 96899512156,  
 Fax: 968 24692925.**

**PHOTOSHOP  
 professional required for  
 three months project in  
 Salalah. 98509485,  
 99419019.**

**LOOKING for a new  
 centre in Muscat:**  
**1. Psychologists, 2.  
 Physiotherapists, 3.  
 Speech therapists, 4.  
 Occupational therapists,  
 5. Special-education  
 teachers.** Send CV to :  
 hopegates.oman@  
 hotmail.com

**NAKHAL Development  
 and Construction Co.  
 urgently requires,  
 Electrical Engineer:**  
 Must be degree/Diploma  
 holder in Electrical  
 Engineering minimum  
 5-7 years Gulf experience  
 in electrical works like  
 planning & designing of  
 11 kv substation, UG &  
 O/H Transmission and  
 distribution networks,  
 Switchgears, Feeder  
 Pillars and more. The  
 candidate should have  
 good communication  
 & co-ordination skills,  
 ability to handle projects  
 independently. Having  
 Omani Driving licence  
 would be privileged.  
 Candidate fulfilling  
 above requirements shall  
 apply with CV to  
 E-mail: nakalndc@  
 omanet.net.om or  
 Fax: 968 26781483/  
 968 26781517.



# 15 CLASSIFIEDS

OMAN DAILY Observer

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2011



## Sahara Hotel Apartments Rotana Hotel

We are glad to receive our honourable customers in our new hotel (Rotana Hotel) at our distinguished location at Al Khuwair area opposite the Ministries Street next to Al Zawawi Mosque. We have Single, Double rooms, suites and Meeting Hall.

For further information please contact us on the following numbers: 24483888/+968-24487799 /+968-24488117 / fax : 968-24488221



### SITUATION WANTED

SENIOR Project Manager/ Systems Manager: 20+ years experience (10 years Oman exp) in IT Software Industry, Masters in Electronics, Software Version Control, Testing, Release, Deployment, Implementation, QMS and L1&L2 Support. 10+ years Health care domain exp. Indian, currently on visit and seeks suitable job. Please call: ☎ 96274923/24478586 or e-mail: garimellar@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

SENIOR Project Manager/IT Manager: With 20+ years experience (10 years Oman exp) in IT Infrastructure Operations, Management & Support of 200 nodes environment (System Admin, DB Admin, Procurement, QMS, Inventory & Licence Management). Indian, currently on visit and seeks suitable placement. Call: ☎ 96274923/24478586 or e-mail: garimellar@gmail.com.

★ ★ ★

HR & Administration Generalist with 14 years experience in diversified industries looking for a challenging and exciting career. Personally available in Muscat till 10 March, 2011. Call: ☎ 93530687 or e-mail: josephabraham@rediffmail.com

★ ★ ★

INDIAN male, graduate, holder of FIATA/DGR foundation with 5 years experience in shipping / logistic operations, seeks suitable placement ☎ 99284879 saviorrodrigues2002@yahooom.

★ ★ ★

YOUNG dynamic male with 12 years experience in oilfield industry in Oman (transport & logistics sector) in reputed organisations in managerial positions, seeks suitable placement. Contact on e-mail id: roced\_mas@rediffmail.com

★ ★ ★

INDIAN male, B Com with over 8 years experience in sales, accounts, administration, storekeeping, on family visit, seeks suitable placement ☎ 96458518, 92203891

★ ★ ★

M COM, MBA (finance), completed Oracle Financials 11i Module, having 26 years experience out of which 19 years in Oman, having valid Omani driving licence, can handle finance and accounts independently, up to finalisation, seeks suitable post. Please contact ☎ 98096644.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN female, 32 years with 10 years experience, seeks suitable placement in Muscat, any industry, presently on dependent visa ☎ 93231519

★ ★ ★

23 YEARS, Indian, diploma in electronic engineering, 2 years experience as OMC Engg in Kerala ☎ 0091-9496828633.

★ ★ ★

33 YEARS, Indian electronic foreman, Gulf experience, now in India, seeks suitable placement ☎ 0091-9562283807.

★ ★ ★

ACCOUNTANT 13 years exp with knowledge of Tally & Oracle, seeks job. Contact ☎ 98075840.

★ ★ ★

BE, MBA (HR) PGDBM, Indian female, 3 years experience in HR & Administration, well-versed with Oman HR practice, Oman labour laws, good in interpersonal skills, proficient in MS Office ☎ 92474376.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN Male, 28 yrs dip in marketing from London/UK 3 years work exp, currently in Muscat on visit visa, seeks suitable placement urgently. ☎ 98621435.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN female, 25, BCom, PG in HR, 4yrs, Indian experience. Looking for suitable assignment in Admin/sales co-ordination/ HR ASSH/ back office Contact ☎ 95248485/ E-mail: amrubhusari@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

MATERIAL Controller, 5 years experience MNC exposure with good English, communication skills & system exposure, seeks suitable placement in Big groups/Reputed companies. Can join quickly- please available. Release Contact ☎ 95731866.

★ ★ ★

M TECH Structural Engineer (Indian female), having 4 years of experience in design of bridges and multi-storied building seeks suitable placement. Contact: ☎ 95042203.

★ ★ ★

AN experienced and qualified sales executive, six years experience in Oman local market and interior with Omani driving licence. ☎ 96416273.

★ ★ ★

PROJECTS Co-ordinator, experienced in execution and co-ordination of construction projects, over 14 years, Indian, MBA, employed in Muscat, Seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎ 97528928.

★ ★ ★

ACCOUNTANT, Indian male, BCom graduate with 4 years Gulf experience up to finalisation well-versed in accounting packages, seeking good placements. Contact ☎ 95039062.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN nurse female, Diploma in General nursing, 4 years experience in super speciality hospital, requires suitable placement. Contact ☎ 92339082. E-mail: anugladson@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

INDIAN female, 27, experienced MBA professional looking for a suitable assignment in HR/ admin/sales co-ord/back office. Contact: ☎ 97920717. e-mail: chauhanhchani@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

PAKISTANI male, 33 yrs, experienced driver with valid GCC licence, seeks suitable placement as domestic or official driver. Contact ☎ 95853704.

★ ★ ★

ENGLISH speaking Sri Lankan housemaid looking for full-time or part-time job. Contact ☎ 92480866.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN male, BE electrical with 30 years experience, Oman experience 6 years, having Omani D/L with marketing and project experience seeks suitable placement. ☎ 92034586, 98016791, 92640586.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN male, 12 years experience in guest relations job in Oman with driving licence looking for sales and marketing related job. ☎ 99051829.

★ ★ ★

INDIAN male, PG in Physics, B Ed, IELTS (5.5) completed, looking for suitable placement as teacher in secondary school. Contact ☎ 95166264, 99101705.

★ ★ ★

CHIEF accountant, M Com, Indian, 45 years, having 21 years wide experience in accounts, audit, tax, banking etc, seeks senior position in accounts. Contact ☎ 92785207.

★ ★ ★

HR generalist with experience in nurturing Omani Talent is looking for a challenging and exciting career in a dynamic Organisation. Contact ☎ 97369630.

★ ★ ★

CREDIT manager — MBA & B Tech, 32 yrs, working with a leading bank in India, 5.5 yrs experience, seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎ +91-9895317327, jobunf@yahoo.com

★ ★ ★

MALE, 25 years, Bachelor of Management (Western educated), 3 years + administrative experience. Tech savvy. Good knowledge of MS Office applications seeks immediate placement. Contact ☎ 98569053.

★ ★ ★

BUSINESS continuity planner, male, 25 yrs, looking for project management, co-ordination job, past experience in handling projects include BCP/ DRP, ATM, SVS. Contact: e-mail: ammarirfan@yahoo.com

★ ★ ★

ARAB American female, 26 years, Business BA, 2 years experience (USA, Oman) placement Admin/HR Business development release available. Contact ☎ 98591626.

★ ★ ★

WELL qualified finance manager, with over 10 years of proven expertise in managing finance and accounts of leading companies from various backgrounds in Oman, is looking for a position in similar capacity. Contact ☎ 96341326.

★ ★ ★

26, male, Indian, graduate, seeks suitable placement in office administrator, Data Entry, visit visa for immediate placement. Contact 96248925, e-mail: shrinivas.devang@gmail.com.

★ ★ ★

YOUNG & energetic Indian male, 32 years old with more than 7 years experience in HR & admin, presently working for a well established construction co, excellent in Word, Excel, Foxpro & ERP computer system, looking for a suitable placement. Please contact ☎ 96129755.

★ ★ ★

MALE, 26 years, PG Diploma in 3D Animation, more than 2 years experience as animator, proficient in Maya software-lighting, texturing and inorganic modelling (sets & props), multi-linguistic and good communication skills, presently on visit visa, seeks suitable placement. ☎ 98295939, febin.joshy@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

### SITUATION WANTED

CHEMICAL Engineer, Iraqi nationality having experience. (1 year) water treatment, (2 years) oil & gas field, (1 year) sales & marketing of (LPG), Central Systems Installation & Projects. Contact ☎ 95945927, E-mail: Fahadian\_Fahadian@yahoo.com.

★ ★ ★

NETWORKING professional + 3 years experience in network, system administration, structural cabling, Cisco switches Routers. MSc Telecom Engineering, BS Computer Engineering, CCNA, JNCIA-EX, JNCIA-ER, MCSE and RHCE. Contact ☎ 98813936/ 92223661

★ ★ ★

GENERAL Manager, seeks assignment, 20 years experience in Oman. Engineer, can turn around business. Experience in real estate, building materials, construction machinery, home appliances, overseas representation, joint venture, sales & marketing. Contact ☎ 92618954, e-mail: recruitment1234@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

18 YEARS experience in Administration in a large Trading and EPC contracting company of Oil & Gas, Power & Civil Sectors, well versed with Oman HR practice and Oman Labour Law, good interpersonal skill, proficient in MS Office, seeks suitable placement. Contact: ☎ 92963516.

★ ★ ★

ACCOUNTANT, Indian male, B Com graduate with 12 years experience upto finalisation (6 years in Oman), now working in a co having release, well-versed in Tally9 Gold, Excel, Word, is looking for reliable placement. Contact: ☎ 99622639.

★ ★ ★

### GUEST HOUSE

MURAHIB HOTEL APARTMENTS welcome our valuable GUESTS to our excellent location, AL KHUWAIR, near AL ZAWAWI MOSQUE, a single bedroom, a bedroom & majlis, two bedrooms & majlis ☎ 24478087, Fax: 24482454.

★ ★ ★

QURUM BEACH HOTEL. ☎ 24564070.

★ ★ ★

### FOR SALE

926 sqm at Murtfa't Al Muna, RO 130,000/- Contact ☎ 99353994.

★ ★ ★

NEW & REFURBISHED PORTA-CABINS. Srinivas - ☎ 99460340.

★ ★ ★

LAND at Darsait (400m). ☎ 99323957, 96554668.

★ ★ ★

2 RESIDENTIAL lands together, one 610 and the other 600 sq mtrs, in Al Haram on way to Barka, RO16,000 each ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

967 SQ mtrs residential land in Al Athaiba near the sea, RO 220,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

884 SQ mtrs residential/ commercial land in Al Ghubra north behind Waleed Pharmacy and near to Shell, RO330,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

WE have second hand construction materials such as shuttering materials, props, wood, plywood, steel jack and machinery to sell ☎ 24834115, 24830943.

★ ★ ★

600 SQ mtrs residential land in Mahoot, Hijj 7, RO4,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

TWIN villa in Lansab phase 3 near to the roundabout, 5 bedrooms, 3 floors each side, RO115,000 each side ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

800 SQ mtrs residential land in Lansab phase 2, RO50,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

700 SQ mtrs residential land in Lansab phase 4, RO65,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

3 BEDROOM house in Al Khoudh near to Bank Muscat with land area of 450 sq metres, RO80,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

3 RESIDENTIAL plots of 950 sq metres each near to Naseem garden roundabout, RO25,000 each ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

6,100 SQ metres land about 1 km from the sea and Naseem garden, RO80,000 ☎ 99333479 or 95215360.

★ ★ ★

### WANTED

WANTED Male Nurse with MOH licence to work in Salalah with total special salary package. Contact ☎ 92444271, Fax 23294159, e-mail: liya159@gmail.com

★ ★ ★

### MANPOWER

FRIENDS MANPOWER: Filipino housemaids and all kinds of workers. ☎ 24489268, Tel/Fax: 24478153.

★ ★ ★

### GOOD NEWS

#### FREE INFORMATION ABOUT ISLAM

If you would like to know more about Islam, please call: Tel : 99425598, 96050000, 99353988, 99253818, 99341395, 99379133, For ladies: 99415818, 99321360, 99730723 Or visit: www.islamfact.com

CARGO transfer with attractive price to all areas in the Sultanate and outside of Oman (by truck). Contact: ☎ 00968/99171758.

★ ★ ★

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AL Hikmani for HAJ and UMRAH — With a host of services including the following: Hiring **luxurious coaches**, arranging weekly trips, preparing visas for expats at cost-effective price, including transport, housing, meals and visits to shrine locations. **Land and air trips weekly.** (99311310, 24566016, 99361982, 99707248, 99322124.

★ ★ ★

UMRAH campaign for expatriates. Contact ☎ 24834092, 99340994.

★ ★ ★

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MORNING STAR DRIVING SCHOOL — Learn driving manual/ automatic with professionally qualified male/ female trainees in brand new cars and flexible payments. Call: ☎ 99043283, 24478589, 24478505, www.chamberman.com/member/morningstar www.morningstar.com

★ ★ ★

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• **SITUATION WANTED**

\* Now **FREE** CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES **ONLY**

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

Mailing Address: OBSERVER CLASSIFIEDS SECTION, P.O. Box 974, Muscat, P.C. 100  
Location: OEPPA HEAD OFFICE, Medinat Al Alam,  
Near Ministry of Information ☎ 24649 593, 594, 594, 595, 596, 597  
& OEPPA Ruwi Office, Next to Dhofar Bldg, Behind Ruwi Police Station ☎ 24785668

# ZAJEL

weekly magazine evry saturday along with “OMAN DAILY”

for advertising contact :

Mobile : 96224397 - 95181747

Tel : 24649593

Fax : 24649590

Email : zajeloman@yahoo.com

# زاجل



FLIGHT SCHEDULE

ARRIVALS - SUNDAY					DEPARTURES				
Flight No	Aircraft	From / Via	STA		Flight No	Aircraft	To / Via	STD	
KQ318	B737-8	Dubai	0005		BA072	B777	Abu Dhabi-London Heathrow	0015	
WY182	B737-8	Riyadh	0005		IC866	A319	Bombay-Ahmedabad	0015	
WY812	A330	Bangkok	0010		LX243	A330	Dubai-Zurich	0020	
WY660	B737-8	Bahrain	0010		9W539	B737-8	Bombay	0040	
WY660	B737-8	Bahrain	0010		KQ318	B737-8	Nairobi	0105	
WY672	B737-8	Jeddah	0010		WY601	B737-8	Dubai	0110	
WY646	B737-8	Kuwait	0010		9W529	B737-8	Trivandrum	0115	
WY824	A330	Kuala Lumpur	0030		WY221	B737-8	Cochin	0120	
WY910	A330	Salalah	0120		WY813	A330	Bangkok	0115	
PK229	B737-7	Sialkot-Peshawar	0130		WY251	B737-8	Madras	0115	
NL771	B737-2	Peshawar	0130		WY221	B737-8	Cochin	0120	
BC321	A310	Dacca-Chittagong	0145		WY660	B737-8	Hyderabad	0120	
QR170	A320	Doha	0315		WY201	B737-8	Bombay	0130	
EK866	A330	Dubai	0355		WY281	B737-8	Bangalore	0135	
EY384	A320	Abu Dhabi	0400		WY115	A330	Frankfurt	0140	
GF560	E190	Bahrain	0420		NL688	B737-2	Sialkot	0215	
RJ600	ERJ195	Amman	0450		WY271	B737-8	Jaipur	0220	
WY902	B737-8	Salalah	0700		WY133	A330	Paris	0225	
WY602	B737-8	Dubai	0800		WY327	B737-8	Lahore	0230	
FZ043	B737-8	Dubai	0800		PK230	B737-7	Sialkot	0230	
WY202	B737-8	Bombay	0800		BG022	A310	Chittagong-Dacca	0315	
IX142C	B737-8	Dubai-Abu Dhabi	0805		EK867	A330	Dubai	0500	
QR164	A320	Doha	0825		EY385	A320	Abu Dhabi	0530	
NL669	B737-2	Sialkot	0830		QR171	A320	Doha	0550	
WY232	B737-8	Hyderabad	0840		GF561	E190	Bahrain	0655	
WY272	B737-8	Jaipur	0900		RJ601	ERJ195	Amman	0700	
WY328	B737-8	Lahore	0915		WY603	B737-8	Dubai	0730	
WY212	B737-8	Trivandrum	0915		WY291	B737-8	Calicut	0800	
WY252	B737-8	Madras	0915		FZ044	B737-8	Dubai	0840	
WY282	B737-8	Bangalore	0920		IX142C	B737-8	Amritsar	0855	
WY222	B737-8	Cochin	0925		WY311	B737-8	Chittagong	0905	
EK862	A330	Dubai	0930		NL772	B737-2	Peshawar	0930	
WY902	B737-8	Kuala Lumpur	0955		WY243	B737-8	Delhi	0950	
EY382	A320	Abu Dhabi	1000		WY323	B737-8	Karachi	1000	
G9113	A320	Sharjah	1005		WY263	B737-8	Lucknow	1000	
9W530	B737-8	Trivandrum	1025		WY3301	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1000	
WY604	B737-8	Dubai	1040		WY663	B737-8	Doha-Bahrain	1040	
IX549	B737-8	Trivandrum	1100		WY203	B737-8	Bombay	1040	
GF562	A319	Bahrain	1250		WY605	B737-8	Dubai-Abu Dhabi	1040	
IX337	B737-8	Calicut	1305		EK863	A330	Dubai	1045	
WY3302	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1330		G9114	A320	Sharjah	1045	
WY324	B737-8	Karachi	1425		EY383	A320	Abu Dhabi	1050	
WY606	B737-8	Dubai-Abu Dhabi	1450		WY905	B737-8	Salalah	1100	
WY906	B737-8	Salalah	1505		9W533	B737-8	Cochin	1125	
WY292	B737-8	Calicut	1540		IX554	B737-8	Cochin-Trivandrum	1200	
WY664	B737-8	Doha-Bahrain	1610		WY401	B737-8	Cairo	1200	
IX141C	B737-8	Amritsar	1625		WY701	B737-8	Dar-es-Salaam	1210	
WY608	B737-8	Dubai	1700		WY421	B737-8	Amman-Beirut	1300	
IC885	A320	Delhi	1700		WY101	A330	London-Heathrow	1305	
MP097	B747F	Amsterdam	1700		GF563	A319	Bahrain	1330	
WY204	B737-8	Bombay	1700		WY607	B737-8	Dubai	1400	
WY254	B737-8	Delhi	1710		IX550	B737-8	Calicut	1405	
WY264	B737-8	Lucknow	1750		WY3303	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1430	
WY3304	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1800		WY671	B737-8	Jeddah	1640	
WY814	A330	Bangkok	1805		WY907	B737-8	Salalah	1650	
GF564	A320	Bahrain	1820		IX141C	B737-8	Abu Dhabi-Dubai	1715	
G9117	A320	Sharjah	1855		WY609	B737-8	Dubai	1800	
SV534	EMB170	Riyadh	1900		IC886	A320	Delhi	1800	
WY312	B737-8	Chittagong	1905		WY681	B737-8	Riyadh	1850	
WY122	A330	Malpensa-Munich	1910		MP097	B747F	Sharjah-Hong Kong	1900	
FZ047	B737-8	Dubai	2020		WY647	B737-8	Kuwait	1900	
TG507	A330	Bangkok-Karachi	2035		GF565	A320	Bahrain	1905	
WY908	B737-8	Salalah	2055		WY683	B737-8	Dammam	1915	
WY402	B737-8	Cairo	2145		WY909	B737-8	Salalah	1920	
WY610	B737-8	Dubai	2145		QR165	A321	Doha	1925	
KL449	A330	Amsterdam-Abu Dhabi	2150		G9118	A320	Sharjah	1935	
IC923	A319	Madras	2200		SV535	EMB170	Riyadh	2000	
LH618	A340	Frankfurt-Abu Dhabi	2230		WY689	B737-8	Doha	2005	
BA073	B777	London-Heathrow-Abu Dhabi	2230		WY327	B737-7	Abu Dhabi	2010	
OR168	A320	Doha	2235		WY659	B737-8	Bahrain	2010	
EY388	A320	Abu Dhabi	2240		WY623	ATR42	Al Ain	2015	
GF566	E190	Bahrain	2250		WY611	B737-8	Dubai	2030	
WY624	ATR42	Al Ain	2300		FZ048	B737-8	Dubai	2105	
IC885	A319	Ahmedabad-Bombay	2310		IC934	A319	Madras	2300	
WY636	B737-7	Abu Dhabi	2310		KL450	A330	Abu Dhabi-Amsterdam	2305	
WY422	B737-8	Amman-Beirut	2310		EY381	A320	Abu Dhabi	2330	
WY626	ATR42	Ras Al Khaima	2310		QR169	A320	Doha	2335	
9W534	B737-8	Cochin	2315		GF567	E190	Bahrain	2335	
LX242	A330	Zurich-Dubai	2320		LH619	A340	Abu Dhabi-Frankfurt	2355	
WY612	B737-8	Dammam	2330						
9W540	B737-8	Bombay	2340						
WY702	B737-8	Dar-es-Salaam	2355						

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Muscat 24703345

Muscat 24537080

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Sur Sur 25545298

Buraimi Zahrat Al Buraimi

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Ibri Al Iraqi 25694515

Nizwa Nizwa 25412323

Salalah Mirbat 23298268

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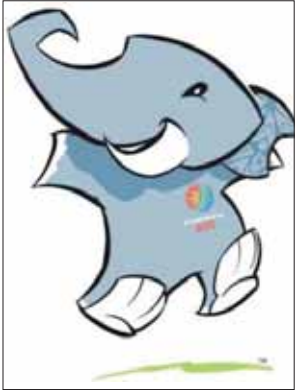
Departure & Arrivals Timetable On Long Distance Coaches

From Muscat					To Muscat				
Route	Dep Time	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days	oute	Dep Time	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days
Daily Services From Ruwi To Al Buraimi									
41	6:30	Sohar	8:50	Daily	41	13:00	Sohar	14:55	Daily
41	6:30	Buraimi	11:00	Daily	41	13:00	Ruwi	17:40	Daily
41	13:00	Sohar	15:45	Daily	41	17:00	Sohar	19:20	Daily
41	13:00	Buraimi	17:40	Daily	41	17:00	Ruwi	22:15	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Sinaw									
52	17:30	Samad Hosp	19:50	Daily	52	7:00	Al Mudhalibi	7:20	Daily
52	17:30	Al Mudhalibi	20:30	Daily	52	7:00	Samad Hosp	8:00	Daily
52	17:30	Sinaw	20:50	Daily	52	7:00	Ruwi	10:25	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Yanqul									
54	14:30	Nizwa Suq	16:50	Daily	54	6:00	Ibri Suq	6:45	Daily
54	14:30	Ibri Suq	18:45	Daily	54	6:00	Nizwa Suq	8:40	Daily
54	14:30	Yanqul	19:30	Daily	54	6:00	Ruwi	11:00	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Ibri (Araqi)									
54	8:00	Nizwa Suq	10:20	Daily	54	14:40	Ibri Suq	15:55	Daily
54	8:00	Ibri Suq	12:15	Daily	54	14:40	Nizwa Suq	17:50	Daily
54	8:00	Al Araqi	12:30	Daily	54	14:40	Ruwi	20:20	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Sur									
55	7:30	Ibra	9:45	Daily	55	6:00	Al Mintrib	7:20	Daily
55	7:30	Al Mintrib	10:25	Daily	55	6:00	Ibra	7:50	Daily
55	7:30	Sur	11:45	Daily	55	6:00	Ruwi	10:10	Daily
55	14:30	Ibra	16:45	Daily	55	14:30	Al Mintrib	15:50	Daily
55	14:30	Al Mintrib	17:25	Daily	55	14:30	Ibra	16:20	Daily
55	14:30	Sur	18:45	Daily	55	14:30	Ruwi	18:40	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Fahud - Jibal									
62	6:30	Izki	8:05	Daily	62	12:30	Fahud	13:15	Daily
62	6:30	Firq	8:25	Daily	62	12:30	Izki	15:55	Daily
62	6:30	Fahud	10:30	Daily	62	12:30	Firq	15:35	Daily
62	6:30	Jibal	11:15	Daily	62	12:30	Ruwi	17:30	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Salalah									
100	6:00	Salalah	19:00	Daily	100	7:00	Muscat	19:50	Daily
100	12:00	Salalah	1:00	Daily	100	10:00	Muscat	22:50	Daily
100	19:00	Salalah	7:40	Daily	100	19:00	Muscat	7:30	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Marmul									
101	6:30	Marmul	17:20	Daily	101	6:30	Muscat	17:20	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Dubai									
102	15:00	Thamrait	16:35	Daily	102	15:00	Buraimi	16:30	Daily
102	15:00	Haima	21:00	Daily	102	15:00	Haffet Check Post	17:45	Daily
102	15:00	Adam	0:45	Daily	102	15:00	Ibri	19:10	Daily
102	15:00	Nizwa Firq	1:25	Daily	102	15:00	Nizwa Firq	20:55	Daily
102	15:00	Ibri	3:10	Daily	102	15:00	Adam	21:35	Daily
102	15:00	Haffet Check Post	4:30	Daily	102	15:00	Haima	1:20	Daily
102	15:00	Buraimi	5:30	Daily	102	15:00	Thamrait	5:05	Daily
102	15:00	Dubai	7:00	Daily	102	15:00	Salalah	7:00	Daily
Daily Services From Ruwi To Dubai									
201	7:00	Dubai	12:30	Daily	201	15:00	Muscat	13:45	Daily
201	16:30	Dubai	22:25	Daily	201	15:30	Muscat	21:35	Daily
For more information or booking please contact the below numbers:									
Ruwi Bus Station 24720124 - 24705522, Burj Salwa Office 24510348 - Head Office Jantel 24492344, Salalah Office 23292773									
Website: www.ontcanm.com - Email: ont@jantel.net									



# Kiwis expected to fly high over Kenya

CHENNAI — New Zealand, semifinalists in two of the previous three Cricket World Cups, hope to at least replicate — if not better — those performances as they take on Kenya in their opening Group ‘A’ fixture of the 2011 edition (0400 GMT) here today.



In the run-up to the day game, there have been the usual statements full of brave words and confidence from both camps.

However, the Kiwis are expected to comfortably win more due to the dumps that Kenyan cricket is in rather than their own obvious all-round superiority.

Nothing more demonstrated the fact than the wretched preparatory tour of India in January this year when the Ken-

yans lost all their five matches to Gujarat and Baroda. The visitors even failed to defend a total of 293 against Gujarat despite a century by 20-year-old opener Seren Waters.

In the World Cup, Kenya had their best moments in the 2003 edition co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Courtesy a walk-over from New Zealand, who refused to play the Kenyans in Nairobi citing security concerns, the eastern African team made it to the semifinals.

En route, they also beat Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Since then, it has been downhill for Kenyan cricket whose authorities never quite leveraged the 2003 success to develop the sport in the country.

In contrast, the Kiwis qualified for the penultimate round in 1999 and 2007 to underline their potential, but for all that, they have never looked a side capable of winning the Cup and it could be no different this time around.

It is not as if the Kiwis are in pink of condition this time around. Their trips to the subcontinent last year were disastrous, losing all their nine one-day matches, four to Bangladesh and five against India. Their 11-match losing



TIM Southee bowls as his New Zealand team-mates James Franklin (left) and Jesse Ryder watch during a practice session on the eve of their Cricket World Cup match against Kenya in the southern Indian city of Chennai yesterday. — Reuters

streak ended at home against Pakistan, but they still lost the series 2-3.

Lack of consistency has

been New Zealand’s bugbear as their performance levels swing to the extremes. Yet, when the team clicks as one,

the Kiwis have proven to be a handful, although these occasions have been rare and far in between.

The Black Caps are still smarting from the drubbing against India in the warm-up game here a week back when

the home team piled up 360 and went on to complete a 117-run rout. The result washed away New Zealand’s win against Ireland in their previous warm-up match that saw opener Martin Guptill scoring a century.

Coach John Wright, who took over from Mark Greatbatch soon after the team returned from their nightmare tours of Bangladesh and India, has stressed that he has no magic wand to turn the team around, but a bit of tinkering seems to have had the desired effect even if the improvement has been only marginal.

Their top four batsmen in a reshuffled order — Brendon McCullum, Guptill, Ross Taylor and Jesse Ryder — have not fired in unison which is worrisome for the Black Caps although all are eminently capable of tall scores.

In bowling, although the Kiwis have a profusion of seamers, they are hoping that their two frontline spinners, Nathan McCullum and rookie Luke Woodcock, would prosper in conditions that historically have aided spin.

In many ways, the tournament holds immense significance to New Zealand who are expected to qualify for the knockout rounds from

Group ‘A’ along with Australia, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, who among them have won all the previous five World Cups.

The luck of draw has provided New Zealand with a projected ‘soft’ opener against the Kenyans whose fortunes revolve around their two senior players, Stephen Tikolo (39) and Thomas Odoyo (32), both set to play their fifth World Cup while Waters, a Durham University student, represents their future hope.

**New Zealand:** Daniel Vettori (captain), Hamish Bennett, James Franklin, Martin Guptill, Jamie How, Brendon McCullum (wicket-keeper), Nathan McCullum, Kyle Mills, Jacob Oram, Jesse Ryder, Tim Southee, Scott Styris, Ross Taylor, Kane Williamson, Luke Woodcock.

**Kenya:** Jimmy Kamande (captain), Seren Waters, Alex Obanda, David Obuya, Collins Obuya, Steve Tikolo, Tanmay Mishra, Rakep Patel, Maurice Ouma (wicket-keeper), Thomas Odoyo, Nehemiah Odhiambo, Elijah Otieno, Peter Ongondo, Shem Ngoche, James Ngoche.

**Umpires:** Rod Tucker (Australia) and Marias Erasmus (South Africa). **Third umpire:** Aleem Dar (Pakistan). **Fourth umpire:** Sudhir Asnani. **Match referee:** Roshan Mahanama (Sri Lanka). — IANS

## McCullum back with NZ squad

CHENNAI — New Zealand spinner Nathan McCullum returned from hospital to join yesterday’s practice session but the team management is still in two minds whether to play him in today’s World Cup Group ‘A’ opener against Kenya.

Captain Daniel Vettori sounded wary of rushing the off-spinner, taken to hospital on Thursday with a high fever, into sharing the spin burden in the match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

“Nathan got back from hospital and joined us this morning for a lighter session later in the day,” Vettori said of his spin colleague in a news conference yesterday.

“He is feeling a lot better but we might take a decision at the last minute. I’m reasonably confident he can take part in tomorrow’s game. It all depends on Nathan’s fitness but I think we definitely will play two spinners (against Kenya).”

New Zealand had a poor build-up leading to the World Cup, being whitewashed in series by Bangladesh and India before losing a home series against Pakistan.

“We acknowledge we lost a lot of games and there has been some disappointing performances, particularly in the subcontinent.

“But the World Cup is a fresh start. If we play well tomorrow the guys can turn around their confidence pretty quickly.”

While he and McCullum may have to shoulder the spin responsibility during the tournament, Vettori expects his pacers to do well after fine-tuning their craft under bowling coach Allan Donald’s supervision.

“Allan has been an exciting addition to the team because he brings obviously his own skill and confidence. He speaks from a position of



NATHAN McCullum (right) talks to New Zealand team-mate Luke Woodcock during a practice session in Chennai yesterday.

authority and the guys listen,” Vettori, wearing spectacles and characteristic stubble, said of the former South African pacer.

“He knows what it takes to succeed in the subcontinent as well as other parts of the world.”

Kenya, on the other hand, sounded confident of creating an upset.

“Nobody should take the associate teams lightly. At the end of the day, the result will show. We just need to go out and express ourselves,” Kenya skipper Jimmy Kamande said. — Reuters

## Rhodes ensures Kenya are fit for the Cup fray

CHENNAI — Fielding guru Jonty Rhodes understands the batting or bowling limitations of an emerging team but he finds it completely inexcusable if they lack in fielding or fitness.

During the course of his 11-year one-day career, the South African revolutionised fielding and one of the enduring images of the 1992 World Cup was of an airborne Rhodes flying into the stumps with the ball in hand to run out Pakistan’s Inzamam-ul Haq in Brisbane.

Enjoying his stint as Kenya’s fielding coach, Rhodes said there was no reason why the associate teams could not match the traditional powerhouses when it comes to fielding in the World Cup.

“I made my debut in 1992 and in that World Cup Kepler Wessels was the captain of the team,” 41-year-old Rhodes told reporters at the M A Chidambaram Stadium yesterday, on the eve of Kenya’s World Cup Group A match against New Zealand.

“We had guys ... with no international experience whatsoever. We identified two departments we could be the best in the world — best fielding team and the fittest team,” said Rhodes, who took 105 catches, including some gravity-defying ones at backward point, in 245 one-day internationals.

“That has been the same approach the ICC has been working on with the associate teams to make sure those two areas are non-negotiable.



KENYA’S coach Jonty Rhodes (centre) jokes with his wards during a practice session.

“It does not require you to play Test cricket. The guys who play less cricket can still be sharp.”

Rhodes expects the Kenyans to vindicate this opinion. “As regards to best fielders, you’ll see a couple of them tomorrow from both sides.

“New Zealand are renowned for putting in great work on the field and the Kenyan blokes have certainly shown to me that they are not scared of anything coming their way.

“These guys are fit and are natural athletes. The fielding department is something I did not have to work too hard on, it was already there.

“Fielding is an important part of 50-overs cricket and with so many evenly balanced teams here this year, the side that puts in a great effort in the field will be the team that would go to the knockout stage, to the final,” he predicted.

Rhodes also offered an explanation

for the relatively sloppy fielding of the subcontinental teams, compared to that of Australia, South Africa or England.

“I think the only difference in India and the subcontinent is after 40 overs, you get sweaty and it’s pretty humid. It’s tough to maintain intensity in the field, especially when a partnership gets going against you. It’s not difference in the skill levels, just a matter of maintaining the intensity throughout the 50 overs.” — Reuters

## Aramex and Asalaam win



ARAMAX and ABA School players in action during the second OCCI-CBC basketball tournament. Aramex defeated ABA School 88-46. In the second match, Asalaam International Group won against TAISM 78-33. Oman Cement will meet ABA School in the other game.

## TR Engineering register facile win

MUSCAT — TR Engineering registered a facile 75-run win against OCT Mabella in an Oman Cricket organised Al Ansari Group of Companies-sponsored ‘C’ Division T20 League match played during the weekend at the PDO grounds.

Electing to bat after winning the toss with valuable contributions from all the top order batsmen TR Engineering piled on 211 for the loss of two wickets at the end of their quota of 20 overs. Openers Zahir Dosani 56 (34b, 9x4) and Muhammad Rashid 38 (33b, 2x6 and 2x4) put on 72 runs for the first wicket off 8.1 overs, followed by a 54-run second wicket partnership between Zahir and No 3 batsman Saeed Bashir who top-scored with an unbeaten 68 (37b, 9x4).

Saeed together with Omani batsman Sharif Pindook 37 not out (18b, 5x4) were associated in an unbroken third wicket partnership of 85 runs.

Requiring 212 runs for a win OCT Mabella got off to a flier with opening batsman Mohsin Gul Baig chipping in with 43 (23b, 6x4) and his partner Shabbir Ahmed 24 (14b, 4x4) putting together 63 runs for the first wicket off six overs.

With their departure in quick succession wickets tumbled and OCT Mabella ended

their 20 overs on 136 for the loss of eight wickets. The only other batsman to make any noteworthy contribution was Khalid Ali 28 (26b, 3x4).

Ajay Padwal claimed two for 23, while Suresh Pillay and Saeed Bashir picked up two wickets each conceding 19 and 32 runs respective off 4 overs each.

**Brief scores:** **TR Engineering** 211 for the loss of two wickets off 20 overs (Saeed Bashir 68 n.o, Zahir Dosani 56, Muhammad Rashid 38 and Sharif Pindook 37 n.o) bt **OCT Mabella** 136 for the loss of eight wickets off 20 overs (Mohsin Gul Baig 43, Khalid Ali 28 and Shabbir Ahmed 24; Ajay Padwal 3/23, Suresh Pillay 2/19 and Saeed Bashir 2/32).

**Points:** **TR Engineering** - 2 pts (5 games, 8 pts) and **OCT Mabella** 0 pt (7 games, 6 pts).

**PERULI DAZZLES**

Opening batsman Prasad Peruli with a dazzling unbeaten 101 (2x6 and 10x4) helped Al Habib register a narrow 13-run win against Arrow Overseas ‘B’ in a ‘G’ Division T20 match played in the afternoon at the same venue.

Deciding to bat after winning the toss Al Habib were reeling at 53 for the loss of four wickets but recovered to reach 156 without further loss at the end of 20 overs with No 6 batsman Abbas Ali chipping in with an unbeaten 23 (18b, 2x4) and associating in an un-



ABBAS ALI P PERULI

finished 103 run partnership together with Prasad. Arrow Overseas ‘B’ in their turn lost wickets at regular intervals and managed to reach 143 All out off 19 overs. Pravin Kumar with 43 (23b, 4x4) and opener Nowfal 35 (28b, 3x4) were the only batsmen to make any noteworthy contributions.

The wickets to fall were shared by skipper Ramanathan two for 19, Mudassar two for 30 and Abbas Ali two for 32.

**Brief scores:** **Al Habib** 156 for the loss of four wickets off 20 overs (Prasad Peruli 101 n.o and Abbas Ali 23 n.o) bt **Arrow Overseas ‘B’** 143 all out off 19 overs (Pravin Kumar 43 and Nowfal 35; Ramanathan 2/19, Mudassar 2/30 and Abbas Ali 2/32).

**Points:** **Al Habib** - 2 points (5 games, 4 pts) and **Arrow Overseas ‘B’** 0 pt (4 games, 4 pts).

**MAJEES CT TRIUMPH**

In a National Bank of Oman (NBO)-sponsored T20 ‘F’ Division match played in the morning at the University grounds Majees CT defeated Towell Construction by 20

runs to stay in contention for honours.

Winning the toss and electing to field Towell Construction did well to restrict Majees CT to 154 for the loss of nine wickets off the 20 stipulated overs, thanks to a brilliant 52 (30b, 7x4) from opening batsman skipper Zulfikar Habibulla and a wellcompiled unbeaten 25 (18b, 1x4) from No 10 batsman Sunil Kumar.

The bowlers to cause the damage were Mohammed Asif three for 41, skipper Shyam Gaikwad two for 23 and Mohammed Arif two for 25 off four overs each.

Towell Construction in reply were bowled out for 134 off 19 overs with a top score of 50 (46b, 3x4) from opening batsman Avinash Joseph.

Steven Henry and Omani player Parviz Abdul Qadir Al Balushi bagged two wickets each conceding 24 and 29 runs respectively off four overs each.

**Brief scores:** **Majees CT** 154 for the loss of nine wickets off 20 overs (Zulfikar Habibulla 52 and Sunil Kumar 25 n.o.; Mohammed Asif 3/41, Shyam Gaikwad 2/23 and Mohammed Arif 2/25) bt **Towell Construction** 134 all out off 19 overs (Avinash Joseph 50; Steven Henry 2/24 and Parviz Abdul Qadir 2/29).

**Points:** **Majees CT** 2 pts (5 games, 8 pts) and **Towell Construction** 0 pt (5 games, 6 pts).

## Devils rock Rangers for sixth straight win

NEWARK — Swedish goalie Johan Hedberg helped New Jersey Devils post their sixth successive victory with a 1-0 shut-out of the New York Rangers in the NHL on Friday.

Hedberg, unbeaten since taking over in goal for the injured Martin Brodeur on Feb. 6, made 16 saves while Ilya Kovalchuk got the game’s only goal to extend his season-high point streak to nine games.

New Jersey’s winger converted a wrister at 8:18 in the second period to continue his strong form and run his team-best goal total to 21, triggering admiring chants from his home crowd.

**Results:** New Jersey Devils bt New York Rangers 1-0, Carolina Hurricanes bt Philadelphia Flyers 3-2, St Louis Blues bt Buffalo Sabres 3-0, Boston Bruins bt Ottawa Senators 4-2, Detroit bt Florida 4-3, Minnesota Wild bt Anaheim Ducks 5-1. — Reuters

## John Wall makes record

LOS ANGELES — John Wall passed his way into the record books, and the rookies slipped past the Sophomores.

Wall handed out a record 22 assists, DeMarcus Cousins had 33 points with 14 rebounds, and the freshmen class ran past the second-year stars, 148-140 on Friday night in the Rookie Challenge at the LA Staples Center to tip off the NBA All-Star Weekend festivities.

The speedy Wall shattered the previous Rookie Challenge mark of 17 assists set by New Orleans’ Chris Paul in 2007.

“That was my only tar-

get,” said Wall, who added 12 points. “I asked before the game, what was the assist record and it was 17. Me and DeMarcus joked we were going to break the record.”

The Sacramento’s budding star returned the favour to his former Kentucky teammate by flipping the ball of the backboard and the trailing Wall rocked the house with a thunderous two-handed slam with 12 ticks left, ending the highest scoring game in the all-time series.

“That was great,” said Wall upon accepting the Most Valuable Player trophy at midcourt. — dpa



# Sehwag smashes 175, India off to a flyer

## Kohli hits unbeaten century on World Cup debut, Munaf grabs four wickets

DHAKA — A flawless 175 from a ram-paging Virender Sehwag backed by some disciplined bowling from Munaf Patel carried India to a 87-run win over Bangladesh in the opening game of the Cricket World Cup here yesterday.

Replying to India's 370 for four, Bangladesh could muster only 283 for nine, much to the disappointment of a capacity crowd of around 25,000 at the Sher-e Bangla National Stadium.

The emphatic victory enabled India avenge their shock defeat against the South Asian neighbour in the previous edition and gave a rousing start to their World Cup campaign ahead of big battles against powerful sides.

Riding on Sehwag's heroics and Virat Kohli's unbeaten century on his World Cup debut, India set Bangladesh a mountain of an asking rate of 7.4. Sehwag, who pulled a hamstring and had to take a runner, and Kohli (100 not out) put on 203 runs for the third wicket.

"I've always said this is a revenge game and we really played well," a beaming man-of-the-match Sehwag said during the presentation ceremony while delirious Indian fans blew conch horns around the stands.

"I started really well and kept telling myself I have to bat at least 20, 30 overs. If I could bat (that long), I could maybe score a hundred in 30 overs."

Sehwag needed a runner after reaching three figures having hurt his left knee while trying to push Rubel Hossain for a single in the 38th over of India's innings. "It's a little sore," he said.

The Delhi dasher was also involved in 60-run stand with Sachin Tendulkar (28) for the first wicket and 83 for the second with Gautam Gambhir (39).

The home side began promisingly, with attacking openers Tamim Iqbal (70 off 86 balls, including three fours and a six) and Imrul Kayes (34 off 20 balls) trying to lead what could have been a heroic run chase, but lost their way in the middle overs, as they got weighed down by the rising asking rate, while Munaf (four for 48) took crucial wickets.

Tamim and the Kayes plundered 56 runs in just 6.5 overs with the latter hitting seven fours.

However, Munaf saw the back of Kayes (34) by inducing an inside edge on to the stumps, as a hush fell on the stadium.

Junaid Siddique and Tamim were then involved in a 73-run stand, before Harbhajan Singh dismissed Siddique.

With the asking rate mounting close to nine per over, Bangladesh's slim hopes rested on captain Shakib Al Hassan and Iqbal. The duo valiantly carried the battle into the opposition camp by scoring at over a run per ball, and was involved in

another 50-plus partnership, but the left-handed opener's wicket in the 33rd over proved the turning point of the game.

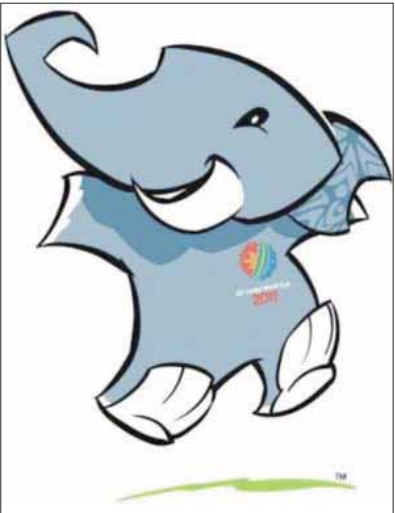
The Chittagong boy tried to hit Patel on the leg side but finished in the hands of Yuvraj Singh, who gleefully accepted the low offering at mid wicket.

Shakib (55) and Mushfiquir, who had done well with the bat in the World Cup match between the two side four years ago, came together, but by then the match had slipped out of Bangladesh's hands.

Shakib got to his half century with a single off Yuvraj, but fell in the very next over of Yusuf Pathan. His departure triggered a middle order collapse as the galleries began to empty.

Earlier, Bangaldesh captain Shakib put India in after winning the toss. Sehwag, who just before the World Cup had said that he would like to stay longer at the crease, proved true to his word.

Sehwag gave a powerful start, and then anchored the innings in the middle



overs to sustain the momentum before getting dismissed in the 47.3 overs.

He was ably assisted by young Virat Kohli, who cracked an unbeaten 100 on his Cup debut. Playing his third World Cup, Sehwag plundered runs at will during his 200-minute stay at the middle, sending the leather to all ends of the park and giving an ominous signal to India's rivals in the coming matches.

Sehwag's 140-ball stint comprised 14 boundaries and five huge sixes, as he defied an injury and batted with a runner to notch up his personal best ODI score and second hundred in 15 World Cup matches. He reached his century with a single off spinner Mohammed Mahmudullah in 94 balls, and took only 30 more to get to his maiden 150 in ODIs.

Sehwag's innings finally came to an end when he inside edged onto his stumps a delivery from Shakib.

Twenty two-year-old Virat (83 balls,

8x4, 2x6) never looked in any spot of bother, as he clobbered the venomless Bangladesh bowling to smithereens during his 83-ball innings.

### FIELDING AN AREA OF CONCERN: DHONI

Meanwhile, Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he is far from being satisfied and pointed at fielding as a 'big' area of concern.

"Fielding is a big area of concern for us. We need to save 5-10 runs and contribute some more on the field. While fielding, we have to save around 10 runs. All good sides will do that," Dhoni said.

Dhoni, however, was happy the way India batted after losing two wickets in quick succession.

"When you have lost a couple of wickets, you need to stabilise, and it was nice to see Sehwag and Kohli do that. As a team we fight injuries, so it is good to have a long break before the next game."

Bangladesh skipper Shakib said while they could take positives from the batting, it is the bowling that let them down.

"We bowled too many bad balls, too many boundary balls. I thought the bowlers were rusty and did not execute the plans. It cost us the game. Virender Sehwag played a great innings and took the game away from us. Hopefully the bowlers will comeback in the next match," Shakib said.

"There were many positives in the batting front. We batted sensibly and most of the top order batsman played cricketing shots. The crowd was superb."

### SCOREBOARD

<b>India</b>	
V Sehwag b Shakib .....	175
S Tendulkar run out .....	28
G Gambhir b Mahmudullah .....	39
V Kohli (not out) .....	100
Y Pathan c Rahim b Shafiu Islam .....	8
<b>Extras:</b> (b-1, lb-2, w-16, nb-1) .....	20
<b>Total:</b> (4 wkts, 50 overs) .....	370
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-69, 2-152, 3-355, 4-370.	
<b>Bowling:</b> S Islam 7-0-69-1 (nb-1, w-2), R Hossain 10-0-60-0 (w-5), A Razzak 9-0-74-0 (w-1), Shakib 10-0-61-1 (w-3), N Islam 7-0-54-0, Mahmudullah 7-0-49-1 (w-3).	
<b>Bangladesh</b>	
T Iqbal c Yuvraj b M Patel .....	70
I Kayes b M Patel .....	34
J Siddique st Dhoni b Harbhajan .....	37
Shakib c Harbhajan b Y Pathan .....	55
M Rahim c sub b Zaheer .....	25
R Hasan (not out) .....	28
Mahmudullah b M Patel .....	6
N Islam lbw M Patel .....	2
A Razzak lbw Zaheer .....	1
Shafiu Islam run out .....	0
R Hossain (not out) .....	1
<b>Extras:</b> (lb-10, w-13, nb-1) .....	24
<b>Total:</b> (9 wkts, 50 overs) .....	283
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-56, 2-129, 3-188, 4-234, 5-248, 6-261, 7-275, 8-279, 9-280.	
<b>Bowling:</b> Sreesanth 5-0-53-0 (nb-1, w-1), Zaheer Khan 10-0-40-2 (w-4), M Patel 10-0-48-4, Harbhajan Singh 10-0-41-1 (w-1), Y Pathan 8-0-49-1 (w-2), Yuvraj Singh 7-0-42-0 (w-1).	



INDIA'S Virender Sehwag (left) smashes the ball as Bangladesh wicketkeeper Mushfiquir Rahim looks on during the inaugural match of the 2011 Cricket World Cup at the Sher-e Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP



INDIA'S Virat Kohli (left) celebrates after completing his century. PICTURE RIGHT: Munaf Patel (centre) is congratulated by his team-mates after he dismissed Bangladesh's Imrul Kayes.



## Tendulkar equals Miandad's record

DHAKA — India's batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar yesterday equalled Pakistan's legendary batsman Javed Miandad's record of playing six consecutive World Cups.

The 37-year-old Tendulkar equalled the feat when he stepped out to take guard against Bangladesh in the tournament opener at the Shere Bangla National Stadium here.

Appearing in his 445th ODI, Tendulkar scored just 28 runs in 29 balls before being run out following a horrible mix-up with Sehwag.

Tendulkar, who made his international debut in Pakistan in 1989, played his first World Cup under Mohammed Azharuddin's captaincy in 1992 Down Under. Pakistan went on to lift the 1992 World Cup and it was Miandad's fifth World Cup appearance.

The former Pakistan captain, who played 233 ODIs and 124 Tests, made his international debut with the first World Cup in 1975, a day before his 18th birthday. He ended his career with the 1996 World Cup after Pakistan lost to India in a quarterfinal in Bangalore.

## Wankhede goes into complete lockdown

MUMBAI — Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium went into complete lockdown yesterday just 24 hours after it was criticised by the city's top fire chief for not meeting safety standards. All unauthorised personnel were being shooed away by harassed security guards, who were under orders not to allow any media to come within 75 metres of the stadium, which will host the World Cup final on April 2.

"We are under so much tension. Every day something or the other is happening. Please go away. Our jobs are on the line. If any officer sees you, we will be in trouble," a uniformed guard said as he escorted journalists out of the stadium complex.

A large digital clock in front of the Indian cricket board (BCCI) headquarters, which is housed in the same compound as the Wankhede, was counting down the minutes to India's opening World Cup match against Bangladesh in Dhaka.

There was no disguising the fact that time was fast running short too for Mumbai's cricket authorities to get their

problems sorted before the venue hosts the first of its three World Cup matches on March 13. Safety inspectors were unhappy that mandatory fire equipment, including water hydrants, no-smoking indicators, fire alarms and extinguishers were still not in place.

"They should have sorted this beforehand as you never want to leave these things so late," a Mumbai fire officer said while leaning through the window of his engine after freeing a trapped bird from a house situated just a stone's throw away from the stadium.

"It's never good to hear negative things about your city ... and we are still waiting for them to let us know when we can come back," he added referring to the clearance the fire brigade have to give Wankhede before it can host any matches.

All the negative publicity surrounding the imposing 33,000-seater concrete and steel structure, which rises out from the middle of one of Mumbai's poshest areas of Marine Lines, has not gone down well in the neighbourhood.

"After what happened here (when more than 150 people were killed in the 2008 Mumbai attacks), the authorities cannot allow any kind of safety or security lapses. It's really shameful," local resident Mita Mithani said.

Although the stadium was a no-go area, a cacophony of drilling, hammering and banging sounds could be heard drifting out from inside the arena.

Outside, dozens of workers were busy carrying out a multitude of tasks on the path leading up to the Wankhede.

Some labourers, wearing protective masks, crouched on the ground to weld together metal barriers, while others dragged metre after metre of heavy electric cables from the public roads right up to the stadium entrance.

Even a sign reading 'Mumbai Cricket Association' was in a state of disrepair and appeared to be attached precariously on top of a pair of rusted metal poles that looked like they could topple over at any time over the labourers working underneath. — Reuters

## Skippers sweat over 'dew factor' choices

MUMBAI — The 'dew factor' at the World Cup looks likely to make captains sweat over their choices at the toss, adding an extra factor to think about in the subcontinent for the day-night matches.

The evening dew, quite normal in the subcontinent during this time of the year, might also spoil the chances of more spinners making it into their teams as it gets very difficult for them to grip the ball once it gets wet.

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori, an off-spinner, is well aware of the problems. "The wicket starts getting little bit better when the dew comes on, so it's a bit better for batting but the outfield is particularly slippery and difficult to bowl," Vettori told reporters in Chennai yesterday.

"We saw that in the warm-up match against Ireland. I think it will influence (the decision of whoever wins) the toss."

The organisers have scheduled 36 of the 49 matches in the February 19-April 2 World Cup as day-night fixtures in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The knockout stages are all late finishes.



It probably impacted Bangladesh captain Sakib Al Hasan's decision to field first on a placid track against India in the opening match in Dhaka yesterday.

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni had said the 'dew factor' would impact his choice of players and it meant India included only one spinner against Bangladesh.

"We will have to see if there is dew on the outfield," Dhoni had said after their

warm-up game in Chennai on Wednesday. "The last time we toured Bangladesh, it was around January and there was a lot of dew, and now we are close to the end of February.

"Still we need to see if there is dew and pick the best 11 accordingly."

The organisers mopped up the ground to get rid of the dew during the drinks intervals in yesterday's match in Dhaka.

Pakistan's World Cup-winning captain Imran Khan also predicted that the dew factor would play a critical role in the outcome of matches at the tournament.

"Apart from the related strengths and weaknesses of the participating teams I think the 'dew factor' in day and night matches will decide results," Imran told Geo Super channel.

"I think any team batting second will have a huge advantage as the ball keeps on getting wet, the outfield is wet and bowlers find it hard to grip the ball.

"And in these months I know by experience that the 'dew factor' also becomes very important in the subcontinent."





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# Sri Lanka confident of good start against Canada



Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara (centre) and team-mates pictured during a training session at the Suriyawewa Mahinda Rajapakse Stadium in Hambantota yesterday. — AFP

HAMBANTOTA, Sri Lanka — Kumar Sangakkara believes Sri Lanka will have too much firepower for minnows Canada as the 1996 champions launch their World Cup campaign at a new stadium (0900 GMT) today.

Despite having little knowledge of Canada, and of the ground in the tourist town of Hambantota, Sangakkara is confident his team will make a bright start.

“We are confident of a good start and when we go to play sides that we haven’t played much we don’t need to worry because in those games it’s all about us, how well we do and how well we play our cricket,” said Sangakkara.

Sri Lanka will be without middle-order batsman Chamara Silva, whose elder sister died on Thursday, making way for all-rounder Thisara Perera to bolster both bowling and batting.

Sangakkara said giving a run-out to all 15 players in the squad in the warm-up matches had been crucial.

“We had given chances to all 15 players in the warm-up matches, so that when an opportunity arrives we have another player to fill the gap,” said Sangakkara, who denied he was already thinking ahead to the clash against Pakistan.

“We can’t think ahead. Once we finish Sunday’s match then only we will plan and think about the match against Pakistan,” said Sangakkara, referring to the match in Colombo on February 26.



CANADA’S Karl Whatham (right) catches a ball as team-mates watch during their training session at the Suriyawewa Mahinda Rajapakse International Cricket Stadium in Hambantota yesterday. — AFP

Sri Lanka, runners-up in the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean, go into the tournament in good shape after comfortable wins in their two warm-up matches.

All of the side’s batsmen — except for Mahela Jayawardene — had good workouts in the build-up and are likely to relish the inexperienced Canadian bowling attack.

Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekara, Angelo Mathews and Perera will lead the pace attack but Muttiah Muralitharan’s off-spin is likely to cause the most problems for the Canadian batsmen.

The leading wicket-taker in one-day internationals, Muralitharan, with 519 wickets in 341 matches, has fully recovered from knee problems.

Canadian captain Ashish Bagai admitted his team faces a big challenge.

“Obviously Muralitharan and Malinga are the big threats but if we can get through a couple of their bowlers we have a good chance,” said Bagai, who also played down the issue of the new venue.

“It is a new venue, even they won’t know what to expect, so it’s going to be tough for both teams,” said Bagai of the ground, built at a cost of nearly \$8 million.

Consistent rain has given little time for the pitch to settle down but it is likely to help slow bowlers.

Besides Bagai and Davison, Rizwan Cheema and Sri Lankan-born

Ruvindu Gunasekera lead the batting in the 15-man squad, which includes players born in India, Pakistan and Uganda among other nations.

But whether Davison, who initially walked away from the squad because two experienced players were excluded, can find his top form at the age of 40 remains to be seen.

The two countries have only met once before, with Sri Lanka mauling Canada, dismissed for 36 — still the lowest total in a World Cup match — by nine wickets at Paarl in the 2003 World Cup.

Canadian batsman Rizwan Cheema said his team would give their best shot against the strong Sri Lankans.

**Sri Lanka:** Kumar Sangakkara (captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Upul Tharanga, Thilan Samaraweera, Chamara Silva, Chamara Kapugedera, Angelo Mathews, Thisara Perera, Nuwan Kulasekara, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Muttiah Muralitharan, Ajantha Mendis, Rangana Herath. Coach: Trevor Bayliss (Australia).

**Canada:** Ashish Bagai (captain), Rizwan Cheema, Harvir Baidwan, Nitish Kumar, Hiral Patel, Tyson Gordon, Henry Osinde, John Davison, Ruvindu Gunasekera, Parth Desai, Karl Whatham, Khuram Chohan, Jimmy Hansra, Zubin Surkari, Balaji Rao. Coach: Pubudu Dassanayake (Sri Lanka).

**Umpires:** Ian Gould (England) and Shavir Tarapore (India). **Third Umpire:** Tony Hill (New Zealand). **Fourth umpire:** Daryl Harper (Australia). **Match referee:** Chris Broad (England).

## Bagai shrugs off history of humiliation

HAMBANTOTA, Sri Lanka — Canada captain Ashish Bagai insists that the record-breaking World Cup rout suffered at the hands of Sri Lanka in 2003 will have no bearing when the teams meet today.

Bagai played in the Canada side which was bowled out for a paltry 36 — still the lowest total in all World Cup tournaments — at Paarl in South Africa.

But the 29-year-old, Delhi-born wicketkeeper, is adamant that the humiliating loss is not an issue with the team now.

“There are only two guys from that World Cup here — myself and John Davison — and we don’t talk about that game too much. But the one before that is still in my mind,” said Bagai, of his team’s only World Cup win against Bangladesh at Benoni in 2003.

Bagai has instructed his team to play without fear and not freeze when they face 1996 champions Sri Lanka on Sunday in their opening Group ‘A’ clash.

“I hope the players play freely. I want to see the young guys play their natural game and the older guys show responsibility, like they did in the warm-up match against England,” said the captain.

Canada lost their first warm-up against Bangladesh by nine wickets but England handed when they fell just 16 runs short of a 244-run target, with batsman Rizwan Cheema rapid 71-1.

“I t cent per- a n c e E n g - and al- noteve- went helped spirits i n t o ment,” B a g a i , in his W o r l d “ W e play a good cricket and the world that Nobody ex- we want to use it to our advantage.”

Bagai also criticised the International Cricket Council’s decision to slash the World Cup from 14 to 10 teams for the 2015 tournament in Australia and Sri Lanka.

“Everyone from the associate world including players from Test world have said it’s a real shame for the game.

“If they want to play Tests, fine, but the World Cup should involve as much of the world as possible. It’s a shame and very disappointing for players like us who were looking for opportunities to play against the best and improve.

“It’s really going to hold back the growth of the game. If they want to keep it to 10 teams, which they want to do, that’s fine, but it’s never going to be a global sport.”

Bagai said the move to increase the Twenty20 World Cup teams to 16 may be inspired by commercial reasons.

“You can see where the ICC is headed and the direction they think cricket is going, so it might be a commercial move because T20 probably sells the best globally.” — AFP



## Tragedy-hit Hambantota set for Cup baptism

HAMBANTOTA, Sri Lanka — Hambantota, where 3,000 people died in the 2004 tsunami, welcomes the World Cup today, the latest morale-boosting step for the ambitious Sri Lankan coastal city.

The stadium where Sri Lanka will tackle Canada is named after president Mahinda Rajapakse, who hopes the facility will go a long way in changing the face of his hometown and help its dream of hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

“Hambantota was hit by the tsunami in 2004. So, with the World Cup coming, the people have a chance to celebrate and World Cup matches are a historic moment for them,” Sri Lanka Cricket Secretary Nishantha Ranatunga said.

Ranatunga, younger brother of 1996 World Cup winning team captain Arjuna, said the stadium will be crucial for the future.

“The Hambantota stadium is not

only about World Cup matches, it will be one of the top facilities for the youth of Hambantota and the adjoining towns and I am sure it will produce a number of talented players in future.”

The ground development project is part of a makeover of the province which involves a new international airport, seaport and Sri Lanka’s first expressway from Hambantota to Colombo — a distance of around 220km — by the end of 2012.

“The Sri Lankan army worked around the clock to make the stadium ready,” Shanaka Ratnayake, who has been overlooking the venue’s development ever since the land was identified in June 2008, said.

Building started in May 2009 but incessant rains slowed progress and there were fears that the venue might not be ready for the World Cup.

A Chinese construction company then got involved and, along with the army, sped up the work.

The hallmark of the new ground is a pearl-shaped grandstand roof.

Among the many admirers of the stadium is Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara.

“We whole-heartedly support the state-of-the-art stadium in Hambantota. As a nation we have done wonders. The Commonwealth Games in 2018 will be a yet another milestone and I support that bid from Sri Lanka,” said Sangakkara.

Despite today’s match tipped to be a one-sided affair, it is a complete sell-out and will be packed to its 35,000 capacity.

With huge ‘Let the celebrations begin’ and ‘Welcome to Hambantota’ banners already in place, the town is abuzz with the World Cup, with hundreds of fans filling the small number of hotels in the town.

The stadium will also host Pakistan-Kenya match on Wednesday. — AFP



A FISHEYE lens view of the Suriyawewa Mahinda Rajapakse International Cricket Stadium in the southern district of Hambantota. Hambantota, where 3,000 people died in the 2004 tsunami, welcomes the World Cup today, the latest morale-boosting step for the ambitious Sri Lankan coastal city. The stadium where Sri Lanka will tackle Canada is named after President Mahinda Rajapakse, who hopes the facility will go a long way in changing the face of his hometown and help its dream of hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Games. — AFP





# Dutchman Gesink does the double

MUSCAT — Dutchman Robert Gesink extended his lead of the Tour of Oman yesterday after claiming victory in the fifth and penultimate stage, an 18km time trial.

Giovanni Visconti finished second in the race against the clock with fellow Italian Marco Pinotti in third as Gesink claimed his second stage win in as many days.

Wearing the overall leader's Red Jersey, Robert Gesink clocked the best time on the roller-coaster type course, beating Italians Visconti and Pinotti. With one stage to go, the Dutchman takes a serious option on overall victory.

After the mountain top finish at Jabal Al Akhdhar on Friday, it was another hard day on the bike for the 124 remaining riders.

Taking off with the Red Jersey on his shoulders, it looked to be a difficult task for climber Robert Gesink (RAB) against the time-trial specialists, but the Dutchman made the best of the long climbs on the course to set a final time of 29'21", at an average speed of 37.841km/h.

Italian road champion and fifth overall this morning, Giovanni Visconti (FAR) had to settle for the second best time, 16" adrift, while another Italian, Marco Pinotti (THR) was third, at 24". Title-holder and World time-trial champion, Fabian Cancellara (LEO) was only fourth, at 27".

In the new overall standings, Robert Gesink increases his lead and now has a 1'13 advantage over Edvald Boasson Hagen (SKY).

Third overall, Visconti is 1'19 adrift. Gesink will be wearing the Red Jersey again today for the final stage of the Tour of Oman, a 157km flat stage from Qurayyat to the Muttrah Seafront. The Rabobank rider also leads the best young riders' standings, while Hagen keeps the Green Jersey and Kump remains the leader of the most aggressive riders' classification.

The Red Jersey winner, Robert Gesink said at the podium that "It's a really big surprise to have won the time-trial. When I took off on the course, my goal was to try and keep the Red Jersey."



RABOBANK team rider Robert Gesink of the Netherlands (centre) celebrates on the podium after winning the fifth stage of the Tour of Oman yesterday. — Mohammed Mahjoub

To win a time-trial is a huge surprise but the course was very difficult and suited me and the fact that we were on normal bikes helped me. It was already very special to win the stage, it was my goal on this Tour of Oman, so to win today's time-trial is fantastic. Now I have to keep control of the Red Jersey."

Sultan al Harthi, head of Muscat Municipality presented the prizes on the podium, which overlooked the stunning views of the Oman Sea. Speaking to the journalists present after the prize giving he commented : "We are extremely pleased that the Tour of Oman is already

such an integral part of the international cycling circuit and an important training ground for these elite cyclists. We are satisfied with the Tour of Oman's success so far, but we have no plans to stop here. We want to ensure that more Omanis are integrated into the organisation in the future and we will grow the Tour and change the stage locations so that it can continue to be a tool to project the warmth, colour and visual splendour of Oman worldwide."

The last stage of the Tour of Oman will take place from Qurayyat, finishing at the Muttrah Seafront. Departing at 1230pm, the cyclists will immedi-

ately hit a steep climb up the Quyrayat jebel before heading to Al Tarif for the first time trial.

They will then head past Saih al Dhahi and Al Amrat and straight down Al Nahda and Al Mina street to Muttrah.

Arriving at approximately 2.40pm, they will then do an eight lap loop of Muttrah with a second speed trial on the third lap.

The peloton is then expected to cross the finish line between 4-4.30pm.

Rashad al Zubair, Chairman of the Zubair Corporation will be handing out the prizes for the final leg today.

# Everton end Chelsea's dreams of FA Cup treble

LONDON — Phil Neville scored the decisive spotkick to give Everton a 4-3 penalty shootout win over holders Chelsea after their FA Cup fourth-round replay ended in a 1-1 draw after extra time at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

Neville sent Chelsea keeper Petr Cech the wrong way after Ashley Cole had blasted his penalty high and wide as Everton completed a remarkable fightback in the lunchtime kick-off to end Chelsea's dreams of becoming the first club for 125 years to win the FA Cup three times in succession.

In the later matches, Premier League clubs Birmingham City and Stoke City easily won their fifth-round ties 3-0 against League One (third division) opponents Sheffield Wednesday and Brighton.

Birmingham, already through to the Carling Cup final against Arsenal later this month, reached the last eight of the FA Cup with goals from Jean Beausejour, Obafemi Martins and David Murphy while Stoke beat Brighton with goals

from John Carew, Jon Walters and Ryan Shawcross.

Everton's Neville told BBC Five Live: "I knew I was going to score, I knew where the ball was going to go — and that's half the battle. We've been practising penalties all week. The manager just told us to hit them as hard as possible."

"My biggest worry was that there was a big divot in the penalty spot. Petr Cech looks really big, but luckily he dived the wrong way." After the teams fought to a goalless stalemate in 90 minutes of end-to-end soccer, Chelsea took the lead in the last minute of the first period of extra time when Frank Lampard scored with a low volley from eight metres out. With a minute of extra time remaining Leighton Baines equalised with a left-footed free kick to force the match into a shootout.

Everton trailed 2-0 on penalties after Lampard and Didier Drogba scored from their spotkicks and Baines saw Cech save his penalty.

Phil Jagielka scored to pull

Everton back to 2-1, before Chelsea's Nicolas Anelka, taking virtually no run up, had his spotkick saved by Everton keeper Tim Howard and Mikel Arteta scored to make it 2-2.

Michael Essien and Johnny Heitinga made it 3-3 before Cole missed and Neville scored to give Everton their stunning victory and end Chelsea's hopes of emulating Blackburn Rovers, the last team to win the Cup three years in a row in 1884, 1885 and 1886.

Chelsea started lethargically but created more chances and finally went ahead after 104 minutes when Lampard lashed in from close range.

Everton thought they had won the match in the last minute of normal time when Cech could only parry a long-range shot from Baines into Marouanne Fellaini's path. Although Fellaini swept the ball home, he was marginally offside in the build-up. Everton now face Championship (second division) Reading in the fifth round at Goodison Park on March 1. — Reuters

# Wozniacki to play Kuznetsova in final

DUBAI — Caroline Wozniacki reached the final of the Dubai tennis championships by beating Serbian sixth seed Jelena Jankovic 7-5, 6-3 on yesterday. The top seed from Denmark, who will return to the top of the world rankings next week, will face 16th seed Svetlana Kuznetsova in today's final after the Russian defeated 11th-seeded Italian Flavia Pennetta 6-4, 6-4.

Jankovic made the more positive start, breaking Wozniacki's serve to love as she built up a 3-0 lead and then holding off two break points when leading 4-2.

However, she failed to take advantage of four set points as she led 5-3, before Wozniacki recovered the break by rushing her opponent

into a forehand error. Wozniacki broke again to lead 6-5 and held off two break points as she served out the set.

Jankovic, who had been taken to three sets in her previous two matches, clearly began to tire in the second set, and an exchange of three consecutive breaks left Wozniacki leading 4-3.

Once again Jankovic held but failed to convert two break points as Wozniacki held for 5-3, and the Dane then broke to love in the next game to seal her victory.

"I didn't think about the score," Wozniacki told reporters. "I just felt, 'Okay, just hit the ball. Just make her win the point. Just play aggressively. You have to dictate.'" — Reuters

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## Intelligent vehicles from Ford

FORD is rapidly expanding its commitment to wirelessly connect intelligent vehicles — known as vehicle-to-vehicle communications — becoming the first automaker to build prototype vehicles for demonstrations across the US, doubling its intelligent vehicle investment in 2011. • **Page 22**



## Omantel sets up new unit

OMANTEL has announced the setting up of Omantel Business — a new enhanced brand positioning for the company's corporate business unit. The announcement of the name and identity was made by the recently appointed Vice-President of the Corporate Business Unit — Todd Dick. • **Page 23**

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## Alpha Bank rejects National Bank merger

ATHENS — An attempted merger between Greece's top two banks stalled after Alpha Bank rejected an offer from National Bank to make the country's best capitalised lender.

Hours after NBG unveiled a "friendly merger" proposal tabled on January 18, Alpha said the offer amounting to an "absorption" had been "unsolicited" and rejected it.

The offer revealed held out eight new NBG shares to Alpha shareholders for every 11 outstanding Alpha shares, while relative ownership rights in the new entity for NBG and Alpha shareholders would be 71 per cent and 29 per cent.

The offer had earlier pushed up the Athens stock exchange index. — AFP

# National Ferries plans acquisition of two new passenger ferries

By Conrad Prabhu

MUSCAT — National Ferries Company (NFC) plans to acquire two new passenger ferries for deployment off the Sultanate's eastern seaboard.

The state-of-the-art ferries will operate between Shannah on the Sultanate's east coast, and Masirah Island, a top official of the state-owned company told the *Observer*.

Ghazi al Zadjali (pictured), Adviser to the Board of Directors of National Ferries, said the new additions will bolster the company's fleet of passenger ferries to a total of 10 by 2012.

This includes two high-speed ferries currently nearing completion at an Italian shipyard and due for delivery during the course of this year. Also on the anvil is a fleet of three small water taxis to serve inaccessible coastal communi-



ties along Oman's Musandam coast.

"We hope to identify within a month a suitable shipyard where the two new ferries will be built. Assuming a construction timeframe of 12 months, we expect delivery to take place during the first half of 2012. Both ferries will operate on the Shannah-Masirah

- ❖ High-tech passenger ferries to operate on Shannah-Masirah sector
- ❖ New acquisitions to boost fleet strength to 10 ferries, water taxis by 2012

sector," Al Zadjali said.

The move underscores an aggressive effort by NFC to ramp up its ability to provide a comprehensive coastal maritime transportation service covering coastal towns, villages and communities all along the Sultanate's lengthy shoreline.

High-speed passenger services first launched by the company in August 2008 currently link the capital city Muscat with Khasab in Musandam Governorate. NFC's first two acquisitions, the superfast diesel-powered catamarans *Hormuz* and *Shinas*, are currently

deployed on this sector. A third high-speed ferry, named *Savqarah*, is currently awaiting deployment off the Sultanate's northern coast, pending the completion of roll-on/roll-off infrastructure at ports of call.

Two other sister ferries of *Savqarah*, dubbed *Hallaniyat* and *Masirah*, are nearing completion at Italy's Rodriquez Cantieri Navalli shipyard. The latter two high-speed ferries will operate between Salalah, the Hallaniyat Islands, Hasik and Shuwaymiyah in Dhofar Governorate. All five ferries make up NFC's core fleet of

high-speed catamarans capable of top speeds in excess of 50 knots.

In comparison however, ferries No 7 and 8 — earmarked for deployment on the Shannah-Masirah route — will be designed for speeds of around 15 knots, given the short distance they are intended to cover between the island and mainland, said Al Zadjali.

"We do not need high speed ferries on this route, because the distance between Shannah and Masirah is around 18 kilometres.

But in every other respect, the new ferries will be as modern and high-tech as *Hormuz* and *Shinas*. Each ferry will be designed to carry around 150 passengers and 30 cars." Importantly, the new ferries will cater not only to citizens and residents shuttling between the island and mainland, but tourists as well. ■ **To page 22**

## Banking sector leads MSM firms' earnings

By Samuel Kutty

MUSCAT — The Muscat Securities Market (MSM) managed to maintain investor confidence in consistence with the message of accelerated sectoral growth. The corporate earnings trend of MSM 30 companies for 2010 showed early signs of revival.

The total revenue of the companies, excluding investment holding firms, stood at RO 2,458 million, registered a growth of 3.0 per cent on year on year basis. While the index earnings for 2010 increased on a stronger note by 6.7 per cent to RO 442.231 million thanks to earnings revival in banking sector and selective earnings growth seen in industry and services sector companies.

Overall the net profit margin of MSM 30 companies showed an increase of about 60 basis points on a year-on-year basis to 18.0 per cent levels as in 2010 against 17.4 per cent in 2009.

"On back of stronger government spending along with the continuance of local demand remaining intact, banking sector scrips will remain as the best buys while industry and service shares will be selective picks", according to a research report of Gulf Baader Capital Securities, one of the leading brokerage firms in Oman.

Overall banking sector 2010 earnings came out on the expected line, the report says. Overall 2010 total income of banking sector grew by 6.9 per cent on year on year basis, earnings grew on a stronger note by 28.9 per cent mainly due to stabilisation of asset quality which in turn lead to lower provisioning. BankMuscat earnings improved on back of effective liability management, higher growth in non-operating income and lower provisioning. ■ **To page 23**

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## Intel to invest \$5bn in new Arizona plant

HILLSBORO, Oregon — US computer chip giant Intel announced plans to invest more than \$5 billion to build a new state-of-the-art chip manufacturing facility in Arizona.

The announcement was made by Intel president and chief executive Paul Otellini during a visit by President Barack Obama to an Intel facility in Hillsboro, Oregon.

Intel, the world's largest computer chip maker, said

construction of the new facility, Fab 42, in Chandler, Arizona, will begin in the middle of this year and it is expected to be completed in 2013.

"When completed, Fab 42 will be the most advanced high-volume semiconductor factory in the world," Otellini said, and will generate thousands of jobs. Intel said the new Arizona factory will make transistors with a minimum size of 14 nanometers.

"Building the new fab on the leading-edge 14-nanometer process enables Intel to manufacture more powerful and efficient computer chips," Intel said in a statement.

A nanometer is one-billionth of a meter or one ninety-thousandth the width of a human hair. "The investment positions our manufacturing network for future growth," said Brian Krzanich, senior vice-president. — AFP

## Spanish banks' bad debts at 15-year high

MADRID — Spanish banks' non-performing loans ratio, a key indicator of their financial health, jumped to 5.81 per cent in December, the highest level since 1995, the Bank of Spain said.

It said total bad debt held by the banks soared to 107.173 billion euros (\$145.17 billion), a ratio to total loans of 5.81 per cent, up from 5.68 in November and 5.66 per cent in October, the Bank of Spain said.

The rate, which was 4.98 per cent in October 2009, is the highest since December 1995, according to calculations by Spanish media.

Spain's lenders, especially its regional savings banks that account for about half of all lending in the country, have been heavily exposed to bad debt since the collapse of the property sector at the end of 2008.

Credit rating agency Moody's in December issued a negative outlook on Spain's banks and warned that total economic losses could reach 176 billion euros.

To allay these concerns the Spanish government is racing to strengthen the regional lenders, considered the weak link in the country's banking system.

Several mergers among the saving banks last year were considered insufficient to convince nervous markets.

The banks are at the heart of market fears that the country could need a bailout from the EU and the International Monetary Fund. — AFP



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HALCYON CAPITAL

## Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Board of Directors of Halcyon Capital Holding Co. SAOC invites all shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Sunday, 13th of March 2011 at 3.30pm at Mumtaz Mahal, Qurum.

The agenda for the meeting will be as follows:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2010.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Account) in respect of the Company for the financial year ended 31st December 2010.
- To consider and approve transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2010 (As per Annexure 1).
- To consider and approve transactions that the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending 31st December 2011 (As per Annexure 2).
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the directors for the year ended on 31st December 2010. (As per Annexure 3).
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the directors and sub-committees of the company during the next financial year ended on 31 December 2011. (As per Annexure 4).
- To consider and approve the director's remuneration for the year ended on 31st December 2010. (As per the Annexure 5).
- To appoint auditors for the Company for the year ending 31st December 2011 and to fix their remuneration.

Each shareholder is entitled to give a written proxy to another person, who need not be a shareholder, to attend the meeting and vote on his/her behalf at the AGM.

If you wish to appoint a proxy, please complete and submit the attached Proxy Form to the Company office.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, shareholders are requested to arrive about half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For further information, please contact Ms. Suchita on telephone 24771453.

Chairman

Halcyon Capital Holding Co. SAOC

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## Muriya appoints Omani as CEO    National Ferries plans acquisition

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Muriya Tourism Development company has announced the appointment of its first Omani CEO, Adil Taqi. Formerly with Gulf Developer Dama, Taqi brings with him years of prime Real Estate experience and has also held senior positions at large corporations locally, including Alliance Housing Bank (now known as Ahlibank) and PDO.

He aims to bring his distinct Omani experience, insight and attitude to ensure that Muriya's projects meet the needs of locals, and expatriates and continue to deliver on time as promised.

Adil Taqi commented on the occasion: "I am delighted to be joining Muriya team, especially at this exciting time when the company is about to begin commencing hand-over on the Jebel Sifah and Salalah Beach projects. And about the two upcoming projects, Taqi said: "We will work on introducing the features of the new projects that I believe they will



change the face of international and domestic tourism in Oman".

Established in Oman in 2006 as a joint venture between Egypt's Orascom Hotels and Development and Omran, the company is responsible for pioneering new developments in the Sultanate including the highly anticipated and ambitious; Jebel Sifah' and 'Salalah Beach' projects.

Located 45 km from Muscat, Jebel Sifah is set on a land of 6.2 million square metres not far from the tranquil fishing village of the same name Sifah. Less than

an hour's drive from the capital Jebel Sifah is a scenic resort with white sandy beaches overlooked by Oman's mountains. In addition to four five-star internationally acclaimed hotels to include a Four Seasons, Missoni Hotel and Banyan Tree resort, the development features Sifah boutique marina hotel scheduled to open Q2 2011, a world-class 18-hole PGA Golf Course, a 150-berth marina, restaurants, cafes, retail outlets and freehold luxury properties.

Situated in the traditional Dhofar region, which is renowned for its picturesque annual monsoon season, Salalah Beach is set in an area of 15.6 million square metres. Luxury villas and apartments and two world-class 18-hole PGA Golf courses are planned for the development, in addition to an estimated 200-berth Inland-Marina with a Marina Town and international 5-star hotels to include Club Med, Rotana and Movenpick Hotels and Resorts in addition to two Marina Boutique Hotels.

■ From Page 21

We want the sailing to be a memorable experience for passengers. Accordingly, the ferries will be designed and fitted out to deliver on this goal," the Adviser said. Masirah Island has, of late, been developing into a popular hotspot for adventure sports lovers and nature tourists.

"NFC's vision is to support economic, tourism and social development all along the Sultanate's coast through the establishment of an efficient, affordable and comfortable ferry-based passenger service. Our service will continue to expand and diversify in the coming years," Al Zadjali noted.

As part of its mandate to provide coastal transporta-



tion services, NFC has also unveiled plans to introduce a water taxi service to cater to secluded communities along the Sultanate's coast. Initially,

three small-sized water taxis are envisaged for deployment between Dibba, Lima and Kumzar on the Musandam coast. The water taxi service

is due to be operational by early next year.

Three-year-old NFC has already earned international accolades for the high standards of its passenger ferry service. At their annual summit held in New York last November, Interferry, the global grouping of international ferry operators and service providers, applauded NFC on its success in running the "world's fastest and safest ferry operation".

At the Muscat Asian Beach Games in December, *Shinas* clocked a world-beating speed of 56.6 knots for diesel-powered ferries, while sister-ferry *Hormuz* logged a top speed of 56.3 knots, said Al Zadjali, adding the achievements are a reflection of NFC's aspirations to be a world-class operator.

## BUSINESS ALERT

## Ford at work on intelligent vehicles to make roads safer

MUSCAT — Ford is rapidly expanding its commitment to wirelessly connect intelligent vehicles — known as vehicle-to-vehicle communications — becoming the first automaker to build prototype vehicles for demonstrations across the US, doubling its intelligent vehicle investment in 2011 and dedicating even more scientists to developing this technology.

"Ford believes intelligent vehicles that talk to each other through advanced Wi-Fi are the next frontier of collision avoidance innovations that could revolutionise the driving experience and hold the potential of helping reduce many crashes," said a spokesperson for Ford.

"Intelligent vehicles could help warn drivers of numerous potential dangers such as a car running a red light but blocked from the view of a driver properly entering the intersection."

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report on the potential safety benefits of vehicle-to-vehicle communications estimates that intelligent vehicles could help in as many as 4,336,000 police-reported, light-vehicle crashes annually, or approximately 81 per cent of all light-vehicle crashes involving unimpaired drivers. Experts say intelligent vehicles could be on the road in five to ten years.

Ford's vehicle communications research technology allows vehicles to talk wirelessly with one another using advanced Wi-Fi signals, or dedicated short-range communications, on a secured channel allocated by the Federal Communications Commission. Unlike radar-based safety features, which identify hazards within a direct line of sight, the Wi-Fi-based radio system allows full-range, 360-degree detection of potentially dangerous situations, such as when a driver's vision is obstructed.

For example, drivers could be alerted if their vehicle is on path to collide with another vehicle at an intersection, when a vehicle ahead stops or slows suddenly or when a traffic pattern changes on a busy highway. The systems also could warn drivers if there is a risk of collision when changing With this "intelligent vehicle" technology, drivers could be alerted at unsafe intersections where their view is compromised or where another vehicle is not stopping for a red light.

After a decade of research, Ford plans a new 20-member task force — consisting of company planners, engineers and scientists from around the world with expertise in safety, eco-mobility, infotainment and driver convenience — to accelerate development of intelligent vehicles with features that provide a range of benefits to consumers.

Ford Motor Company, a global automotive industry leader based in Dearborn, Mich., manufactures or distributes automobiles across six continents. With about 163,000 employees and about 70 plants worldwide, the company's automotive brands include Ford and Lincoln. In Oman, the Ford vehicles are marketed by Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC, a part of the renowned Saud Bahwan Group. They come with 6 years unlimited mileage protection, service and parts network that stretches across the Sultanate, over 98 per cent parts availability and Ford Privilege Card which provides 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA.

## EMC attends Springboard Programme



CEO of Emirates Medical Center, was the speakers for the second time at the springboard programme. She highlighted how she has faced and overcome all the challenges

EMIRATES Medical Center (EMC) participated in the Springboard Programme in association with the British Council Oman, held at the Safer International Hotel recently. Springboard is a women's development programme, which enables women to achieve greater recognition and influence and to fulfil their potentials in both their work and personal lives.

Dr Fatma O Ali, owner and

## Innova — now with 'family package'

CRAVE even more fun along with the entire family? Check out Innova's new family package that pampers 8-members in luxurious comfort. Discover performance so thrilling that dull weekends turn into exciting adventures. Looks so stylish that everyone turns to stare. And features so classy that life begins to sparkle...wood gear knob, sporty rear spoiler, turn signal on outer mirrors, attractive body stripe and Innova family chrome badge knob, to name a few. Optionally, the DVD combo, rear parking sensors and rear camera with view on LCD panel on inner mirror all help to give you a better control of the car. Yes, the Innova family package will let nothing come in your way from having a great time with your entire family.

The Toyota Innova has taken Oman by storm, "Modern-day qualities and integrated technologies enable the Innova to define global standards for minivans," remarks an SBG spokesperson, "The Innova not only makes a sophisticated statement, but it also exudes quality and status. Its exciting performance sets the pace, owing to a stellar 2.7-litre VVI-i engine." The Innova offers generous room for the whole family to relax and enjoy the high-quality features. The 3-row seating helps comfortably seat eight persons. What's more, these seats can slide or space up so as to suit different space requirements — for fitting in luggage and camping gear.

The new Innova is studded with style and luxury features that include a multi-information display, fog lamps, strong dual air-conditioning system, advanced audio system with cassette/cd/mp3 player and six-speaker array, Optitron combination metres, to name a few.

This outstanding performer comes from Toyota, Oman's most coveted brand. Toyota offers enduring quality and nothing comes close to it in terms of value-retention. It is no surprise; therefore, that Toyota soars far above the rest, with a dominant market share and ever-expanding customer base.

The unmatched, nationwide parts and service support of Saud Bahwan Group make Toyota's pride of place a reality. Toyota customers in Oman enjoy 6-year unlimited mileage protection, over 98 per cent parts availability and round-the-clock care, amongst many other exclusive privileges from the Group.



## NBO sponsors 'Sailing Arabia — The Tour'



NATIONAL Bank of Oman (NBO) in partnership with strategic partners Commercial Bank of Qatar and United Arab Bank, sponsored the 'Oman Sail — Sailing Arabia — The Tour'. Organised by 'Oman Sail', the event was held under the auspices of Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Minister of Sports Affairs.

The sailing Tour brought Gulf states together in a race around the Arabian Peninsula, started on January 30 in Manama, Bahrain covered 1,408 kms over two weeks and included offshore and in-Port Races.

The winning teams of the inaugural 'Sailing Arabia', at the end of the two weeks, include: Team 'New Caledonia' who came first, followed by Team Renaissance' in second place and in third place was the NBO Partners Team.

Speaking at the prize giving ceremony, Hassan Shaban, NBO's Chief Marketing Officer said: "NBO is delighted to have sponsored the first 'Sailing Arabia — The Tour'. I take this opportunity to congratulate all the participating gulf states, particularly the winning teams. NBO believes in sponsoring and encouraging different sporting events, all over the Sultanate and the region".

## Dumond's Spring Summer 2011 collection

DUMOND'S collection for Spring Summer 2011, brand for women's shoes and accessories, went deep into tropical waters and brought several different colors and shapes from the bottom of the sea into the new season's pieces. The bets are the summer boots — models that transit from winter to summer in a new concept — and the small sac bags.

The season presents a colour chart with strong and tropical colours like the yellow, red, coral and several shades of blue, green and also the classic shades of gray, beige, brown and black. Among the new materials there are the otter printing — bovine hair on leather — and oyster — bovine leather with serigraphy.

One of the lines of the collection is the reefs, which blends organic shapes to the colour composition to build truly underwater gardens on the bags and shoes. With strong shades like yellow, coral and green in its colour chart, the pieces present sophisticated options in flat sandals, ballerinas and sandals with the new block heel.



## Shoe Mart launches 2011 collection

EMBARKING on a new journey — Shoe Mart has voyaged across the world to launch an exquisite Spring Summer 2011 collection. This season is inspired by — the past, present and future that rings in a world of fascinating looks and wondrous styles that will get feet tapping.

Bling is back on footwear and the trend is about sparkle and statement shoes. The nude palette is key here in soft satins and leathers. This collection ranges from gorgeous flat toe posts and gladiators to platform and heeled sandals that will make you stand out in a crowd. A transitional look for brands Peppermint and Paprika in ladies footwear include rivets, press studs and eyelets that replace heavy studding. Key details of the range include metal chains, mesh and heavy chunky buckles that come in a dark palette of black, cognac, grey and tan.

This range comprises of flats shoes, peep toes, heel sandals, wedges and ballerinas. Tribal influences are still around this season and animal prints continue to be best-sellers. Primal desires are seen in the snake, leopard and croc materials that are incorporated with metallic and multi neons. From flat sandals to high heels this look is inspired by nature and mixes glamour with sophistication.

The 4 main styles of Men's footwear this season are namely: Casual and Comfort, Driving shoes, Formals and Canvas the shoes in stores come in a burst of different colours and tones. This season casual and comfort is portrayed in style with slip-on's and bright coloured shoes in Grey and Yellows as well as loafers. A shoe for every long drive to match the car paint or match your wardrobe, driving shoes which are exceedingly comfortable on the feet come with in-sole cushions and moccasins in an array of colours such as red, navy and green.

For ever business meeting or formal outing the Formals range comes in a special selection of black pointed shoes to brown lace ups. Canvas shoes stand out in this collection with innovative graphics and exciting print on ankle high canvas shoes in military print and wide palette of colours along with canvas in new innovations which come in blues and reds.



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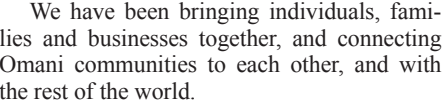
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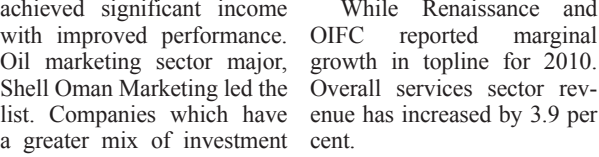
Index	Highest	Lowest	Index Value	Prev Val	Diff	Diff %
MSM30 Index	7,012.75	8,915.85	8,971.58	8,914.97	56.61	0.63
Banks and Investment Index	8,408.03	8,234.97	8,296.53	8,225.06	71.47	0.87
Services and Insurance Index	2,986.45	2,940.46	2,959.89	2,940.64	19.25	0.65
Industry Index	7,492.71	7,403.27	7,431.62	7,403.33	28.29	0.38

Group	Buy Vol %	Buy Val %	Sell Vol %	Sell Val%
OMANIS	86.65 %	84.37 %	82.23 %	75.10 %
GCC	5.83 %	7.73 %	8.89 %	11.47 %
ARABS	2.31 %	1.93 %	1.81 %	1.08 %
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# Bulls push past ME, inflation worries

NEW YORK — Wall Street bulls drove stocks to a third straight week of gains, blowing past worries about growing unrest in the Middle East and emerging inflation in the United States.

Their enthusiasm faces a holiday-shortened week packed with economic data on the depressed US housing market, as well as earnings reports from heavyweight companies. US equity and bond markets will be closed tomorrow in observance of the Presidents Day holiday.

“People have been calling for a pause for several weeks now and as it has not materialised the complacency on the bullish side continues to grow,” said Michael James of Wedbush Morgan Securities.

“We are certainly at risk for a meaningful pullback if something meaningful happens, but it is hard to predict.”

The Dow Jones Industrial Average of 30 blue-chip stocks climbed 0.96 per cent over the week to finish on Friday at 12,391.25 points, its highest level since June 2008.

It was the 11th positive week for the bellwether Dow



## WALL STREET WEEKLY REVIEW

in the past 12 weeks, bringing gains for the period to 12 per cent.

The tech-rich Nasdaq Composite added 0.87 per cent at 2,833.95, also the highest peak since June 2008.

The S&P 500 index, a broad measure of the markets, advanced 1.04 per cent to 1,343.01, a level last seen in October 2007.

“The theme remains the same as it has been for several

months,” James said. “People are bullish — there are expectations that the US economy will continue to improve.”

James noted the market had developed “a self-fulfilling prophecy” because people have become conditioned not to sell as the market continues to go up.

On Wednesday, the US central bank threw red meat to the bulls in the form of improved economic forecasts.

The Federal Reserve raised its growth projections for the US economy this year, but said the recovery was still too fragile and unemployment too high to lift its foot off the stimulus accelerator just yet.

Investors also were heartened by a robust manufacturing report from the Philadelphia Fed that took the sting off several disappointing indicators, notably January retail sales.

By contrast, the Labour Department’s January inflation reports, showing annual inflation up 1.6 per cent at the consumer level and 3.6 per cent in the wholesale pipeline, set investors’ teeth on edge.

As the economy grapples with recovery from severe recession, investors worry that rising prices could curb crucial consumer spending and pinch businesses’ profit margins.

“The concern is real... Whether the threat is real is a different story,” as inflation remains within the Fed’s comfort zone, said Dan Greenhaus of Miller Tabak.

And overall, “earnings have continued to be good, economic data has continued

to be good,” he added.

Investors will get a wave of data next week on the housing sector, still struggling to climb out of a collapse more than three years ago.

The Case-Shiller home price index for December is due on Tuesday, followed by reports on January existing-home sales on Wednesday and new-home sales on Thursday.

Other key indicators include the Conference Board’s reading on Tuesday on consumer confidence in February and a second estimate on 2010 fourth-quarter economic growth on Friday.

Although the company earnings season is winding down, next week features a raft of important results, including from two world-leading Dow components: Wal-Mart, the biggest retailer, and Hewlett-Packard, the largest computer maker, both on Tuesday.

On Thursday will come results from two companies rescued from collapse by the government during the financial crisis: insurer American International Group and automaker General Motors. — AFP

# Citigroup sets executive bonuses, tied to profits

NEW YORK — Citigroup Inc, recovering after a series of government bail-outs, will pay some top executives millions of dollars of cash bonuses if its core operations earn at least \$12 billion before taxes over the next two years.

The awards “are intended to sharpen the executives’ focus” on long-term performance without excess risk, and align their interests with those of stockholders, the third-largest US bank by assets said in a regulatory filing on Friday.

John Havens, the bank’s chief operating officer and a longtime confidant of Chief Executive Vikram Pandit, could get a \$5.2 million bonus under the plan, and the sum could grow significantly higher if the bank performs well.

Friday’s filing is the second time this week that Citigroup has discussed long-term compensation for top executives.

The New York-based bank is trying to reward those who helped it recover from the crisis and ensure they do not take risks that might endanger it again.

Citigroup took \$45 billion in bail-out money during the financial crisis. The US Treasury finished selling its common stock stake in the bank in December.

Last month, Citigroup reported a



profit for 2010, its first full year in the black since 2007.

Its main Citicorp unit earned \$20 billion from continuing operations before taxes in 2010, just above the \$19.9 billion a year earlier.

In contrast, its Citi Holdings unit, comprising businesses that the bank wants to sell or wind down, lost \$6.6 billion before taxes in 2010.

If Citicorp earns \$12 billion pre-tax from continuing operations over the next two years, just 30 per cent of what it earned in the previous two, then Ha-

vens would earn his \$5.2 million bonus under a predetermined ratio.

But if Citicorp were again to generate a \$39.9 billion pre-tax profit, then Havens’ bonus could reach at least \$17.2 million, according to that ratio.

Other executives’ bonuses if Citicorp’s two-year pre-tax profit reaches \$12 billion include: Chief Financial Officer John Gerspach, \$1.7 million; Manuel Medina-Mora, head of consumer banking in the Americas, \$2.7 million; and Alberto Verme, head of Europe, Middle East and Africa, \$2.3 million.

Their payouts would also be higher if Citicorp were to earn more. Citigroup said other executives it did not name would also qualify for cash awards. Risk management executives are not eligible for these awards, according to an e-mailed statement from Citigroup spokeswoman Shannon Bell.

The filings do not address compensation for Pandit, whose base salary has already been raised to \$1.75 million from \$1.

But Citigroup’s board plans to “develop a comprehensive compensation package” for Pandit, to be disclosed at a later date, according to a statement by Chairman Richard Parsons.

Even if Citicorp meets or exceeds the \$12 billion target, the payouts are not a given.

While two-thirds of the payout would be made on 20 January, 2013, the remaining payout due a year later would be reduced if there were losses in 2013.

Executives would also need to remain employed at Citigroup to get the full bonuses, unless certain conditions are met, according to the filing.

On Wednesday, in separate filings, Citigroup disclosed awards of millions of stock options to top executives over the next three years. — Reuters

## BIZ BRIEFS

### BM&FBovespa, Shanghai set for talks

SAO PAULO — Brazil’s BM&FBovespa and China’s Shanghai Stock Exchange would sign an agreement that could lead to joint ventures between two of the world’s largest exchange operators.

The announcement by BM&FBovespa, the world’s fourth-largest operator, comes after a frenzied week of announced mergers that show bourses are aggressively strengthening global ties in the face of competition at home.

The Brazil- and China-based companies would sign a memorandum of understanding (MOM) on Monday, BM&FBovespa said in a securities filing. “The objective (is) to initiate a common discussion about business opportunities and exchange information,” it said. It wasn’t immediately clear whether the discussions could lead to a deep partnership.

Chief Executive Edemir Pinto said last Monday that BM&FBovespa was on the lookout for opportunities to expand in China and India amid the coming wave of consolidation, noting similarities between the South American and Asian markets. Pinto declined to say whether BM&FBovespa was in merger talks.

The interest in Asia is the latest sign of the growing financial might of emerging markets such as the BRIC group, which includes Brazil, Russia, China and India — and it could rattle previous MOMs struck with exchanges in North America and Europe.

On Tuesday, Germany’s Deutsche Boerse sealed a deal to acquire Big Board parent NYSE Euronext. Last week, London Stock Exchange agreed to buy Canada’s TMX Group, reviving a wave of exchange mergers that was on hold the last few years.

Exchanges from Hong Kong to Sao Paulo are looking to capitalise as more money and investment shift away from traditional financial hubs.

BM&FBovespa and Nasdaq OMX Group signed an MOM in 2009 on stock-order routing between exchanges, market data, and services. That same year, NYSE Euronext signed an MOM with the Shanghai exchange to cooperate on listings and exchange-traded funds. (Reporting by Cesar Bianconi, additional reporting by Jonathan Spicer in New York; Additional writing by Ana Nicolaci da Costa; Editing by Richard Chang)



### OCBC bank’s profit hit by higher costs



SINGAPORE — Singapore’s Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp Ltd (OCBC) posted a one per cent rise in quarterly net profit as higher costs for mergers and staff offset higher income.

Net profit for the three months through December reached S\$505 million (\$396 million), compared to S\$502 million a year ago, said OCBC.

Operating expenses for the fourth quarter jumped one third year-on-year to S\$620 million, including one-time charges for mergers of OCBC’s subsidiaries in Indonesia, it said.

For the full year 2010, Singapore’s second biggest lender reported a net profit of S\$2.25 billion, up 15 per cent from a year earlier, spurred by higher income and reduced credit losses. OCBC gave a positive outlook for 2011 despite inflationary risks.

“While mindful of commodity price increases and other factors causing inflationary pressures, on balance, we are optimistic for the outlook for 2011 given the healthy growth prospects in Asia,” said chief executive David Conner.

OCBC was Singapore’s second bank to report results after rival DBS Group Holdings earlier posted a 38 per cent jump in quarterly net profit to S\$678 million.

### Voestalpine posts 7-fold increase in net profit

VIENNA — Austrian steelmaker Voestalpine AG saw its net profit increase more than seven-fold to 400.3 million euros (\$544.4 million) in the first three quarters of its business year, the company said. The country’s biggest steel producer cited the economic recovery as one of the reasons for its success in the 2010’11 fiscal year so far.

Voestalpine also said it profited from strong business in advanced products it sold to Europe’s export industries such as the German car makers, as well as to emerging markets in Asia and South America.

Sales rose 26 per cent to 7.94 billion euros between April and December, compared to the same period in the previous business year.

Operating profit nearly quadrupled to 658.2 million euros, on the back of an austerity programme and nearly full utilisation of the company’s main plants.

“In contrast to a number of its competitors in Europe, the Voestalpine Group has achieved a very stable performance in the past months, and the trend in revenue and earnings continues to move upward,” the management board said.

The company raised its projected operating profit for 2010’11 by 50 million euros to 850 million euros. In 2009’10, this figure was only 352 million euros.



### Nokia chief executive sells Microsoft shares



HELSINKI — Nokia chief executive Stephen Elop (pictured) told reporters he has bought shares worth 1 million euros (\$1.3 million) in the Finnish mobile phone maker and sold his Microsoft shares.

Eyebrows were raised recently when it became known that the Canadian national who took over at Nokia in September — leaving an executive position at Microsoft — still owned shares in Microsoft but had not bought shares in Nokia.

Nokia has said this was due to insider-trading rules, since Elop had been in talks

with Nokia about a new job, and then in talks on Nokia’s behalf adopting Microsoft software for Nokia’s high-end mobile telephones.

A week ago, Nokia announced it would cease development of its own Symbian operating system and begin installing Windows Phone 7 on its high-end mobile phones.

Elop said a final deal with Microsoft was expected to be signed in a few months.

The partnership aimed at creating a major new player to counter Apple and Google, but in Finland there are fears of job cuts as a result of the move. Nokia said it has been in talks with other partners before opting for Microsoft.

### Swiss Re posts 74pc full-year earnings jump

ZURICH — Swiss Re, one of the world’s biggest reinsurers, posted a 74 per cent jump in annual net income at \$863 million (635 million euros), although it fell short of analysts’ expectations. Analysts polled by Swiss economic news agency had expected \$1.2 billion in profits for 2010. The group’s property and casualty underwriting services was hurt by high natural disaster claims.

Flooding in Queensland, Australia, was expected to have an impact of \$100 million in the fourth quarter of 2010, while preliminary estimate of claims from the floods in 2011 was forecast to reach \$225 million.

In addition, claims from the Australian cyclone Yasi was seen reaching \$100 million.

Nevertheless, the company, a pillar of the global reinsurance industry, has gradually been rebuilding its capital base in a business turnaround since it shed the risky investment policy that left it trembling about two years ago.

In 2008 Swiss Re posted its biggest-ever loss of 864 million Swiss francs, forcing the group to turn to Wall Street sage Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway for fresh funds in the form of a 20 per cent stake in the company.

In November 2010 it announced that it had repaid Berkshire Hathaway. The group also reassured investors, saying that its capital stood at over \$10 billion in excess of ratings agency Standard & Poor’s AA requirements at the end of 2010. — Agencies



Port of Salalah

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BERTH	CODE	VESSEL NAME	CARGO	LASTPORT	NEXTPORT	BERTH/ANCHOR	TIME	ETD/SAILED	AGENT	STATUS
03	M64A	Maersk Wolgast (M64A)	Containers	TBA	TBA	18-Feb-11	07:18	18-Feb-11 22:00	Maersk	Alongside
04	M3JL	E R Elsfleth (M3JL)	Containers	Mombasa	Sharjah	19-Feb-11	01:10	20-Feb-11 16:00	Maersk	Alongside
05	M10I	Maersk Drummond (M10I)	Containers	Colombo (Sri Lanka)	Jeddah (KSA)	18-Feb-11	23:14		Maersk	Alongside
06	MNBA	MSC Namibia (MNBA)	Containers	Hodeidah (Yemen)	Aden	18-Feb-11	20:16	19-Feb-11 23:00	Sharaf	Alongside
06	MPAM	MSC Pamela (MPAM)	Containers	Jeddah (KSA)	Jebel Ali (UAE)	19-Feb-11	07:15	20-Feb-11 04:00	Sharaf	Alongside
22	RYST	Raysut II (RYST)	NIL	Sohar	TBA	19-Feb-11	01:15		SSMS	Alongside
30	BRPA	Bruce Park (BRPA)	NIL	Singapore	Suez	19-Feb-11	02:25		Towell Banwil Co LLC	Alongside
D	ARBY	APL Ruby (ARBY)	Containers	Aden	Fujairah (UAE)	16-Feb-11	23:12		GAC	Anchorage
SHA	GRAN	Grouper Ann (GRAN)	NIL	Sharjah	Muscat	15-Feb-11	23:55		Inchcape	Anchorage
	AALM	APL Almandine (AALM)	Containers	Aqaba (Jordan)	Singapore	21-Feb-11	08:00		GAC	Expected
	ACSR	APL Costa Rica (ACSR)	Containers	Port Kelang	Djibouti	20-Feb-11	18:00		GAC	Expected
	ALATH	Alpine Athelia (ALATH)	Bulk Fuel	TBA	TBA	19-Feb-11	17:00	19-Feb-11 20:00	Inchcape	Expected
	ANOV	APL Norway (ANOV)	Containers	Singapore	Port Said	20-Feb-11	19:00		GAC	Expected
	ARN	Abdulrahman (ARN)	NIL	Mogadishu	Berbera (Somalia)	22-Feb-11	00:00		Dhofar	Expected
	ATRM	President Truman (ATRM)	Containers	Port Said	Karachi (Pakistan)	19-Feb-11	22:00		GAC	Expected
	BARW	Banwaago (BARW)	NIL	Berbera (Somalia)	Berbera (Somalia)	22-Feb-11	00:00		Dhofar	Expected
	BENT	Bentonville (BENT)	Containers	Port Said	Colombo (Sri Lanka)	23-Feb-11	08:00		Sharaf	Expected
	BSE	APL Brisbane (ABSE) (BSE)	Containers	Nhava Shiva	Djibouti	20-Feb-11	08:00		GAC	Expected
	CCMS	CMA CGM Maasai (CCMS)	Containers	Port Qasim	TBA	20-Feb-11	13:00		Al Fayha	Expected
	CHAM	Champion (M2AR) (CHAM)	Containers	TBA	TBA	19-Feb-11	21:00		Maersk	Expected
	INTG	Integrity (INTG)	General Cargo	Jeddah (KSA)	TBA	23-Feb-11	04:00		Towell Banwil Co LLC	Expected
	M014	Maersk Alabama (M014)	Containers	TBA	TBA	20-Feb-11	14:00		Maersk	Expected
	M2KR	E R Luebeck (M2KR)	Containers	TBA	TBA	21-Feb-11	18:00		Maersk	Expected
	M60F	Nedlloyd America (M60F) (M60F)	Containers	TBA	TBA	23-Feb-11	19:00		Maersk	Expected
	M7TG	Safmarine Cunene (M7TG)	Containers	TBA	TBA	21-Feb-11	21:00		Maersk	Expected
	M8PF	Maersk Santana (M8PF)	Containers	TBA	TBA	23-Feb-11	20:00		Maersk	Expected
	M90W	Maersk Georgia (M90W)	Containers	TBA	TBA	20-Feb-11	18:00		Maersk	Expected
	MHHA	Hansa Atlantic (MHHA)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Gioia Tauro (Italy)	23-Feb-11	05:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MLOT	Lotus (MLOT)	Containers	Mundra	Port Said	20-Feb-11	08:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MMUR	MSC Maureen (MMUR)	Containers	Mundra	Jeddah (KSA)	20-Feb-11	08:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MINAT	Msc Natalia (MINAT)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Gioia Tauro (Italy)	22-Feb-11	11:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MNUP	Northern Jupiter (MNUP)	Containers	Singapore	New York	20-Feb-11	10:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MSDN	MSC Sudan (MSDN)	Containers	Sukhna	Djibouti	21-Feb-11	11:30		Sharaf	Expected
	OLCA	Olympic Carrier (OLCA)	NIL	Sohar	TBA	20-Feb-11	00:00		SSMS	Expected
	UNCO	Unicorn (UNCO)	NIL	Dubai	Dubai	21-Feb-11	00:00		GAC	Expected



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Extreme Sailing Series starts today  
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SQU to develop low fat, low sugar Omani halwa  
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Adham's paintings project  
Oman's landscape beauty  
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At the Berlin Film Festival  
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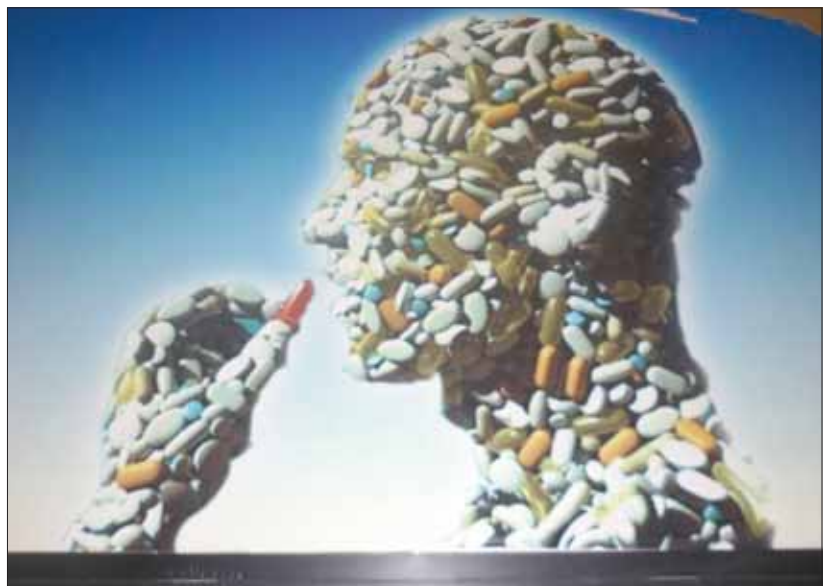


# Observer Features

Sunday, February 20, 2011



With very clear slogans and images against drugs, the mobile anti-drug campaign unit is regularly stationed at the Qurum Natural Park from 5 pm to reach as many people as possible



## Anti-drug awareness at Qurum Park

By Maryam Khalfan

THE Mobile Anti-Drug Awareness Exhibition (MADAE), organised by the Royal Oman Police (ROP), is attracting record number of Muscat Festival visitors at the Qurum Natural Park from the very first day of the festival. True to their core values and testimony to the constant effort to enhance awareness about the impacts and dangers of addiction to narcotics and psychotropic substances, the ROP is doing its best to make the people, especially the youth, to shun the habit of using drugs in any form.

With very clear slogans and images against drugs, the mobile anti-drug campaign unit is regularly stationed at the Qurum Natural Park from 5.00 pm through the opening hours of the festival to reach



According to Suleiman bin Saif al Tamtami, an ROP officer from the department of anti-narcotics and substance abuse, from first day of the festival, a lot of people have visited the unit to glance through the exhibition showcasing samples of real narcotics and psychotropic substances such as the opioids — the narcotic and painkiller drugs that are naturally produced from opium or are synthetically manufactured to relieve pain.

The exhibition is indeed an eye opener for a big segment of the youth and adults alike who are not familiar with a wide-range of narcotic and psychotropic substances to get

an opportunity to glimpse and acquire knowledge about an



association of such substances associated with drugs as well as to avoid getting duped into such acts, he said.

According to experts in psychotherapy, in most cases, the youth get duped in to drug use merely because of peer pressure, depression, lack of self-confidence, loneliness, genetic make-up, anxiety and lack of parental care as a means of coping with painful psychological feelings. However, others get tricked easily because of accessibility to drugs. Some of them choose to use it either to experiment and many others are chronic drug abusers.

The exhibition is also an

eye-opener and a mine of information on drugs for the

Drug addiction is a complex condition of the brain, which is exemplified by obsession to use in spite of the adverse health, physical and social consequences



community, particularly the parents, to be cautious of the jeopardy and side effects involved in drug addiction, the ways of identifying an addict and the actions involved in helping an addict to overcome the habit with the assistance of

the authorities concerned.

On display at the unit includes an assortment of over-the-counter medications that provide a relieving and relaxing effect to an ailment but can also lead to drug addiction if abused. "Also portrayed im-

ages of the means of trafficking and smuggling drugs into the Sultanate using different ways of transportation such as the sea, land and other tactics of smuggling such substances, said Al Tamtami.

Also on display are emotional and distinctive poignant images of victims who succumbed to death due to overdose and the impacts of narcotic and substance abuse and an exhibit of seized materials from drug dealers. Among such materials include domestically used objects such as packaging containers, cigarette packets, soaps, shoes, injections and fruits like orange to name a few. Also showcased includes a video presentation portraying the diverse tasks and awareness programmes of the campaign.

— Pictures by Ameena bint Marhoon al Hafriya



as many people as possible in the public through such an event.

The campaign is also designed to draw the attention of the public, particularly the youth who are more at risk of getting duped to such menace to be aware of the types and impacts of drug addiction and psychotropic substance abuse.

## An insight into drug addiction

IN general, the problem of drug abuse and addiction to narcotics and psychotropic substances is a growing major problem observed in societies particularly among the youth who are more susceptible to get duped to substance abuse. It is found in almost all communities around the world, there is no country that is immune to this global problem.

According to experts in psychiatry care, drug addiction is a complex condition of the brain, which is exemplified by obsession to use and reliance on drugs in spite of the adverse health, physical and social consequences it may result in.

Drug addiction is, at times distinguished by an uncontrollable tendency to crave and seek for mood relaxing sensation even in the countenance of extremely

negative consequences.

Drug addiction is a progressive condition in which the tolerance level of drug abuse increases with dependence from lighter types to stronger ones. The means of addiction also varies with the custom of usage, which also advances with the habit ranging from smoking to inhalation and finally to injection of narcotics and psychotropic substances. Likewise, the quantity of a respective drug also increases with the duration of abuse. In the initial stages, addicts use small quantity of drug substances with less frequency and in the middle stage the amount and frequency progressively increases accompanied by many social and financial problems.

However, in the advanced stage, an addict to such substances feels the quantity of usage is insufficient

in spite of feeling desperate and anxious and cannot sustain without drugs. At this period, the abuser reaches a rock bottom phase with a complete loss of all aspects of life due to chronic use of drugs. According to experts in narcotic and psychotropic substance abuse, the majority of victims addicted to such stuff by and large blame family, society, legal systems, unemployment and other external factors as a means of defence against addiction, which is normally not the case. But, because of the character's behaviour of obsession, the family relationships disintegrate and the general public and legal system distrust such a person, which also result to loss of employment.

Drug addiction is a chronic problem, which can brutally impact on the mental health of a person



making it even difficult for an addict to achieve full recovery due to recurrent episodes of treatment and relapses.

For instance, according to data of the Ministry of Health's Central Registry, in 2010, approximately, 2,378 people in the Sultanate re-

ported to different healthcare institutions of the ministry to seek treatment against narcotics and other intoxicating materials.





## Research and Society

Issued by Oman Daily Observer in cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University



## Repair of concrete beams using carbon fibre composites



- ❖ Such composites strengthen concrete beams against vehicle impact
- ❖ The corrosion is mainly due to the Sultanate's harsh climate

forced concrete rectangular beam specimens exposed to accelerated corrosion. The corrosion rate was varied between 5 (mild) to 15 per cent (severe) which represents loss in cross sectional area of the steel reinforcement in the tension side. Damaged beams were repaired using three different schemes by bonding CFRP sheets to the tension side to restore the strength loss due to corrosion.

The experimental programme consisted of 10 reinforced concrete rectangular beam specimens. The tensile reinforcement of six of the repaired beams and three of the un-repaired beams were corroded to various degrees by means of an impressed electrical current. Six of the beam specimens were repaired with CFRP sheets using three different repair schemes. Following the corrosion phase, the beam specimens were tested to failure in flexure, in four point bending.

**Accelerated corrosion process**

Dr Al Saïdy points out that this process is used to render clearer results concerning the repair of corroded beams, and he explains that after 28 days curing in room conditions at 25 degree C temperature and 60 per cent humidity, 9 beams were placed inside a tank which has salted water with a concentration of about 3 per cent by weight of water. To induce corrosion in the reinforcement, the rebars were connected to a power (voltage) source where a current was applied to accelerate the corrosion process. Stainless steel rebars were placed parallel to the beams in the tank to act as cathode and were connected to the negative charge of the power source.

The beams were immersed up to one-third of their height in the water. To obtain theoretical mass loss of 5 per cent in tension reinforcement rebar of specimen, a constant current of 323 mA was applied to each specimen for a period of 19 days. Likewise, to obtain theoretical mass loss of 15 per cent in tension reinforcement rebar of specimen, a constant current of 323 mA was applied in each specimen for a period of 57 days.

The repaired beams were divided into three groups based on three repairing schemes. Dr Al Saïdy goes on to say that in the first one, damaged beams due to accelerated corrosion were repaired by bonding CFRP sheets on the tension side of the beam. In the second group, the

itudinal direction). The CFRP was wrapped around both sides of the beam specimen to a height of 65mm from the bottom face.

**Results**

Dr Al Saïdy explains the results of this study saying that after the study has been completed, corrosion cracks were observed on all corroded specimens before testing, each extending parallel to the length of the specimen. They were located along the side of the corroded bottom bars and rust staining was observed along these cracks.

In general, the yield and ultimate strength decreased with the increase of the corrosion (reduction of the cross-section of reinforcement). In addition, the elastic stiffness decreased with the increase of the corrosion.

**Repaired specimens****Specimens with 5 per cent corrosion:**

Yield and ultimate strengths of the repaired specimens increased over the corresponding un-repaired specimen. Yield strength of repaired specimen was 24 per cent greater than the yield strength of un-repaired specimen. Ultimate strength of repaired specimen was 44 per cent greater than the ultimate strength of un-repaired specimen. However, the ultimate deflection of repaired specimen was 50 per cent less than the ultimate deflection of un-repaired specimen.

**Specimens with 10 per cent corrosion:**

Ultimate strengths of the repaired specimen increased slightly over the corresponding un-repaired specimen. Yield strength of repaired specimen was 16.6 per cent greater than the yield strength of un-repaired specimen. Ultimate strength of repaired specimen was 24 per cent greater than the ultimate strength of un-repaired specimen. Ultimate deflection of repaired specimen was 58 per cent less than the ultimate deflection of un-repaired specimen. Failure of repaired beam was due to CFRP sheet rupture.

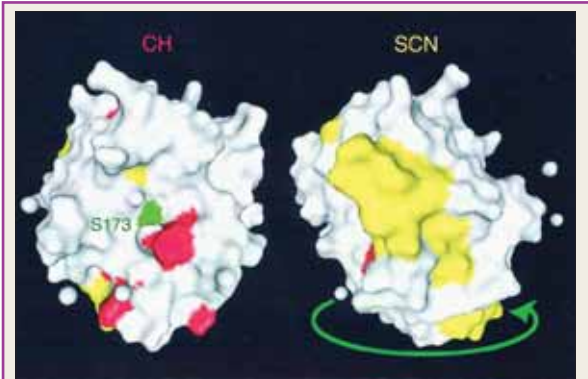
**Specimens with 15 per cent corrosion:**

The ultimate strength of repaired specimen using Scheme2, Scheme2 (2 layers) and Scheme3 were 36.7 per cent, 64.7 per cent and 69.9 per cent, respectively, greater than the ultimate strength of un-repaired specimen. Ultimate deflection of repaired specimens using Scheme2, Scheme2 (2 layers) were 26.6 per cent, 33.1 per cent and 5.9 per cent respectively, less than the ultimate deflection of un-repaired specimen.

**Conclusions**

Dr Al Saïdy goes on to talk about the conclusions of the study, and says that based on the experimental results, the following conclusions are drawn:

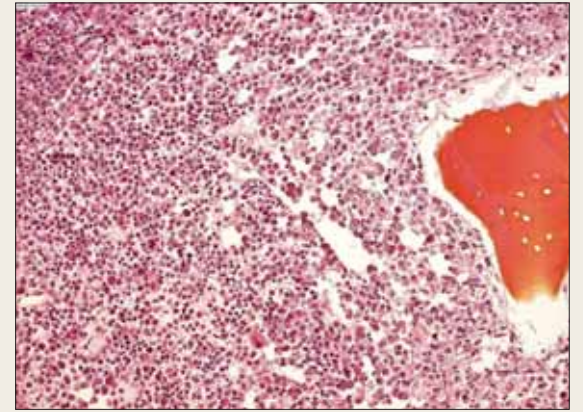
- Repairing of corrosion damaged beams using CFRP sheets is effective and all repaired beams were able to reach ultimate loads higher than the ultimate load of the damaged state.
- The use of CFRP sheets for strengthening RC beams decreased the ultimate deflection of these beams to a level below the control beam.
- The layout of CFRP reinforcement was more important than the total amount used in the efficiency of strengthening corrosion damaged beams.
- The use of U-shaped CFRP sheet anchored the flexural CFRP sheet and prevented any debonding at concentrated loads. The U-shaped sheets are more effective in beams with higher rate of corrosion.



## Genetic Causes of Congenital Neutropenia

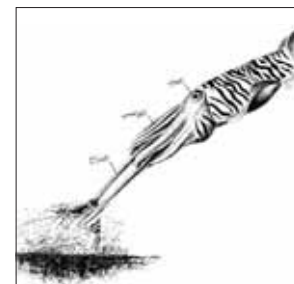
Dr Yasser Wali, of the department of Child Health in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, is conducting a research project entitled Genetic Causes Of Congenital Neutropenia.

Dr Wali explains that Inherited disorders of neutrophil homeostasis and function comprise a heterogeneous group of diseases. Many underlying genetic defects (including the etiology of "benign ethnic neutropenia") are still unknown and the pathophysiology of these diseases is poorly understood. In spite of recent improvements in symptomatic treatment approaches, patients continue to be at risk for severe infections as well as the development of leukaemia. Dr Wali's study aims to investigate these pathomechanisms by deciphering the genetics of congenital neutropenia using ge-



nome-wide linkage studies, and, based on our previous studies, it will identify novel informative families for genetic studies. In addition, the study aims at elucidating the complex interplay of multiple factors controlling neutrophil survival and apoptosis where mechanisms governing the stress response of the endoplasmic reticulum will be analysed in detail. Finally, Dr Wali explains that the study will enable researchers to assess whether retroviral-mediated gene transfer has any effect in reconstituting the phenotype of mutated myeloid cells. It will also shed light on the genetic basis of rare disorders of neutrophil development and elucidate common pathways of stress responses and apoptosis which may help to understand pathomechanisms of more common conditions such as cancer and degenerative diseases. Therefore, Dr Wali concludes that this study will not only help to characterise the genetic defect in families with congenital neutropenia, but also to understand the pathophysiology of host defence and leukaemogenesis.

## The evolution of groundwater in Samail Catchment area



and semi-arid regions. Dr Al Hosani explains that the study uses groundwater chemistry and groundwater elevations to identify and understand the primary processes controlling groundwater quality and salinity in the aquifers within the Samail Catchment. It also investigates the deteriorating status of groundwater quality in the region due to scarcity of rainfall and over pumping. Such conditions have had a negative impact on the agricultural activities in the region.

Dr Talal al Hosani, of the Department of Earth Sciences, College of Science, is currently conducting a research project entitled The Evolution Of Groundwater In The Samail Catchment, Oman.

Dr Al Hosani's approach combines physical hydrogeology, water chemistry, stable isotopes and radiogenic isotopes. These isotopes are transportable and have been applied and tested in other arid

regions. Dr Al Hosani explains that the long-term results of the research can be used to evaluate methods of effective management of groundwater resources in the study area, which will provide needed data for effective and sustainable management of water resources in the region.

## Study to find use of black ink from fish to treat osteoporosis

## Safety profile and therapeutic use of black ink from Omani fishes in two experimental models of osteoporosis in rats

Dr Hadia Bererhi, of the Department of Medical Physics at SQU Hospital is conducting a research project entitled: Safety Profile and Therapeutic Use of Blank Ink from Oman Fishes in Two Experimental Models Of Osteoporosis In Rats.

Osteoporosis, Dr Bererhi explains is a major health problem affecting millions of individuals worldwide and Oman is no

exception. There is strong experimental as well as anecdotal evidence that black ink from fishes may prevent bone loss and may therefore be used for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis.

Dr Bererhi says that the aim of this study is to evaluate the toxicity and the efficacy of the black ink substance obtained from Omani fishes in treating and preventing bone-loss induced by using two experi-

mental models of osteoporosis in rats: ovariectomy (OVC) and corticosteroid (COR) administration.

**Toxicity effects**

Toxicity of the ink will be examined on 4 groups of 10 rats each. One group of rats (control) will not receive the ink and the remaining 3 groups will be fed gauged varying amounts of the ink, for specific time periods to evaluate acute, sub-acute and chronic toxicities. The rats will be killed and the effect of the ink on major organs will be evaluated.

**Treatment and prevention**

The efficacy of the ink in the treatment and prevention of osteoporosis will be evaluated on 144 rats. The rats will be divided into 6 groups of 24 rats each:

- Group 1: OVC group to be compared with sham operated group and used to measure the efficacy of the ink in pre-

- Group 2: OVC group to be compared with sham operated group and used to measure the efficacy of the ink in treatment
  - Group 3: Sham operated group
  - Group 4: COR administered group to be compared with normal control (NC) group and used to measure the efficacy of the ink in prevention
  - Group 5: COR administered group to be compared with normal control (NC) group and used to measure the efficacy of the ink in treatment
  - Group 6: normal control (NC) group
- After 6 weeks — the estimated time for osteoporosis to develop in OVC and COR rats — each group will be subdivided into four sub-groups of 6 rats which will receive either zero, low, medium or high ink doses (Note: Groups 1 and 4, the prevention



groups, will receive ink doses immediately following OVC and COR). Bone biopsies and blood biochemistry

at baseline and at specific intervals during the study will be performed to evaluate the effect of the ink on bone metabolism.



# SQU to develop low fat, low sugar Omani halwa

A RESEARCH project to develop low fat halwa was initiated by Prof Mohammad Shafur Rahman of the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at Sultan Qaboos University. Though Omani halwa is famous at home and abroad as a symbol of traditional Omani hospitality, considering the type and amount of fat and sugar content, halwa may be categorised as an unhealthy food, especially if consumed in high quantities. This is the factor that prompted SQU team to develop a healthier variety of Omani halwa, an idea which is likely to be welcomed by the local sweet industry. According to the research team, healthy halwa could be developed with reduced input of fat and sugar and addition of other functional compounds beneficial to health.

Halwa is a traditional candy in the Sultanate of Oman consumed on a day-to-day basis and at formal social occasions. It is usually served in Omani homes before drinking Arabic coffee. The people of Oman have passed on the technology of making halwa through generation of artisans and pride themselves in being able to make one of the best halwa in the Gulf Region.

Halwa is a jelly sweet, mainly made up of starch, sugar, water, ghee, and aromatized with saffron, nuts and/or rose water. Omani halwa is usually made with sugar (50 per cent), water (25 per cent), mill flour (10 per cent) and ghee (ie saturated fat) (15 per cent).

Elaborating on their research, Prof



Researchers at the halwa factory with Prof Rahman (second from right)

Rahman said that the first phase of the project involves studying consumer preferences by exploring the important quality attributes considered by the halwa consumers.

"A structured survey questionnaire was used to determine consumers' preferences and their behaviour with regard to halwa. Five types of consumer groups were identified through hierarchical cluster analysis and the preferred key attributes were explored for each group", he said. Colour was

ranked within top 3 attributes for all the groups. In general colour, sweetness, appearance, mouth feel and solubility in saliva were found to be the most important attributes for selecting a halwa.

The second part of the project will consider studying the physicochemical, sensory and textural characteristics of different types of halwa available in the market, so that different formulated low fat halwa could be matched with the specific types in the market.

Third phase of the project involves developing low fat halwa by substituting fat-mimic natural ingredients. The natural fat-mimic ingredients expected to provide similar mouth feel as high fat halwa. Scientifically the structure building mechanisms of the natural fat-mimic ingredients and its behaviour inside mouth during consumption will be explored.

Qassim al Shamsi, a PhD student from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) jointly supervised

by Professors Aminah Abdullah and Rahman, has been working on developing low fat halwa. He conducted part of his research at the Sultan Qaboos University as a visiting graduate student. Based on his work at SQU, he won the Young Scientist Award at the International Islamic University Malaysia (International Conference and Advancement in Science and Technology, ICAST 2010) for his paper "Consumers' Preference Mapping and their Behaviour with Regard to Traditional Halwa using a Structure Survey Questionnaire" by Q Al Shamsi, M S Rahman, A Abdullah and M Clarereboudt.

This paper identified five types of Omani consumers and their characteristics regarding halwa preferences; and accepted for publications in the *Journal of Food Products Marketing* published by Taylor and Francis, New York. This would be a pioneering work regarding Omani consumers. Dr Michel Clareboudt of the Department of Marine Sciences and Fisheries guided Al Shamsi for performing complex cluster and principal component analyses for classifying consumers and products.

Prof Rahman and visiting PhD student Al Shamsi are also working with the Al Amri Omani Halwa Company in Al Seeb in order to formulate low fat and low sugar halwa by mimic the similar sensory perceptions of the available high fat and high sugar halwa. A project proposal is being prepared for possible funding from Industrial Innovation Center (IIC).



## Between Us Only!

Majid Said al Suleimany

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## Dealing With Situations in Life!

THOSE who are my avid readers will recall that I have written so much and many times on these themes with even from March 2003 — 8 years ago — titled *Keeping Up With The Changes*.

Today let us rediscover the 90/10 principle by the famous Dr Stephen Covey. It will certainly change your life. The 90/10 principle is incredible! Very few know and apply this principle. The Result?

Millions of people are suffering undeserved stress, trials, problems and heartache. They never seem to be a success in life. Bad days follow bad days. Terrible things seem to be constantly happening. Theirs is constant stress, lack of joy, and broken relationships. Worry consumes time, anger ruins friendships and life seems dreary and is not enjoyed to the fullest. Friends are lost. Life is a bore and often seems cruel. Does this describe you? If so, do not be discouraged. You can be different! Understand and apply the 90/10 principle. It will change your life!

What is this principle? Ten per cent of life is made up of what happens to you. 90 per cent of life is decided by how you react. What does this mean? We really have no control over 10 per cent of what happens to us. We cannot stop the car from breaking down. The plane may be late arriving, which throws our whole schedule off. A driver may cut us off in traffic. We have no control over this 10 per cent. The other 90 per cent is different. You determine the other 90 per cent! How? By your reaction. You cannot control a red light, but you can control your reaction. Don't let people fool you; You can control how you react! Let's use an example. You're eating breakfast with your family. Your daughter knocks over a cup of coffee onto your business shirt. You have no control over what just happened. What happens next will be determined by how you react. You curse. You harshly scold your daughter for knocking the coffee cup over. She breaks down in tears. After scolding her, you turn to your spouse and criticise them for placing the cup too close to the edge of the table. A short verbal battle follows. You storm upstairs and change your shirt. Back downstairs you find your daughter has been too busy crying to finish breakfast and get ready for school. She misses the bus. Your spouse must leave immediately for work. You rush to the car and drive your daughter to school. Because you are late, you drive 40 miles an hour in a 30 mph speed zone.

After a 15-minute delay and throwing \$60 (traffic fine) away, you arrive at school. Your daughter runs to the building without saying goodbye. After arriving at the office 20 minutes late, you find you forgot your briefcase. Your day has started terrible. As it continues, it seems to get worse and worse. You look forward to going home. When you arrive home, you find a small wedge in your relationship with your spouse and daughter. Why? Because of how you reacted in the morning.

### Why did you have a bad day?

- A) Did the coffee cause it?  
B) Did your daughter cause it?  
C) Did the policeman cause it?  
D) Did you cause it?

The answer is D. You had no control over what happened with the coffee. How you reacted in those 5 seconds is what caused your bad day.

Here is what could have and should have happened. Coffee splashes over you. Your daughter is about to cry. You gently say, "It's OK honey, you just need to be more careful next time." Grabbing a towel you rush upstairs. After grabbing a new shirt and your briefcase. You come back down in time to look through the window and see your child getting on the bus. She turns and waves. You and your spouse kiss before you both go to work. You arrive 5 minutes early and cheerfully greet the staff. Your boss comments on how good of a day you are having. Notice the difference. Two different scenarios. Both started the same. Both ended different. Why? Because of how you reacted. You really do not have any control over 10 per cent of what happens. The other 90 per cent is determined by your reaction.

Here are some ways to apply the 90/10 principle. If someone says something negative about you, do not be a sponge. Let the attack roll off like water on glass. You do not have to let the negative comment affect you! React properly and it will not ruin your day. A wrong reaction could result in losing a friend, being fired, getting stressed out, etc.

How do you react if someone cuts you off in traffic? Do you lose your temper? Pound the steering wheel? (A friend of mine had the steering wheel fall off!) Do you curse? Does your blood pressure skyrocket? Do you try and bump them? Who cares if you arrive ten seconds later at work? Why let the cars ruin your drive. Remember the 90/10 principle, and do not worry about it!

You are told you lost your job. Why lose sleep or get irritated? It will work out. Use your "worrying" time and energy into finding another job.

The plane is late. It is going to mangle your schedule for the day. Why take out your frustration on the flight attendant? She has no control over what is going on. Use your time to study, get to know the other passenger, etc. Why get stressed out? It will just make things worse.

Now you know the 90/10 principle. Apply it and you will be amazed at the results. Take Care!

## Adham's paintings project Oman's landscape beauty

By Hasan Kamoopuri

ADHAM bin Ismail bin Hamdan al Farsi is famous for the inventive way he created paintings and prints on one theme of Omani landscapes, Omani forts or anything related to Oman's heritage, history and scenic beauty.

As a member of the Omani Association of Fine Art (OSFA), Adham makes it a point to actively participate in all national and regional painting exhibitions. He believes, Oman, like other countries in the region, is rich in human values, heritage, history, natural resources and scenic landscapes and this can be very well projected by the artists.



Adham developed the love for painting early in life. As he grew and watched Oman's rich heritage and scenic beauty, he realised that artists can do a lot to project this in their paintings.

Adham has had active participation in exhibitions such as the 7th Youth Exhibition for Fine Arts (2003) and received the Golden Prize at OSFA; the Silver Prize in the 12th Annual Fine Arts Exhibition (2004) at OSFA; and the Golden Prize in the 13th Annual Fine Arts Exhibition (2005) at OSFA. He actively participated at the Small Art Works Exhibition (2005) at the Youth Arts Studio, at the First Annual Exhibition of the Arabic Writing (2006); at the 14th Annual Fine Arts Exhibition (2006); and gained the Silver Prize in the 12th Annual Youth Fine



Arts Exhibition (2008).

Adham actively participated in an art workshop at Salzburg, Austria, in August 2009; and was awarded the Fifth Prize at the 'Qaboos Oman Competition' on Best Portrait Drawing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 2009. He also actively participated in the Small Art Work competition 2010 and won the judgement committee prize.

Adham's painting on Oman's natural beauty in Tiwi area where the village is surrounded by sand, sea and the mountains under the clear blue sky is very popular among nature lovers. His painting on architectural work in Bidiya Castle in the Sharqiyah region, showcasing the combination of wood and clay as a mark of beauty in Omani architectural works is popular among architecture buffs. Another painting



done by Adham is about the Fort Tower at Bausher area, with a focus on the fact that the Sun's rays penetrate the clouds to be reflected on the icon of old Omani tower.

These are just very few examples of his works related

culture and heritage, Omani art and artists are set to reflect this reality in their works. The Omani Society for Fine Art encourages and introduces Omani artists to the international art scene and provides a unique accessible venue to



to Oman's natural beauty and historical places.

Over the years, Adham has been able to expand his sphere into areas such as ceramics, calligraphy and design. In November 2009, Adham was among the six short-listed finalists who received consolation prizes in 'Qaboos Oman' contest. "For all the artists, painting His Majesty the Sultan's portrait itself was an honour," says Adham.

Adham says art is the soul of a culture and OSFA recognises the work of good Omani artists. As Oman continues to develop while preserving its

showcase these talents.

Adham has a fascination for historical and tourist places in Oman. His artwork has Omani forts as an important theme. In his paintings, the beauty of Omani architecture, landscape and historical places come alive.

Much of Adham's artwork depicts people, places, towers and natural beauty of different wilayats of Oman. That is because he is fond of nature. As a landscape painter and drawing master, Adham is like an ambassador when he travels abroad and participates in exhibitions.

## Al Ma'ali School organises English Week

By Abdulaziz al Jahdhami

AL MA'ALI School for Basic Education is one of the leading schools in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi. The English Club in the school organised an English Week for students of different classes. It was the first of its kind held in the school.

The event came as part of the school's general plan to develop students' performance through different activities conducted in and outside the class. Teachers of each subject in the school prepared a comprehensive plan to involve both outstanding and low-achievement students. Academic-based and problem solving activities were included in order to enrich students' knowledge and thinking skills.

Some of the activities were matching words with pictures and reading presentation that were held between students in the daily morning assembly. In these activities, students were asked to match appropriate words with pictures and as well as reading some words and alphabets that were given to them.



Students were also asked to read some information from their presentations about animals. Such activities aimed at encouraging students to show their impromptu thinking in taking decisions to match the English alphabets. They also helped students to improve their public speaking abilities.

It also included some competitive activities held in the English Club like storytelling and finding Arabic equivalents for

English proverbs. Students from different grades staged some short English plays for their classmates. In the English Club, movies were also screened for students to enhance their English learning through watching cartoons.

The English Week was concluded with reading sessions and a closing ceremony in which the top winners of the activities were awarded.



# Happy Birthday!



Michelle Rose Quadros

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# Extreme Sailing Series starts today



By Ali Ahmed al Riyami

AS part of this year's Muscat Festival, the Sultanate of Oman is host to the opening round of the world's most exciting sailing series — The Extreme Sailing Series — becoming the second time that the capital area will host this prestigious international sailing series, which commences today up until Thursday, February 24.

The Wave, Muscat, the venue for the event, has become a hub of activities in the last few days, as nine international teams, as well as two Omani teams, descend on the venue for the much anticipated start of the event. And with 44 of the world's very best sailors, including Olympians, World Champions and International sailing stars taking part, this year the event promises to be bigger than ever.

Oman Sail has two Extreme 40s taking part in the 2011 Extreme Sailing Series — *The Wave, Muscat* return as the reigning champions and *Oman Air* has come on board as title sponsor of their second boat — and

for the first time in Oman's history, both have a full-time Omani crew member on board.

Khamis bin Mohammed al Anbouri — the man who made history as the first Omani to stand on the podium of an international sailing event in the 2010 Extreme Sailing Series — will return to *The Wave, Muscat*, while Nasser bin Salim al Mashari will be making his debut on the circuit aboard *Oman Air*.

At a press meet, at Oman Sail's Head Office at The Wave Muscat,

*Muscat* is here to defend its title."

While Nasser reiterated Khamis' sentiments he added that the competition would require their very best efforts and that they are committed to put in their very best for Oman.

David Stafford, Vice-President Sales and Marketing, The Wave Muscat, spoke to the *Observer* about the event and why they are sponsoring it. He said, the Extreme 40s are a critical international sporting event for Muscat and in Oman's sporting calendar. It is an important part of their inter-



Khamis noted, "This year the Extreme Sailing Series is going to be much bigger in terms of venues and competition. Every venue will be a challenge on its own due to the different wind conditions; however, my focus right now is all about the start in Muscat, in my home country among my family members and friends. Many visitors will be coming from around the world to see the start of the World Series and I am determined to show everyone that *The Wave*,

national marketing and branding; not only for The Wave Muscat's development but also for Muscat and Oman, he added.

He pointed out, The Wave Muscat is home to the world champion team and Oman Sail and that sailing and the Omani way-of-life and culture are inextricably linked. As one of the major ITCs in the country, they are proud to be supporting the Extreme 40s Series event, he added. In this way, he continued, they are aiding

Khamis bin Mohammed al Anbouri — the man who made history as the first Omani to stand on the podium of an international sailing event in the 2010 Extreme Sailing Series — will return to *The Wave, Muscat*, while Nasser bin Salim al Mashari will be making his debut on the circuit aboard *Oman Air*

Oman Sail's endeavour of regenerating the maritime history of Oman.

The Extreme Sailing Series will be one of the main highlights of the Muscat Festival. There will be a host of family entertainment with a range of fun on- and off-the-water activities in the Public Village, which will be open from February 22-24, from 11 am-6 pm everyday. The village will be full of activities, shows and entertainment, all free to enter, including:

• 'Try Sailing' sessions — come

• Food stalls

The Extreme Sailing Series is a unique concept, pitting some of the very best professional sailing teams in the world against each other on identical Extreme 40 catamarans, on challenging, tactical courses, but close to shore to provide spectacular, stadium-style entertainment for the public. The Series will visit nine venues between now and December before the overall Series champion is decided.



and try sailing for yourself!

- Beach Football League with an incredible RO 2,000 up for grabs for the winning team
- Off-road RC car shows
- Kite shows
- Red Bull series of BMX, football and dance freestyle shows
- Kite buggy demonstrations (cap - ble of reaching speeds in excess of 80 kph!)
- Kids area with bouncy castle, face painting and PS3

For two years running Oman has been crowned overall Series champions, but with nine other teams hot on their heels, the question is, will they be able to bring the crown back to Oman for the third year? Everyone is invited to come and cheer on the two national teams, *The Wave, Muscat* and *Oman Air*, as they take on the very best of international sailing talent and battle to be crowned Extreme Sailing Series, Muscat Champions.

— Photos by Ali al Riyami



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Iranian actresses Leila Hatami and Sareh Bayat (below) arrive on the red carpet for the premiere of the movie *Jodaeiye Nader Az Simin* (Nader And Simin, A Separation) by Iranian director Asghar Farhadi presented 'in competition' in Berlin during the International Berlinale Film Festival. — AFP



German actress Diane Kruger poses on the red carpet ahead of the premiere of the film *Unknown Identity* by US director Jaume Collet-Serra. (Right) Actress Sindi Lacey arrives on the red carpet for the premiere of the film *The Forgiveness Of Blood* by US director Joshua Marston. — AFP

# Grannies take up ballet to stay healthy

By Simin Wang

CLAD in a black short-sleeved leotard, matching leggings and light pink ballet flats, Lee Poh Ying warms up in the glass-walled studio with fellow dance students.

But Lee and a few of the other weekend ballerinas are not your typical pre-teen ballet students stretching their backs and kicking up their legs to prepare for their group lessons.

She is a 62-year-old grandmother with her hair bundled up in a hairnet, one of a growing number of older people in Singapore trying to stay fit and active in a fast-greying society with an average life expectancy of 81.4 years.

Ballet was Lee's childhood dream, but it took her decades before she finally had the time and freedom to pursue it.

"My mother did not allow me to learn ballet, saying I should focus on my studies, and that dance was not a well-paying job," she said.

"I could only admire the



Lee Poh, 62, dancing in her elderly ballet class at a community centre near her flat. — AFP

girls in my school dance, and then secretly try the moves in my room."

Now the former supervisor at an electronics factory, who retired in 2002, dances with other adult students every Sunday morning at a community centre near her suburban apartment.

"I like ballet a lot. It makes

me very happy. I will continue dancing until I cannot dance," she said.

Singapore, like other affluent Asian societies such as Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, is grappling with an ageing population because of falling birth rates and longer lifespans.

By 2030, 20 per cent of Sin-

gaporeans are forecast to be 65 years or older, according to official statistics.

The government has been encouraging senior citizens to lead healthy lifestyles, and elderly Singaporeans are taking it upon themselves to explore various forms of exercise including dance.

Amy Tan, executive director

of Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully (WINGS), a non-profit education centre for mature women, finds the trend beneficial.

"Physical activities for elderly women require their mind and body to participate together, which is wonderful for their mental and physical wellness," said Tan.

However, learning ballet is not easy for mature women, some of whom have to struggle with medical conditions, injuries — and fear of failure.

Jacqueline Chow, 53, who has studied ballet at a community centre since 2008, finds it hard to execute some ballet steps because of her spinal, knee and foot problems.

To help her out, her ballet teacher alters the exercises.

"As I have stiff joints in my leg, I cannot do a grand plie, which is the bending movement of both knees," she said. "So I only do a plie within my own limits."

She once swung too hard and fell down while doing a pirouette, the classic ballet move of turning on one foot.

"It was very painful, but I learned from it. Now I know that I cannot shift my body too hard when I do a pirouette," said the university employee.

After three years of ballet, Chow says her back is stronger and her body more flexible.

Yu Shuhuai, 55, a China-born dance instructor who has been teaching ballet at several government-funded community centres in Singapore for eight years, enjoys working with mature women because of their attitude.

"Once when I came to class early, I saw the dancers reading their notes and revising the dance steps," Yu said. "I was so touched." Their age does show occasionally, and not only in their restricted movements.

"Once a dancer wore hard shoes on top of her ballet flats, and then went around looking for her ballet flats," he said.

In 2003, a group of elderly women approached him and asked if he could help them fulfil their dream of learning ballet.

He agreed and started classes with six students. — AFP

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