

Condolences to Saudi king

HIS Majesty Sultan Qaboos has sent a cable of condolences to King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia on the death of Prince Khalid bin Yazeed bin Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al Saud. His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to the King and the Al Saud family, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant the soul of the deceased eternal peace and give his family fortitude to bear the loss. — ONA

OMAN  DAILY

Observer

HM greetings to Morocco

HIS Majesty Sultan Qaboos has sent a cable of congratulations to King Mohammed VI of Morocco on the occasion of the Throne Day anniversary. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere congratulations along with his best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to King Mohammed VI, praying to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions on him to achieve aspirations of further progress for the people. — ONA

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Ambassador says goodbye

ON behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said received Mahmoud al Khumairi, Ambassador of Tunisia to the Sultanate, who bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to the Sultanate. The ambassador expressed his thanks to His Majesty. ■ **Details, P2**



Top students honoured

SOHAR Aluminium honoured 75 male and female students at the end of its summer training programme for Omani colleges and faculties. This programme came as part of the efforts exerted by the company to allow students apply various aspects of their scientific studies in different departments of the company. ■ **Details, P3**



ROBUST GROWTH: Cargo throughput at the Port of Sohar is projected to surge 60 per cent. This positions the port as an ideal point of entry for products shipped around the Gulf countries and as a gateway to the rest of the world. ■ **Details, P3**

Moon-sighting set for today

MUSCAT — The Moon-sighting Committee will hold its meeting this evening at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to confirm the start of Ramadhan under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, in the presence of His Eminence Shaikh

Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, the Sultanate's Grand Mufti. The committee will receive information from various parts of the Sultanate about the sighting of the moon.

The ministry has recently formed local committees in all the wilayats to observe the crescent.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Yemen will start Ramadhan tomorrow, regional media said.

Reports from these countries said the new moon had not been sighted after sunset yesterday, indicating that today would be regarded as the last day of the Muslim lunar month preceding Ramadhan.

Sailing Award launched

STAVANGER — In response to the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award was launched here in Norway yesterday. The venue witnesses the second stage of the tall ship races-2011.

The Defence Ministry, re-

resented by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), supervised the launching of the award, which is the newest and the most prestigious award in sailing.

The prestigious award will support training in sailing and enhance friendship among crew members of the ships taking part in different world sailing races. ■ **To page 2**

Private sector on right track

MUSCAT — The private sector has become more capable of shouldering its national responsibility towards development, especially the economic aspects, thanks to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos who laid the concept of partnership between the public and private sectors, besides the continuous Royal support for this vital sector.

Khalil bin Abdullah al Khonji, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said in a statement on the occasion of the Sultanate's 41st Renaissance anniversary and the advent of Ramadhan that after more than 40 years of the Renaissance, which covered all fields, the private sector is on the right

track as the projects planned for future and projects which are under way give a bright economic future for the Sultanate. This will double the contribution of the private sector towards the growth of the national economy.

Al Khonji highlighted the OCCI's role in serving the private sector. ■ **To page 4**

Salalah Tourism Festival ends

By Kabeer Yousuf

SALALAH — The 30-day-long Salalah Tourism Festival held side-by-side with the Khareef season came to a glittering close yesterday in the presence of people from all over the region and far afield.

The Aiteen Ground at the foothills of Aiteen Mountain was literally packed with people, both nationals and expatriates. Although the festival has come to an end, the Khareef season will last till mid-September.

Salalah Tourism Festival has, indeed succeeded in promoting the southern tip of the Sultanate in the world tourism arena and every year can be

considered as another step towards transforming the region to a global tourism spot.

This was aptly felt towards the third week of July when there was a huge visitor influx to Salalah and despite a number of hotels and flats for Khareef visitors, people were seen running from pillar to post looking for accommodation. By and large, there was a tremendous increase in the number of tourists this time compared to that of last year, according to shopkeepers in Dhofar Governorate.

Various places of interest such as Jabal Aiteen, Wadi Darbat, Ain al Hamrain and Rakhyout received mammoth number of visitors this year.

Since its opening on July 1, there was a rush to the governorate when the rest of the region was hot.

Misty mountains, foggy serpentine uphill roads and hotels and flats were all in new, rejuvenated mood catering to people from different countries.

Refreshing drizzles, cool breeze and a reinvigorating climate awaited visitors from elsewhere.

A host of varied programmes that stirred the interests of people were on offer for yearning visitors including children. The Royal Oman Police had a permanent exhibition on road safety at Aiteen Ground. ■ **Pictures on P3**

Five of a family killed as vehicle overturns

MUSCAT — Five people died and 6 others were injured yesterday when their vehicle overturned on the main road near Auaiyya in the Wilayat of Bahla. All the victims belonged to a Saudi family.

Lieutenant Slim al Husaini, Assistant officer in Nahida Police Station, said the accident occurred when the driver of a 4-WD vehicle along with 10 companions were on their way back from Dhofar Governorate after a tour. One of the rear tyres burst causing the vehicle to veer off the road and overturn.

Shortly afterwards police-

men from Nahida Police Station and personnel from the Oil and Gas Installation Security arrived at the scene of the accident and transferred the injured to the Auaiyya Health Centre from where they were taken to Nizwa Hospital in ambulances belonging to the police and Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO).

ROP's Mobile Ambulance Unit rescued 155 people who sustained injuries in road accidents.

Meanwhile, 58 people were killed and 449 others were injured during July 16-29 in 265 road accidents.



Omantel extends special offers

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Omantel has announced that it is launching special Ramadhan timings for its customers that will extend the off peak and super peak rates that many currently enjoy for both national and international calls.

The extended rates are being offered as a Ramadhan gift to its customers all over the Sultanate for the coming month and will benefit them whether they are prepaid, postpaid, mobile or fixed consumers.

Under the scope of the new promotion off peak and super off-peak services will start

from 3 pm for all Omantel and Oman Mobile services and will cover all services.

For calls to countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh where there are three rates, the offer will be implemented for the Super Off-Peak rates which will mean even more reduced rates. ■ **To page 3**

Spotlight on Oman's heritage

RINKABY — The Sultanate's Scouts participated for the third consecutive day in the 22nd World Scout Jamboree in Sweden. The July 27-August 8 jamboree being held under the theme "Simply Scouting" is attended by 39,000 Scouts and leaders from all over the world.

The Sultanate's Scouts

participated in the Earth Programme, which comprised discussions and researches about Earth and its preservation, components of the Earth, reasons behind rivers' twist and impact of pollution.

During the sessions, the Scouts attempted to search for the best means to protect the Earth. ■ **To page 4**

Boost to food security strategy

MUSCAT — A contract for the first of a series of grain storage complexes is due to be awarded shortly, signalling the start of a key phase in the implementation of the government's food security strategy.

A complex of warehouses at Barka is expected to be built in the first of a network of strategic

stockpiles of essential staples due to be established at key locations in the Sultanate.

A number of Omani engineering firms are bidding for a contract to build the food storage complex at Barka, on behalf of the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserves (PASFR). The Authority is

overseeing the implementation of the country's food security strategy.

The successful bidder will build a vast storage complex comprising six air-conditioned warehouses each maintained at temperatures ranging from 18-24 degrees centigrade.

■ **Details, P21**



OMAN Shipping Company has launched a Very Large Crude Carrier *Samail* in Kawasaki city, Japan yesterday. ■ **Details, P3**

Airport body scanners fail

BERLIN — Body scanners being tested at Germany's Hamburg airport have had a thumbs down from the police, who say they trigger an alarm unnecessarily in seven out of 10 cases, a newspaper said.

The weekly *Welt am Sonntag*, quoting a police report, said 35 per cent of the 730,000 passengers checked by the scanners set off the alarm more than once despite being innocent.

The report said the machines were confused by several layers of clothing, boots, zip fasteners and even pleats, while in 10 per cent of cases the passenger's posture set them off.

The police called for the scanners to be made less sen-

sitive to movements and certain types of clothing and the software to be improved. They also said the US manufacturer L3 Communications should make them work faster.

In the wake of the 10-month trial which began on September 27 last year, German federal police see no interest in carrying out any more tests with the scanners until new more effective models become available, *Welt am Sonntag* said.

The European parliament backed on July 6 the deployment of body scanners at airports, but on condition that travellers have the right to refuse to walk through the controversial machines.

Worried about embarrass-

ing intrusion into people's privacy, the parliament said the scanners should only produce images of "stick figures" and that any data must be immediately destroyed.

Concerned about the potential health risks, lawmakers also called for a ban on the use of X-ray scanners that use ionising radiation.

The use of scanners caused an uproar in the US last year because they produce a graphic image of a person's body.

The US stepped up the deployment of body scanners at airports after a Nigerian man was accused of trying to ignite explosives concealed in his undergarments during a day flight from Amsterdam to Detroit in 2009. — AFP



Prayer timing

Muscat

Fajr	Dhuhr	Asr	Magrib	Isha
04:13 am	12:18 pm	03:42 pm	06:56 pm	08:13 pm

Weather

	Muscat	Nizwa	Sohar	Al Buraimi	Sur	Khasab	Salalah
Max	34	44	34	45	38	44	27
Min	28	26	29	32	27	35	25



EXCHANGE RATES

Dollar per Omani Rial

Buying	0.382	Selling	0.388
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GOLD PRICE

\$1,626.70



Ambassador says goodbye

MUSCAT — On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said received yesterday Mahmoud al Khumairi, Ambassador of Tunisia to the Sultanate, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty

as his country's ambassador to the Sultanate.

The ambassador expressed his thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support he received during his work in the Sultanate from His Majesty, the government and the Omani

people, which had enabled him in carrying out his duties.

He also wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate further progress under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

HH Sayyid Asaad thanked

the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in serving bilateral relations between the Sultanate and Tunisia, wishing him success in his future assignments and the brotherly people of Tunisia further progress and prosperity. — ONA



Majlis poll panel meets in Salalah

SALALAH — The Majlis Ash'shura 7th Term Elections Committee in the Wilayat of Salalah held a preparatory meeting at the Directorate-

General of Local Affairs at the Office of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar yesterday under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohsin al

Shanfari, Director-General of the Local Affairs and head of the committee.

The meeting, which was attended by candidates accord-

ing to the final list, discussed electoral propaganda and its regulations after being approved by the main committee of the elections. — ONA

Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award launched

From page 1

Commodore Yaqoub bin Yusuf al Kamshaki, Director-General of RNO Administration and Finance, said that the Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award comes as continuation of Oman's glorious maritime history, which has played a pioneering role in many sailing achievements made by the Sultanate throughout the last 41 years of the Renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

He pointed out that the award will provide 100 youths with the opportunity to take part in long sailing boat races, being held every year.

The award, which also includes a scholarship scheme, is the most prestigious award that will be presented during the annual conference of the International Sailing Federation (ISAF) whose events are launched for the first time this year.

Dr Zainab bint Ali al Qasimiyah, Sultanate's Ambassador to Germany, who attended the launching ceremony, said the award comes as an addition to the interests of His Majesty the Sultan to affirm the leading maritime role of the Sultanate throughout the ages. She pointed out that *Sohar, Jewel of Muscat and Shahab Oman* affirm the maritime role of Oman.

The ISAF head in a speech said the Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award will generate fair competition among racers. He pointed out that nomination for the competition will be opened soon through the 26 organisations for sailing that are members of the ISAF.

He noted that steady strides will be made to secure the largest possible number of youths from various nationalities from this generous grant of His Majesty the Sultan. He said that the award will be granted to one of the crew members or the operating agency for training or any of the organisations



operating in training in sailing in recognition of the good services they are providing to help youths in this field.

Stavanger Mayor hailed the award and the status it will enjoy in tall ship races as it is the newest award granted in this field. He expressed his thanks to the Sultanate for selecting Stavanger to launch the award.

ISAF assists youths and those with special needs to train on sailing. It is a non-profit organisation based in the United Kingdom. ISAF, in collaboration with the RNO, will supervise the Sultan Qaboos

Sailing Award.

A number of youths are being trained in sailing, the first batch to be selected at

the award programme for the training grants, which focus on youths and those with special needs. — ONA



PDO supports OHBDA

MUSCAT — Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) will sponsor the training programmes for employment launched to cover blood disorder patients under the umbrella of Oman Hereditary Blood Disorder Association (OHBDA).

At a special ceremony held last week, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in this regard by both parties, represented by PDO Human Resources Director Mundhir bin Salem al Barwani and Deputy Chairman of Oman Hereditary Blood Disorder Association Thuraya bint Saif al Hosni.

The training programme will basically cover 40 patients around the Sultanate aiming to develop their skills in order to improve the quality of their life and enable them to find additional sources of sustainable income.

OHBDA is a non-profit organisation that was officially formed on June 14, 2009 according to Ministerial Decision No 75/2009, with the aim of raising awareness among the public on how to avoid the spread of hereditary blood disorder diseases.

"PDO is pleased to help OHBDA carry out its work in support of the patients and their families," Mundhir al Barwani said. "The programme is being funded as one of PDO's Social Investment projects, which aim to help the wider Omani society."

Thuraya al Hosni hailed PDO's initiative being the first organisation to support the association in this field.

Business opportunities



Extension of Tender Collection and Submission Dates

Pre-Qualification Tender for Lump Sum Turnkey Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Commissioning of Sohar Refinery Expansion Project

Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company LLC (ORPC) would like to extend the collection and submission dates for the following Tender:

Tender Ref No.	Tender Title	Last Date for Collection of Tender	Deadline Date & Time for Tender Submission
1320-11-134	Pre-Qualification Tender for Lump Sum Turnkey Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Commissioning of Sohar Refinery Expansion Project	Previous Date: 18-07-2011	Previous Date: 08-08-2011
		New Date: 03-08-2011	New Date: 06-09-2011 (11.00 hours)

The Tender Documents may be obtained from Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company LLC, Procurement Section, Administration Building, Sohar Refinery, Sohar; Tel No: 00968-26851127/26851151 or by sending a request for receiving the tender document by e-mail to the following address: PQTender@orpic.om

All clarifications to be sent to the above e-mail address using the clarifications format available in the Tender Document.

All Bidders shall submit their bids in a properly sealed envelope/package. Tender envelope/package shall bear the tender title, tender number and address on top of the envelope/package and delivered to:

The Chairman – Tender Board
Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company LLC
Sohar Refinery
P.O. Box 282, Falaj Al Qabail,
Postal Code 322, Sohar,
Sultanate of Oman.

The exterior of the sealed envelopes/packages must not reveal the identity of the Bidder. The Submission Date/Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table. Any proposal submitted after the given Date/Time shall be rejected.

Local Agents must submit a registration form with an authorization letter duly signed & stamped by the authorized person from their respective Parent Company / Principle Bidder delegate to collect the tender on their behalf.

The Company reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid without assigning any reason.

Orpic is the brand name for Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries SAOC. Orpic represents the integrated management of three operating companies, Oman Refineries and Petrochemicals Company LLC (ORPC), Aromatics Oman LLC (AOL) and Oman Polypropylene (OPP). The Orpic brand does not affect any contractual arrangements of ORPC, AOL or OPP. Please continue to deal with your point of contact at ORPC, AOL or OPP in the usual way.

Diwan of Royal Court Muscat Municipality

Advertisement No. (77/2011)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Muscat Municipality, may obtain tender documents for the following, on any working day between 8 a.m. and 12 Noon, from our **Quantity Surveying & Contracts Directorate** (Room No. D1050) on payment of non-refundable tender fee as noted against each:

Tender No.	Description of Work	Tender Fee	Return Date
PRE/11/122	Consultancy Services for Design of Internal Roads for Governorate of Muscat	RO. 100/-	29.08.2011
PRE/11/125	Supply of Pesticides for 2012	RO. 125/-	29.08.2011
PRE/11/144	Oman Botanic Garden Phase X Nursery Enhancements - MEP	RO. 250/-	29.08.2011

The tenderers shall submit with the Form of Tender (Financial Offer) a **Certified Cheque or Tender Bond** in the sum of 2% of the tender value valid for 90 days, issued in the name of Muscat Municipality by a locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Tenders without such bond shall be rejected.

The filled in Form of Tender (in the envelope) addressed to His Excellency the Chairman, Main Tender Committee, Diwan of Royal Court, Muscat, under wax sealed cover, shall be placed in the Tender Box kept at Directorate of Quantity Surveying & Contracts, (First Floor Room No. D1050) Muscat Municipality HQ, Darsait, by 9:00 am **Monday** on the above date mentioned in the table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.

Muscat Municipality is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may be received.

For more information: Website: www.mmm.gov.om
E-mail: qs@mctmnet.gov.om
Tel. 24753904, Fax: 24753049

New mosque opens in Salalah



SALALAH — His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, opened Hateen Mosque in Sahalnout here yesterday. The mosque can accommodate 500 worshippers. On this occasion, the Grand Mufti delivered a sermon titled "Values and



Morals" where he stressed the significance of values of Islam and the high position given by Islam to values and morals, which is very important for the believer. He pointed out that morals and Muslims' good behaviour helped spread of Islam by attracting people to this religion. — ONA

Sultanate launches huge crude carrier

KAWASAKI CITY — Oman Shipping Company (OSC) has launched a Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC), *Samail*, here. This is the 29th vessel to be operated by the company and the tenth in crude oil shipping.

The capacity of the vessel is 300,000 deadweight tonnes (DWT).

Its overall length is 330 metres, with a 60-metre beam and a draft of around 22 metres. She will be the first VLCC to be technically managed "in house" by OSC's subsidiary Oman Ship Management Company in Muscat.

With this addition, OSC now oper-

ates a diversified fleet of 29 vessels comprising 10 VLCCs, one VLGC, 7 LNG carriers, 4 chemical carriers, four product tankers, two Multipurpose Heavy Lift Vessels and one Supramax Bulk Carrier.

The present tonnage with the addition to this vessel will be 4.2 million

DWT and with the delivery of the 12 ships on order, it will reach 8 million DWT by the end of 2012.

Oman Ship Management Company currently manages eight vessels comprising 6 LNG carriers, one chemical tanker and one VLCC, which is *Samail*. — ONA

Sohar Port poised for robust growth

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Cargo throughput at the Port of Sohar is projected to surge a phenomenal 60 per cent this year, underscoring robust year-on-year growth witnessed from the start of commercial operations at the industrial port.

Vessel traffic was projected to jump 20 per cent this year, Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC), the landlord-operator, said in an account of the port's operational performance during the first half of this year.

"Despite the economical and political climate in the region, Port of Sohar managed to continue this trend in the first half of this year, by showing an increase of vessel calls of 20 per cent and impressive cargo growth of 60 per cent.

The main contribution to this growth is due to the further expansion of Oiltanking Odjell Terminals and the commissioning of the two large-scale steel industries, Vale and Jindal Shaded. It is expected that these will be responsible in the near and long-term future for the strong

continued growth of the port," SIPC stated.

While the unfortunate disasters in Japan did have a direct impact on imports into Oman, Sohar Port's container terminal OICT managed to stay at par with last year, partially as a result of newly attracted cargo flows to and from the UAE, the report said.

However, the break-bulk terminal, C Steinweg Oman, was confronted with a strong drop in car imports. This resulted in a sharp contradiction to the good results of last year. It is expected that by the second half of this year, imports from Japan will recover with a consequential positive effect for both the terminals, the report noted.

Total cargo throughput at the industrial port was projected to soar to 19.574 million freight registered tonnes (FRT) by the end of this year, up 66 per cent from 12.245 million FRT recorded at the end of last year.

Dry bulk cargo volumes are expected to skyrocket 126 per cent to 6.396 million FRT this year from 2.830 million FRT last year. A 50 per cent

increase is forecast in liquid bulk volumes, which will rise to 11.581 million FRT this year, from 7.727 million FRT at the end of last year.

Ro-Ro traffic however is predicted to slump 47 per cent to 38,720 units this year, from a high of 73,429 units at the end of 2010. Container volumes are projected to record a marginal 7 per cent increase to 1.046 million FRT this year, from 0.978 million FRT last year.

The total number of vessel calls this year is estimated at 1,334 calls, up 20 per cent from 1,110 calls recorded at the end of last year. Significantly, the figures do not take into account possible effects of the change of focus of Port Sultan Qaboos announced by the government recently.

The continuing robust upturn will result in Sohar Port's biggest growth since it came into operation, SIPC said, citing Sohar's advantageous location as an Ideal point of entry for products shipped around the Gulf countries and as a gateway to the rest of the world.

Curtains come down on Salalah Tourism Festival 2011



SALALAH — Curtains came down on the Salalah Tourism Festival 2011 yesterday which witnessed participation of a large number of citizens, residents and tourists in various activities and programmes held during the 30 days of the festival. — ONA



Omantel extends offers

From page 1

The Super Off-Peak rate will also be extended to all day on Fridays helping thousands of expatriate customers to call home and talk longer for less to friends and family.

Commenting on the new promotional period, Haitham Abdullah al Kharusi, Vice-President of Consumer Business Unit at Omantel, said: "We have decided this year to help our consumers to celebrate Ramadhan with friends and family around the country and overseas by giving them the opportunity to talk for longer at more convenient times of the day.

"Ramadhan is a time for families and we wanted to ensure that all of our customers from wherever they

hail from could benefit from these extended Ramadhan off-peak rates."

Ramadhan off-peak offer from Omantel will offer all Omantel and Oman Mobile prepaid and postpaid customers the opportunity to talk to families and friends locally and internationally at off-peak rates.

Customers can talk for as low as 7.5 bzs when calling locally from fixed to fixed where they can make international calls from their fixed line to the UAE, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh for 89 bzs per minute only.

For calls made from mobile to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh during the offer period, super off-peak charge of 98 bzs per minute will be applied.

Sohar Aluminium honours 75 students



MUSCAT — Sohar Aluminium (SA) honoured 75 male and female students at the end of its summer training programme for students of Omani colleges and faculties.

A farewell party was organised at Crown Plaza Hotel under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Hinai, Human Resources

and Corporate Affairs General Manager at SA.

This raining programme came as part of the efforts exerted by the company to allow the students apply the aspects of their scientific studies inside the different departments of the company according to their speciality.

It also aimed at acquainting these students with the work course inside the company and acquiring the appropriate practical skills.

Dr Al Hinai thanked the students, during his speech at the party, on completing the training programme and benefiting from SA's expertise in the technical, engineering and administrative fields. He commended the students for sharing their mutual ideas and wished them a brilliant future in their scientific and practical life.

Lisa Christowitz, Communications Manager at SA, praised the hard work done by everyone involved in this training programme.

She also recognised the efforts exerted by SA department leaders to ensure students received on-the-job-training and also a platform to enhance their knowledge in an industrial working environment.

The training programme was held over a two-month period. As many as 75 trainees were accepted from Colleges of Technology, Colleges of Applied Sciences and Sultan Qaboos University.

Arabic Classes

Starting from 13.08.2011

Levels - 1, 2 & 3

Timings: 5-7pm / 7-9pm

50 hours, 10 weeks

Also: Special morning classes!!

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RAY raises funds for Japanese quake victims



MUSCAT — Board members and employees of Rukun al Yaqeen (RAY) International LLC organised a fundraiser in aid of the victims of the earthquake in Japan. The proceeds were presented to Seiji Morimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate, when he visited the offices of RAY International last week.

RAY International, which has been doing business with Japanese companies for the last several years, was rep-

resented at the ceremony by senior company executives, including Tameem al Mahrouqi, Managing Director of RAY International Energy Division, and Zakaria Abdul Aziz, Managing Director of RAY International Oil and Gas Division.

In comments, Ambassador Morimoto expressed deep appreciation for the solidarity and sympathy still strongly seen in Oman as demonstrated by RAY International, more than four months since

the March 11 tragedy.

He presented an overview of Japan's current situation and concluded with the nation's determination to revive and regain its glory and commercial brilliance, citing its recent efforts in the field of renewable energy, and so on.

The donation will be deposited into the special account named "Friends of Japan" and transferred later to the Japanese Red Cross Society.

Pvt sector on right track

From page 1

He said the OCCI plays a pivotal role in boosting economy, trade and investment at local, regional and world levels through a series of specialised activities and committees that work according to carefully studied plans and strategies to ensure the growth and development of all sectors.

He pointed out that during Ramadhan, meetings will be held with officials and those in charge of economic and trade sectors in the Sultanate to discuss issues related to the economic sector and the private sector in particular.

OCCI will also host other meetings that will discuss issues such as Islamic banking, sectoral committees, tenders, local products, agriculture and fisheries, consumer protection and scientific research. Al Khonji called on traders of foodstuff and consumer goods to maintain price stability during Ramadhan and retain the prices at the current levels, besides ensuring the availability of goods throughout the month. — ONA

Dar al Atta launches ‘One Riyal’ Ramadhan Campaign

By Hasan Kamoonpuri

MUSCAT — Dar Al Atta has launched its "One Rial" Ramadhan Campaign designed to help needy families during the month. The campaign was launched here yesterday by members from Dar Al Atta.

The "One Rial" campaign will run for three months and has been introduced to allow people to donate a minimum of one rial from their monthly salaries which will enable Dar Al Atta to help the underprivileged families in Muscat by providing them with the necessary items they need during the month.



Commenting on the launch of the campaign, Head of Dar al Atta Maryam al Zidjali said: "We are very happy to launch this initiative during Ramadhan. The idea behind the "One Rial" campaign is to help those less fortunate members of our community by asking others to donate only one rial from their salary to help those families that cannot afford to buy everything they need during the month."

She added: "People have two ways to participate in the campaign. They can transfer one rial from their bank account to the association's bank account or Oman Mobile subscribers can send an SMS with the word "donate" to 90001 and one rial will be added to your bill. Dar al Atta is a Muscat-based non-profit voluntary organisation which was set up in 2002. It endeavours to better the lives of those less fortunate than themselves both in the capital and beyond. The group periodically organises fundraising events to help others.

Azerbaijani officer killed near Karabakh

BAKU — An Azerbaijani army officer has been killed by Armenian forces on the frontline close to the disputed region of Nagorny Karabakh, the defence ministry in Baku said yesterday.

The Azerbaijani lieutenant died after a bullet hit him in the head on Friday, a defence ministry spokesman said, in the latest deadly incident. Named as Lieutenant Elshad Gasanov, he was the 14th soldier to be killed this year amid continued tensions over the mountainous region. — AFP

Helicopter crash in Nigeria kills three

LAGOS — A helicopter crash in southwestern Nigeria has left three people, including the pilot, dead, an emergency official said yesterday after a six-hour search in a wooded area to locate the wreckage.

The private helicopter crashed on Friday outside Ife-Odan in Osun state in a mountainous area, said Yushau Shuaib, spokesman for the national emergency management agency (NEMA).

He said that three people aboard the OAS helicopter —

the pilot and two women — died. Full details of the crash remained unclear, including the cause, he said.

"The crash happened in an extremely difficult mountainous area, difficult to access. No vehicle or motorcycle can access the area. It is just now that our officers are bringing down the three corpses," he said. The helicopter, travelling from Lagos to the north-central city of Ilorin, crashed on a hilltop more than 1,000 feet above sea level, he said.

Protesters freed after paying fine

HARARE — Zimbabwean authorities have released a group of 13 human rights demonstrators who were arrested while protesting the detention of activists from Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's party, the group said yesterday.

The 13 demonstrators were part of a protest by the group Restoration of Human Rights, which had gathered on Wednesday at the high court in central Harare to press for the release of seven people being held without charge in what activists called a crackdown on opponents of President Robert Mugabe.

They were released late on Friday after agreeing to each pay a \$10 (seven-euro) fine for a charge of making a public nuisance.

"We paid the fines for them not because they were wrong, but to avoid having them spend the weekend in filthy cells," Restoration of Human Rights spokesman Stendrick Zvorwadza said. — AFP



LARISA Popa, 24, reacts after being crowned Miss Universe Romania 2011 in Bucharest yesterday. Popa will represent Romania at the Miss Universe beauty pageant due to be held on September 12 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — Reuters

‘Malawi risks becoming next Zimbabwe’

JOHANNESBURG — Malawi, once considered a southern African success story, risks going down the same road as regional basket case Zimbabwe, said the leader of recent anti-government protests that left 19 dead.

Undule Mwakasungula had been in hiding since security forces launched a violent crackdown to quell two days of demonstrations that erupted on July 20.

Re-emerging in South Africa for a forum on Malawi held on Friday in Johannesburg, the chair of the Human Rights Consultative Council — an umbrella organisation of rights groups that organised the protests — said Malawi is undergoing twin economic and political crises that are reminiscent of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

"We are almost Zimbabwe, both in the economy and in political governance," Mwakasungula, who also heads the non-profit Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation in Lilongwe, said in an interview. He drew parallels between Mugabe and Malawian President Bingu wa Mutharika, who has been criticised for a series of increasingly autocratic moves seen as restricting political freedoms.

"There are similarities in terms of their president and Bingu wa Mutharika, their style of leadership. They're both using a heavy hand in terms of their governance, in terms of how they want to rule. And also disregarding other branches of government — the judiciary, the legislature," Mwakasungula said.

Mutharika, who came to

office in 2004, has been criticised for expelling rivals from the ruling party, expanding presidential power and signing laws that have restricted protests, media freedom and lawsuits against the government.

The moves have alienated foreign donors, causing the United States and Britain to cut their aid to the impoverished country at the same time it is facing massive fuel shortages that have forced drivers to queue overnight for petrol.

Mutharika has also presided over a foreign exchange crisis that has seen international currencies become virtually unavailable, leaving businesses in the import-dependent country unable to buy goods and materials abroad.

"Malawians right now are frustrated," Mwakasungula said. "Malawians are disgruntled in terms of how the country is being governed, how the economy is moving. They want to have more voice."

The day of the demonstrations, Mwakasungula says he and his fellow organisers were rounded up and beaten by police at the church in Lilongwe where they had gathered to monitor the protests.

"It was a fracas. The police were just brutal. They were just animals, really," he said.

Mwakasungula said he was briefly detained, then released to get medical attention. Afterward, he went into hiding.

But he said he plans to return home and organise another demonstration, even though his lawyers have told him there is a warrant out for his arrest on treason charges — which carries the death penalty in Malawi.

Spotlight on Oman’s heritage

From page 1

The Scouts set up a factory run by wind power, dug rivers and planted lands as a model required for the whole world.

The Sultanate's delegation visited the Mexican delegation camp together with the Scouts from Germany, Sweden and Spain aimed at exchanging cultures and familiarising with other people's heritage.

The Sultanate's Scouts also performed traditional Omani sports accompanied by Omani folklore.

The delegations from Costa Rica, Britain and Norway visited the Sultanate's camp where they ate Omani traditional dishes and familiarised with the Sultanate's rich civilization, history, achievements and heritage. — ONA

S African who spilled drink on Zuma treated like ‘murderer’

JOHANNESBURG — A South African racehorse owner who was convicted of assault for spilling a drink near President Jacob Zuma says he has been treated "like a murderer," local media reported yesterday.

"It was an accident," Daryl Peense told the *Saturday Star* of the incident at last year's Durban July, the country's largest horse race, when he spilled his drink over the president.

"I understand the seriousness of the matter — if it were true — but I feel like I am being treated like a murderer."

Peense admitted in Durban Magistrate's Court that he spilled his drink as Zuma passed below his balcony, but said it was an accident caused by people pushing to get a view of the president.

However, one of Zuma's bodyguards told the court he saw Peense deliberately pour a tumbler of whisky and water over the president's head, missing him only because an alert guard used his jacket to shelter Zuma. Peense, who testified that he was drunk at the time, was found guilty on Wednesday. He faces sentencing on September 7. — AFP

Jet runs off runway in Guyana

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — A Caribbean Airlines jet early yesterday ran off the runway on landing at Guyana's Cheddi Jagan International Airport.

Several persons have had to be rescued, officials said.

Fire Chief, Marlon Gentle, said teams are still on the ground helping passengers of the flight, which originated in New York.

None of the 154 passengers and eight crew members was seriously injured, authorities said.

Health Minister Leslie Ramsammy said that one person suffered a broken leg and several others sustained minor bruises.

They were being treated at a nearby district hospital and Guyana's main healthcare institution — the state run Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

The Boeing 737-800, operated by the Trinidad and Tobago state-owned Caribbean Airlines, was broken in two, after running off the runway and down a slope. Police and soldiers have cordoned off the crash site. — AFP

‘Africa heroin trafficking hub’

VIENNA — Drug traffickers faced with restrictions to transit routes through Asia and the Middle East are turning to eastern Africa, driving up instability and increasing substance abuse, a United Nations report said.

The UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said Africa's emergence as an important heroin transport route in 2009 was of serious concern in a region ill-equipped to fight trafficking or care for people addicted to drugs.

"Drug seizures and the arrest of traffickers indicated that African drug traffickers — particularly West African networks — are increasingly transporting Afghan heroin from Pakistan into East Africa for onward shipment to Europe and elsewhere," it said in a global report on the Afghan opium trade. — Reuters

**DIWAN OF ROYAL COURT
SOHAR DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

Advertisement

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Sohar Development Office may obtain tender documents for the following, on any working day between 9.30 a.m. and 12 Noon, from **Quantity Surveying & Contracts, Sohar Development Office Tel: 26842322, Fax: 26842070** on payment of non-refundable tender fee as noted against each tender below:

Tender No.	Description of Work	Tender Fee	Return Date
PRS/10/035	Construction of Shelters for Fishing Equipment at Majees (Re- Tender)	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/049	Supply of Clothes for Sohar Municipality Labours	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/059	Construction of Road Humps at Different Locations	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/061	Cost Consultant (Post Contract) for Sohar Water Supply Network Phase II in Sohar	R.O. 30	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/062	Supply of Agriculture Materials, Fertilizers & Planting Sack for Landscaping Department	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/063	Civil Works for Al Hambar Park	R.O. 30	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/064	Supply of HDPE Pipes to SDO	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/065	Supply of Irrigation Materials, Seasonal Flowers & Grasses Stolon for Al Hambar Park	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/066	Supply & Fix Play Equipments, Marble Benches & Pins for Al Hambar Park	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/068	Hire of Labours to SDO	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/069	Manufacture & Fix of Wooden Pergolas for Al Hambar Park	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011
PRS/11/070	Beautification Works near Al Na'eem R/A at Al Tarceef	R.O. 25	Monday 29/8/2011

The **Form of Tender** (in small envelope) under wax sealed cover shall be placed in the tender box location in our **Quantity Surveying & Contracts, by 10.00 a.m.** All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.

The Tenderers shall submit with Form of the Tender (**Financial Offer**) a **Certified Cheque or Tender Bond** in the sum of 2% of the tender value valid for **90 days**, issued by a locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Tenders without such bond shall be rejected.

Sohar Development Office is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may be received.

For enquiries, call: 26840840
P.O. Box 140, Sohar, PC: 311, Sultanate of Oman
للاستفسار : ٢٦٨٤٠٨٤٠
ص.ب: ١٤٠ - الرمز البريدي: ٣١١ ص.حار- سلطنة عمان

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Interested Companies specialized in the field of this Tender and registered with Sohar Development Office may obtain tender documents for the following tender, on any working day between 8 a.m. and 12 Noon, from **Quantity Surveying Section, Sohar Development Office** on payment of non-refundable tender fee as noted below:

Tender No.	Description of Work	Tender Fee	Return Date
PRS/11/060	Supervision of Sohar Water Supply Network Phase II in Sohar	R.O. 150	Monday 29/08/2011

The filled in **Form of Tender** (in the envelope provided) addressed to **His Excellency the Chairman, Main Tender Committee, Diwan of Royal Court, Muscat**, under wax sealed cover, shall be placed in the Tender Box kept at Directorate of Quantity Surveying & Contracts, **(First Floor Room No.D1050) Muscat Municipality HQ, Darsait, by 9.00 a.m.** on the above date. The remainder of the tender documents shall be handed over at the same time to **QS & Contracts Directorate**. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.

The tenderers shall submit with the Form of Tender (Financial Offer) a **Certified Cheque or Tender Bond** in the sum of 2% of the tender value valid for 90 days, issued by a locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Tenders without such bond shall be rejected.

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A FLOODED residential area in Aga town, Niigata prefecture, northern Japan yesterday. — Reuters

300,000 flee floods

TOKYO — Floods claimed their first victim in Japan and nearly 300,000 people were urged to flee their homes yesterday as a weather system that killed dozens on the Korean peninsula swept the country.

Local governments in the central province of Niigata and tsunami-hit Fukushima issued the guidance after the national weather agency urged citizens to be on maximum alert against more flooding and mudslides.

Helicopter footage on NHK showed bridges over the Shinano River in Niigata partially submerged, while trees and telephone polls had been knocked down.

Kamo City in Niigata was extensively flooded, with water submerging roads.

Forecasters warned that the rains could continue to be torrential after reaching 1,000 millimetres to date in Sanjo City, Niigata, 250 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, since they started on Wednesday.

A total of 296,000 people had been asked to evacuate their homes by early yesterday, according to public broadcaster NHK, but no compul-

sory orders were issued despite muddy swollen rivers, broken dykes and flooded houses. The first Japanese victim, Eiichi Murayama, 67, was confirmed dead in Tokamachi City, in Niigata, early yesterday.

“We found a car fallen in River Nakasawa last night... and found the driver’s body downstream,” an official at Niigata police said of the drowned man.

Four other people are missing in the area, including a 93-year-old woman who was swept away in a river and a 25-year-old man who was believed to have fallen into a flooding river while driving, police said.

Officials had requested the Self-Defence Force dispatch troops to join the search for missing people and help those stranded by mudslides and floods. A 63-year-old man was listed as missing in Fukushima, whose Pacific coasts were hit by a massive tsunami on March 11 that crippled an atomic power plant in the world’s worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

— AFP

US and China meet, arms decision soon

WASHINGTON — The United States and China have held top-level talks on Taiwan, with Washington working preemptively to avoid a fallout as a decision nears on whether to sell fighter-jets to Taiwan.

US officials have said that they will decide by October 1 on whether to sell F-16 jets to Taiwan, a longstanding request from the self-ruling island which fears that China’s rapidly growing military has gained a major edge.

Wang Yi, the top Chinese official in charge of Taiwan, met with Deputy Secretary of State William Burns. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton joined part of the closed-door session, a State Department official said.

China’s state-run Xinhua news agency said Wang “stressed that the Chinese mainland has been steadfast in opposing the US arms sales to Taiwan, because it harms Sino-US ties and the peace-

ful development of the cross-strait relations.”

State Department spokesman Mark Toner did not give details of the talks but said it was “important that we have dialogue with China on a range of issues,” which “doesn’t, certainly, preclude our strong relations with Taiwan.”

Burns took office as the State Department’s number two on Thursday after his nomination was held up by Senator John Cornyn, who said he relented only after Clinton agreed to release a long-delayed report on Taiwan’s arms needs.

The jets would be assembled in Cornyn’s state of Texas. Congress is a stronghold of support for Taiwan, with the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week voting without dissent to urge “immediate steps” for arms sales.

In Taiwan, the *Apple Daily* reported yesterday that Taipei’s defence minister Kao

Hua-chu is planning to visit the US in September to push the F-16 request.

The United States switched its recognition to Beijing in 1979 but Congress at the same time approved the Taiwan Relations Act which requires the United States to provide the island enough weapons for self-defence.

The law states that the US administration will make the decision without consulting China.

Admiral Mike Mullen, the top US military officer, said he spoke about arms sales to Taiwan during a visit earlier in July to Beijing and: “Clearly, the Chinese would strongly prefer us to stop doing this.”

But he said he explained to his Chinese counterpart, General Chen Bingde, that the United States has “responsibilities, and they’re legal responsibilities, in my country to support the Taiwan Relations Act.” — AFP

Rail operator apologises

BEIJING — Shanghai’s subway operator has apologised for a signalling error that saw a train take a wrong turn during peak hours, less than a week after a similar fault killed 40 people on a high-speed line.

No one was hurt but passengers were alarmed by the mistake in the incident which took place on Thursday evening. The Shanghai Shentong Metro Company apologised on its website on Friday evening for the latest incident, which saw a train veer right when it should have taken a left turn. — AFP

INDIAN SCHOOL SOHAR

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Electricity Holding Co. SAOC

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT – Pilot Billing & Collection System

The Electricity Holding Company SAOC (EHC) invites participation in the following tender:-

No. of the Tender	Description	Last date for collection of tender documents	Last date for proposal submission	Tender fee
09/2011	To implement a pilot billing and collection system.	06 Aug. 2011	22 Aug. 2011	RO. 25/- (Non-refundable)

Tender no. 09/2011. experienced billing systems vendors with strong local presence in Oman may participate and collect the tender specifications and conditions from EHC during the official working hours from 1st August 2011, 07:30 am to 3:00 pm against payment of the above fee.

Proposals are to be submitted by the **22 August 2011 at 12 noon.**

The EHC is not obliged to accept the lowest or any bid.

Electricity Holding Company SAOC

In Ernst & Young Building, (Near CCC Complex) Qurum, Muscat
P.O. Box 850, Postal Code 116, Sultanate of Oman
Phone Numbers: 24559285 / 24559200

China’s defence needs

BEIJING — China needs at least three aircraft carriers to defend its interests, a general said, days after the state media broadcast footage of its first carrier in a rare public mention of the project.

“If we consider our neighbours, India will have three aircraft carriers by 2014 and Japan will have three carriers by 2014,” General Luo Yuan, a senior researcher with the Academy of Military Sciences, was quoted as saying by *Beijing News*.

“So I think the number (for China) should not be less than three so we can defend our rights and our maritime interests effectively.”

His comments, published on Friday, came after China sought to downplay the capability of its first aircraft carrier, saying on Wednesday the vessel would be used for training and “research”.

Beijing believes that the three Japanese carriers it referred to, built for helicopter operations, could eventually be converted into full aircraft carriers.

China recently confirmed it was revamping an old Soviet ship to be its first carrier, a project that has added to regional worries over the country’s fast military expansion and growing assertiveness on territorial issues.

“We are currently re-fitting the body of an old aircraft carrier, and will use it for scientific research, experiments and training,” defence ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng said. — AFP

Landmines swept away

SEOUL — North Korean landmine parts apparently churned up by torrential rains have washed up across the border in South Korea, prompting a search for more weapons, the defence ministry said yesterday.

The wooden shells of two North Korean landmines were found on Thursday in a cistern near the Hantan River in Cheolwon County, just south of the inter-Korean border, it said.

“They were just empty wooden shells of landmines. They have no explosives and detonators inside. We assume they might have been washed away,” a spokesman for the defence ministry said. Soldiers were searching areas near the Hantan and Namdaechon rivers for other North Korean mines.

Banners have been put up and leaflets handed out to warn holidaymakers in the area of the possibility of stray mines and ask them to report anything suspicious to authorities. North Korean mines have been carried across the border by floods and landslides in the past. Last year, dozens of wood-cased mines washed up in the South after heavy rains, killing one South Korean and injuring another.

A landslide triggered by this week’s torrential rains also dislodged mines planted decades ago on Mount Umyeon in southern Seoul to protect a military installation.

Soldiers said they were still looking for about 10 mines there. Most of the 1,000 mines laid at the site were removed between 1999 and 2006, but a few remain unaccounted for. Rains have pounded the Korean peninsula over the past week, killing at least 59 people and leaving thousands homeless. — AFP



AREEJ VEGETABLE OILS & DERIVATIVES SAOC

P.O. Box 22, P.C. 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman e mail: mail@avod.com.om

MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR 6 MONTHS ENDED 30th JUNE 2011

Sales turnover during the first half of 2011 was RO 46.747 Million compared to RO 33.583 Million in the corresponding period of 2010. The net profit after tax for the first six months of 2011 was RO 0.834 Million as against RO 0.901 Million during the corresponding period in 2010.

The prices of vegetable oils continued to be volatile in the first six months of 2011. AVOD continues to closely monitor and to effectively manage the volatility in prices and markets. The Company was also affected by the prevalent social unrest in Oman during March 2011, resulting in increased labour costs in subsequent months. Management is working towards improving margins in an attempt to minimize the financial effect of the increased labour costs.

The Company holds the Integrated Management System ISO 9001 : 2000 (Total Quality Management - TQM) / ISO 14001 : 2004 (Environmental Management System - EMS)/ ISO 22000 : 2005 (Food Safety Management System - FSMS) certification.

The Company complies with Corporate Governance Regulations of the Capital Market Authority. The Company’s products meet Omani or other applicable quality standards and the Company complies with environmental and food safety laws.

GENERAL MANAGER

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2011

	6 months ended 30-Jun-2011 Group and Parent Company Rial '000	6 months ended 30-Jun-2010 Group and Parent Company Rial '000
Sales	46,747	33,583
Gross profit	3,390	3,372
Depreciation & amortisation	(81)	(78)
Administration & selling expenses	(2,250)	(2,147)
Operating profit	1,059	1,147
Finance charges	(129)	(160)
Other income	16	35
Profit before taxation	946	1,022
Taxation	(112)	(121)
Profit after tax	834	901

CHAIRMAN

DIRECTOR

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 JUNE 2011

	30-Jun-2011 Group Rial 000	30-Jun-2011 Parent Company Rial 000	30-Jun-10 Group Rial 000	30-Jun-10 Parent Company Rial 000
Fixed Assets	13,430	13,430	13,551	13,551
Intangible Assets	6	6	62	62
Investment in a subsidiary	-	32	-	32
Investments available for sale	-	-	-	-
	13,436	13,468	13,613	13,645
Current Assets				
Inventories	19,078	19,078	12,257	12,257
Trade receivables	10,496	10,496	6,875	6,875
Receivable from related parties	51	51	45	45
Bank and Cash	19	19	13	13
Other Assets	682	682	546	546
	30,326	30,326	19,736	19,736
Current Liabilities				
Trade & Other creditors	24,000	24,000	14,150	14,150
Payable to related parties	17	17	55	55
Due to a subsidiary	-	32	-	32
Bank Loans and Overdrafts	6,337	6,337	5,262	5,262
	30,354	30,386	19,467	19,499
Long term liabilities				
Deferred Taxation	391	391	388	388
End of service benefits	1,159	1,159	1,219	1,219
Long term loans	3,483	3,483	4,380	4,380
	5,033	5,033	5,987	5,987
Net assets	8,375	8,375	7,895	7,895
Shareholders' funds				
Share capital	4,600	4,600	4,600	4,600
Share premium	77	77	77	77
Legal reserve	1,292	1,292	1,111	1,111
Distributable Reserve	576	576	576	576
Retained earnings	1,830	1,830	1,531	1,531
	8,375	8,375	7,895	7,895

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Police add computer probe to phone-hack inquiry

LONDON — London police probing phone hacking at Rupert Murdoch's defunct *News of the World* tabloid are broadening their investigation to allegations of computer hacking, they said yesterday.

A new investigative team will be set up to tackle the new allegations, reporting to Sue Akers, the officer in charge of the phone hacking probe, the Metropolitan Police Service said in a statement.

"Operation Tuleta is currently considering a number of allegations regarding breach of privacy, received by the MPS since January 2011, which fall outside the remit of (phone-hacking) Operation Weeting, including computer hacking," the statement by the London police force said. "Some aspects of this operation will move forward to a formal investigation."

London police reopened their investigation into phone hacking in January, shortly after the prime minister's communications chief, Andy Coulson, resigned because of allegations of phone hacking at the *News of the World* while he was the paper's editor. The paper's royal reporter Clive Goodman and private detective Glenn Mulcaire were jailed in 2007 for intercepting the voicemail messages of royal aides.

On Friday Mulcaire issued a statement through his lawyer saying he was not acting on his own initiative when he intercepted phone messages while in the pay of the newspaper.

Allegations of hacking at News Corp's British newspapers, in particular reports that journalists accessed the voicemails of murder victims, have triggered a judicial inquiry and calls by some politicians to cap News Corp's media ownership.

Blackout freezes Sydney international airport

SYDNEY — The travel plans of thousands of Australians were disrupted yesterday by a power outage at Sydney's international airport.

Australia's busiest air terminal was blacked out for an hour and a half, crippling security screening and check-in and delaying "thousands" of passengers, a Sydney Airport spokesman said. "The cause of the failure is under investigation," he said, estimating that it would take "several hours" to get back on schedule.

Back-up generators also took "some time" to come on, he added, compounding the problem. The reason for the generator problems was also being investigated, he said. Passengers said the outage brought customs and security to "a standstill" and there was "chaos" in the terminal, with huge lines as people were manually processed.

"Madness at Sydney Airport! Nobody going anywhere!" one passenger wrote on Twitter. "Absolute chaos at Sydney Airport. Am definitely going to need that massage when I get to Bali ... if I get there, that is," another said.

UN renews Darfur peacekeeping mission

KHARTOUM — The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region (UNAMID) for one year.

In the resolution passed late on Friday, the Security Council also welcomed the planned review of the number of uniformed personnel required for the mission to operate effectively, a UN statement said.

UNAMID, established in 2007, is the largest UN peace-keeping operation in the world with around 23,000 uniformed personnel and an annual budget, up to June 30, of more than \$1.8 billion.

The Security Council also demanded that all parties to the Darfur conflict, "including all armed movements, engage in talks immediately, and without preconditions," to reach a permanent ceasefire and a comprehensive peace settlement.

Earlier this month, the government signed a peace accord in Doha with the Liberation and Justice Movement, a coalition of a rebel splinter factions.

But Darfur's main armed groups — the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and factions of the Sudan Liberation Army headed by Minni Minnawi and Abdelwahid Nur — did not sign the agreement, with JEM sources saying it failed to address the key issues. Some analysts say the accord was aimed primarily at pleasing the international community, rather than the people of Darfur.

Eight injured in Italy migrant centre riot

ROME — Eight police officers were injured overnight as detainees burned mattresses and threw bottles in a riot at an immigrant detention centre outside Rome, Italian news agency Ansa reported yesterday.

The riot broke out when four Algerian detainees were brought back to the centre after trying to escape the closely-guarded Ponte Galeria facility near Rome's Fiumicino airport — essentially a holding centre for deportations.

The riot lasted around three hours and detainees trashed rooms and threw rocks, bottles and metal pipes at police. Firemen put out several blazes.

The protest follows similar scenes on Wednesday at a centre in Sicily in which 300 asylum-seekers — many of them African migrant workers from Libya — blocked a road and set off fires, asking to be granted refugee status.

Hundreds of people were left stranded on the tarmac, tantalisingly close to gangways left frozen by the blackout.

"Sitting about 20 feet from Sydney gate waiting because of power outage at airport — 2.5 hours late and counting!" one man tweeted from his jet seat.

New York's Met to return 19 artefacts to Egypt

CAIRO — New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art has agreed to return to Cairo 19 artefacts dating back to the time of ancient Egypt's teenage king Tutankhamen, the state news agency Mena said yesterday.

Egypt has been pushing for the repatriation of major pharaonic treasures it says were plundered by foreign powers, including the Rosetta Stone now in the British Museum and Queen Nefertiti's bust from Berlin's Neues Museum.

The agreement between the New York museum and Egypt's antiquities council on the return of the artefacts was signed in November after a series of negotiations, Mena said.

The objects, added to the Met's collection in the early 20th century, include a bronze dog only two centimetres in height, and part of a sphinx-shaped bracelet once owned by the niece of Howard Carter, the British archaeologist who discovered Tutankhamen's tomb, Mena said.

The artefacts will arrive in Cairo on Tuesday, Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, was quoted as saying, and will be put on display at the Egyptian Museum. — Agencies

Zara and rugby star marry in Britain's royal wedding

EDINBURGH — Queen Elizabeth II's eldest granddaughter Zara Phillips marries England rugby star Mike Tindall yesterday, in a low-key event far removed from the spectacle of this year's other British royal wedding.

The couple, both world-beating sports stars, tie the knot at Edinburgh's Canongate Kirk in a private ceremony mid-afternoon that has little in common with that of Phillips' cousin, Prince William, when he married the former Kate Middleton three months ago.

All the senior royals, including William and Catherine, are expected but the kirk holds only 400 people — compared with the 1,900 who filled Westminster Abbey for the April 29 service, which was watched by two billion viewers worldwide.

The reception will be held at the nearby Palace of Holyroodhouse, the queen's official residence in Scotland, although the party started early with a drinks reception on Friday night on the Royal Yacht

Britannia.

Phillips, 30, is the younger child of the queen's only daughter Princess Anne and 13th in line to the throne.

But her parents decided that she and her brother Peter would not have titles in an effort to give them a normal life — and that is what Phillips and Tindall, 32, have tried to do, when the pressures of their careers allow it.

She is a former equestrian eventing world champion, while Tindall played in England's 2003 World Cup-winning team and captained the side in their victorious 2011 Six Nations campaign.

The pair met in 2003 in Sydney, as the England squad celebrated winning the World Cup. Tindall, the jovial, broken-nosed Gloucester captain, claims it was his "pure charm" that won her heart.

The couple now live in a regency townhouse in Cheltenham, southwest England, and have largely kept their relationship out of the spotlight.

During a two-hour party on Friday, Phillips, wearing a

white one-shoulder dress with a blue print design, and Tindall mingled with guests on deck of the ship as a live band played and waiters served champagne and canapes.

Catherine, wearing a mid-length green dress, attended with William and her brother-in-law Prince Harry, although there was no sign of the queen, her husband Prince Philip or William's father Prince Charles and his wife Camilla.

Although it has failed to garner the same global interest as April's wedding, the prospect of all the British royals in town drew several hundred wellwishers to the Canongate Kirk on Edinburgh's Royal Mile yesterday.

"I want to see the royals. I think Zara is a really nice girl, not posh. She is just down to earth," said Trish, a 59-year-old Scottish woman, waiting behind a barrier on the short road that leads from the Kirk to the reception venue.

About 30 people camped out overnight for a good view, including Margaret Kittle, a 76-year-old from Ontario in

Canada.

"I flew over last Saturday and have been here since last night," said Kittle, wearing a Canada hat.

"I started following the royals after I saw George VI and the Queen back home in Canada when I was four-years-old."

Phillips and Tindall attended a final run-through of the service on Friday afternoon at the 321-year-old kirk, which has a light interior, white walls and unusual pale blue pews.

Both dressed in jeans, they spent about 50 minutes inside with the Reverend Neil Gardner, who will conduct the ceremony, and Tindall's best man, Iain Balshaw, his former Bath and England colleague.

They ended with a brief kiss outside the church to the delight of the crowd.

"I think it's really good that they've chosen Edinburgh to get married," said Mary, one of the well-wishers outside the kirk yesterday.

"And I think it's good that they've chosen something that suits them." — AFP

Ukraine mourns 32 dead in mine accidents

LUGANSK — Rescue workers in Ukraine recovered more bodies yesterday as the death toll from two separate mining accidents in the country's notoriously perilous coal pits rose to 32. Fears were rising meanwhile for five miners still missing.

President Viktor Yanukovich announced a day of mourning today, while Prime Minister Mykola Azarov is to attend a funeral service for victims the same day and meet their relatives.

Twenty-four miners died after an explosion early on Friday at the Sukhodolskaya-Vostochnaya coal mine in the eastern Lugansk region, the emergency ministry said, revising an earlier toll of 20. Two people are still missing.

The toll from a separate accident hours later was also revised, from seven to eight, with three still missing, after a mine headframe collapsed at the Bazhanova pit in the town of Makiyivka in the neighbouring Donetsk region.

The twin disasters were the country's worst mining accidents since more than 100 miners died in a mine explosion in 2007.

The blast hit the Sukhodolskaya-Vostochnaya mine at around 2 am on Friday, in an air passage at a depth of more than 2,950 feet, where 28 miners were working at the time, the emergency ministry said. "The provisional explanation is a methane explosion," the regional administration said yesterday.

Rescuers have begun clearing gas from an emergency access tunnel into the mine, in order to go down in search of the missing miners, a spokeswoman said. — AFP



ENGLAND rugby player Mike Tindall (L) and his new bride Britain's Zara Phillips after their wedding ceremony at Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh, Scotland, yesterday. — AFP

Sudan, South to finalise talks 'by end-Sept'

JUBA — South Sudan said yesterday it has agreed with the north to finalise talks on the key issues of oil, currency and borders by the end of September, after the first round of negotiations since independence.

"We have agreed that by September 30 we will reach a final agreement that will be the basis of the (economic) relationship between the two states," the south's chief negotiator Pagan Amum told reporters in Juba.

The agreement would cover the oil sector and the currency issue, Amum said after returning from Addis Ababa, where the African Union-mediated

talks resumed this week following their suspension prior to southern independence on July 9.

The two issues had prompted Amum, who is the south's minister of peace and secretary-general of its ruling party, the SPLM, to warn Monday of an "economic war" with the north, which he accused of imposing oil transit fees that amounted to "daylight robbery."

Around 75 per cent of Sudan's total crude production of 470,000 barrels per day is pumped from the south.

Khartoum's cash-strapped government is desperate to offset the loss of southern oil

revenues, which represented some 36 per cent of its income prior to partition.

The north approved a law last week imposing fees on the landlocked south's use of northern oil infrastructure.

But yesterday, Amum said Khartoum had agreed to charge pipeline transit fees "according to international standards."

The negotiating teams in the Ethiopian capital also discussed how the south and the international community would help Khartoum to recover its losses, which Amum said were about \$ 340 million per month depending on oil prices. — AFP

Massacre suspect had 'several targets'

OSLO — The self-confessed Norwegian killer Anders Behring Breivik told police he had several targets in mind when quizzed after the attacks that killed 77 people, a police prosecutor said yesterday.

Norwegian media reported that the right-wing extremist, who admitted to the July 22 shooting on an island summer camp and a car-bomb blast in Oslo earlier the same day, also wanted to hit the royal palace and the ruling party headquarters.

"During his interrogations he said in general terms that he was interested in other targets," prosecutor Paal-Fredrik Hjord Kraby told a press briefing.

"They were targets which would seem natural for a terrorist," he said, declining to give details.

According to the *Verdens Gang* tabloid, the royal palace was a target because of its symbolic value.

The Labour party headquarters were targeted, the paper said, because of the

party's role in creating the multi-cultural society so loathed by Behring Breivik.

The tabloid, which did not reveal its source, also said investigators believed Behring Breivik had trouble making explosives beyond those that killed eight people in the Oslo blast, which targeted government offices.

Another 69 people, mainly young, were killed in the shooting spree at a Labour Party summer camp on the island of Utoeya.

Behring Breivik, 32, believed he was engaged in a struggle to defend Europe against an Islamic invasion and despised anyone who believed in democracy, his lawyer, Geir Lippestad, has previously told the media.

Lippestad also told a newspaper on Friday that his client had planned to attack other targets.

"There were several projects of different scale for that Friday," Geir Lippestad was quoted as telling *Aftenposten*.

"Things happened that day, which I don't want to go into (here), which meant events unfolded differently from what he had planned," Lippestad added.

Norwegian police refused to identify other potential targets. However, one of the lead investigators, John Frederiksen, said: "What we can say on an operational level is that with the information obtained in the initial phase of our enquiries and from the elements published (by *Behring Breivik*), we have inspected a dozen sites to see if there was any kind of threat.

"We have not found anything" to back that up, he added.

In a report published late Friday, Norway's police intelligence unit, the PST, concluded there was no cause to raise the threat level in the country, given the "unique" nature of the July 22 attacks.

"Based on several factors, it is unlikely that the attacks will be followed by further similar terrorist attacks," the intelligence service said. — AFP



SERBIAN President Boris Tadic attends a special session of parliament over the unrest in the mostly ethnic Serb northern Kosovo after Pristina slapped a trade embargo on Serbia yesterday. — AFP



OPPOSITION leader Hassan al Turabi of the Popular Congress Party (PCP) during a news conference after his visit to Egypt at the party's headquarters in Khartoum yesterday. — Reuters



FORENSIC scientist of the Italian police Patrizia Stefanoni during the appeal hearing of US Amanda Knox in Perugia's courthouse yesterday. — AFP



NORTH Korean Vice-Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan (L) with Clifford Hart, Special Envoy to the Six Party Talks on North Korean De-Nuclearisation, upon his arrival yesterday in New York. Kim is in New York to hold talks on North Korea's nuclear weapon programme. — AFP



US troops from the Combined Task Force 1-67 under Afghanistan's International Security Assistance Force patrol with armoured vehicles in southern Afghanistan. All foreign combat forces are due to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, and last week the first set of security handovers from Nato to Afghan forces took place in seven parts of the country. — AFP

US lawmakers struggle but debt deal a far cry

WASHINGTON — A bitter mood prevailed on Capitol Hill as US lawmakers struggled yesterday to find a compromise measure to lift the nation's \$14.3 trillion debt limit three days before a deadline to avert a ruinous default.

A day after the Republican-led House of Representatives passed a bill to cut the deficit and raise the debt limit, Democrats who control the Senate pushed ahead with their own deficit-cutting plan.

Scrambling to put together legislation that could attract bipartisan support needed to pass it in the Senate, Democrats incorporated elements of a Senate Republican proposal.

Nearly all Republicans in the US Senate signed a letter saying they will not vote for a Democratic plan to raise the debt limit in a sign that the measure does not have the support it needs to advance in Congress.

Forty-three of the chamber's 47 Republicans signed the let-

ter, released yesterday.

Democrats need at least seven Republican votes to clear a procedural vote in the 100-seat chamber.

With entrenched differences remaining, back-channel talks held the best hope for a compromise. Unless Congress raises the debt ceiling, the government would be barred from further borrowing after Tuesday, according to the US Treasury, and could quickly run out of money to pay all its bills.

With tensions high, Democrats accused Senate Republicans of refusing to talk to them. Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell wanted the White House involved to ensure that any final bill has broad Democratic support, aides said.

The debt saga shifted to the Senate late on Friday after the House passed a deficit-cutting bill, breaking weeks of political inertia. The Senate, as expected, quickly killed that bill that would have extended the debt ceiling by just a few

months, but its earlier approval by the House lifted hopes that it could form part of a final compromise.

President Barack Obama urged lawmakers to strike a deal and head off what he has said would be an "inexcusable" default.

"There are multiple ways to resolve this problem," Obama, a Democrat, said in his weekly radio address. "Congress must find common ground on a plan that can get support from both parties in the House. And it's got to be a plan that I can sign by Tuesday."

The Senate was expected to consider the plan crafted by Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid. House Republicans said they expected to defeat that bill because it did not contain enough spending cuts.

"The Senate is burning up precious time by working all weekend on a doomed Reid bill that can't pass the House," a House Republican leadership aide said. — Agencies

Mexico to withdraw aid to Ciudad Juarez police

MEXICO CITY — In the latest chapter of a policing dispute, the Mexican government will withdraw \$4.8 million in annual aid to local police in the country's deadliest city of Ciudad Juarez.

The move is "due to the non respect of operational rules" required by the federal government, said a statement from the National System of Public Security. Authorities in Ciudad Juarez, which lies directly across from the US border city of El Paso, Texas, receive federal aid to train police and increase their salaries.

The ministry said the municipality has only trained 145 of 2,200 local police in the city between 2008 and 2010.

The move came after Ciudad Juarez police chief Julian Leyzaola complained he was shot

at by around 20 federal police as he approached a jail during a prison riot last Monday, in which 17 inmates died.

The public security ministry defended the actions of their officers, saying Leyzaola "broke a security cordon and passed a roadblock without stopping which was against protocol."

Ciudad Juarez authorities said they would issue a complaint about the third clash between federal and local police in the city this year.

The tension comes after city authorities announced that in September they will begin withdrawing federal police from patrols.

The city of 1.3 million has seen a sharp increase in violent attacks in recent years, blamed on disputes between drug gangs. — AFP

US govt cyber supplier hacked

WASHINGTON — Hackers with the loose-knit group Anonymous said on Friday they had broken into the network of US government contractor Mantech International Corp and posted some Nato-related correspondence online.

Anonymous, tweeting as AnonymousIRC, offered the correspondence between Mantech and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as proof of the breach.

Mantech, which claims the US Defence, State and Justice Departments among its clients, declined to comment.

Hackers associated with Lulz Security and Anonymous have claimed responsibility for cyber attacks on the US Central Intelligence Agency, the US Senate, Sony Corp websites and the website of Murdoch's British newspaper group, News International, among others.

Authorities made some arrests in connection with the breaches. — Reuters

Cuba approves flights from 9 more US cities

HAVANA — Air travel between the United States and Cuba will become easier with the opening of charter flights to the forbidden island from an additional nine US cities announced by Cuba authorities on Friday.

Cuban travel agency Havanatur Celimar said it added the cities of Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, Baltimore, Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans, Dallas, Houston and San Juan, Puerto Rico, to the list from where charter flights would be accepted.

Cuba is preparing for an increase in visitors from its long-time ideological foe under a recent loosening of travel restrictions by the Obama administration.

The United States, which maintains comprehensive sanctions on the island and bans tourism to Cuba, does not allow regular commercial flights between the two countries.

But the Obama administration has lifted all restrictions on Cuban Americans visiting their homeland and allowed religious, academic and other professional travel by Americans to Cuba.

Havana Celimar has a monopoly on the Cuban end of US charter flights and receives travellers on flights from Miami, New York and

Los Angeles.

The number of US citizens visiting Cuba increased last year by 20 per cent, to 63,000, according to Cuban statistics.

Some 350,000 Cuban Americans visited Cuba in 2010 after the Obama administration lifted all restrictions on their travel.

The travel opening annoyed Cuban American lawmakers who have introduced legislation in Congress that would reimpose a Bush-era restriction on Cuban American travel to the island of only one visit every three years and more strictly enforce the ban on US travel to Cuba.

The lawmakers argue that the Obama administration is helping prop up the Cuban government, while the White House counters more people-to-people contact is the best way to undermine the island's communist system.

President Barack Obama has threatened to veto any move to undercut his people-to-people policy toward Cuba.

Cuba has said it had 2.53 million tourists in 2010, with Canada the largest provider at nearly 945,000, followed by Britain at 174,000 and Italy at 112,000. — Reuters



THE first oil platform built in Venezuela by its state-owned oil company PDVSA in Orinoco, Venezuela. Venezuela will fulfil its compromise of co-financing with its Brazilian counterpart Petrobras the construction of the Abreuy Lima oil refinery that would process 240,000 oil drums per day, Venezuela's Oil and Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez said. — AFP

Chavez wants higher Opec quota for Venezuela

CARACAS — Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez urged the Opec producer group on Friday to raise its quota for the South American nation given its vast reserves in the Orinoco heavy crude belt.

Venezuela's quota is around 3 million barrels per day, but it aspires to produce far more than that in the coming years through ambitious joint venture projects in the Orinoco.

Opec recently said Ven-

ezuela leapfrogged Saudi Arabia to become the world's No 1 holder of crude reserves, with more than 296.5 billion barrels, albeit much of that tar-like extra heavy oil.

"It has to come in a progressive manner, of course, a reformatting of the quotas so that Venezuela receives bigger quotas," Chavez said during a meeting with ministers shown live on state TV.

"That of course will be part of the discussions and deci-

sions by Opec members, but that will be the case."

Venezuela's output in 2010 was 2.97 million bpd.

Chavez said that if Opec lifts Venezuela's quota, the country could produce between 8-9 million bpd by 2031.

The projects in the Orinoco belt are slated eventually to add 2.1 million bpd of production and bring in some \$80 billion in investment. — Reuters

Peru's new president at I-Day parade

LIMA — New President Ollanta Humala spent his first full day in office by celebrating Peru's Independence Day parade attended by military officials and delegations from numerous South American countries.

A former military officer, Humala presided over the festivities alongside members from the police, military academies and all branches of the country's armed forces.

Delegations from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) were also in attendance and representatives from Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Brazil applauded the new president and his wife, Nadine Heredia. — AFP

Cops arrest Clark Gable

LOS ANGELES — Clark Gable, a grandson of the late movie legend, was arrested in Hollywood on Friday for allegedly pointing a laser device at a police helicopter.

The 22-year-old was detained with a friend after a patrolling police pilot reported a "bright green laser light" had illuminated his cockpit over Sunset Boulevard.

Officers on the ground traced the source of the light to a car, inside which were Clark James Gable and a friend, Maximilian Anderson, 23. — AFP

Weakened tropical storm Don moves into Texas

MIAMI — Tropical storm Don lost most of its punch and was downgraded to a tropical depression late on Friday as it moved ashore into drought-stricken Texas.

Officials at the National Hurricane Center in Miami estimated that Don, which was crossing Baffin Bay, Texas, and moving inland could drop between 5 and 10 centimetres of rain in south Texas and northeastern Mexico, with possible isolated amounts of up to 15 centimetres.

At 0300 GMT yesterday, the storm packed maximum sustained winds of only 55 km per hour, down from 80 km per hour just a few hours ago, according to US government forecasters.

The NHC also discontinued all tropical storm warnings along the Texas coast.

Don was the fourth tropical storm in the Atlantic this season and the second to cross the Gulf of Mexico after Arlene hit east and central Mexico in June. — AFP

Castro to punish sloppy management, bad planning

HAVANA, Mexico City — Legal steps will be taken against Cubans who practice bad planning, sloppy management and inefficiency, Cuban President Raul Castro has warned, according to an official report on Friday.

Castro made the announcement at a government meeting saying that whoever harms the Cuban economy must answer in court, Cuban state media reported.

The president included for censure disorderly as well as unfulfilled plans and the lack

of planning in important areas of the economy.

"If we plan well, we can save and achieve more," Castro said, according to the report.

A report on the economy for the first six months of the year was presented at the meeting, but the figures were not made public.

Agricultural production came in for special criticism. Failures in the farm sector required the importation of more food products than had been planned. — dpa

'Tragic year' for Latin America press: media group

MIAMI — Journalists in Latin America are suffering through their "most tragic year in two decades," with 19 reporters murdered in nine nations so far in 2011, the Inter-American Press Association said on Friday.

Restrictions on the media in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala have also contributed to the deterioration of freedom of the press in the region, the Miami-based group said.

"In seven months, journalists from nine countries have been killed. This is the most tragic year in the last two decades for the Latin American press," the head of the association's press freedom committee Robert Rivard told reporters.

The IAPA said it had recorded five journalist murders in Mexico, four in Brazil, four in Honduras and one each in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. Another Mexican reporter has gone missing, Rivard said.

Violence by organised crime and the legal harassment of independent journalists and the news media have made the situation worse, the IAPA said.

The press association singled out Ecuador, calling on the government of President Rafael Correa to "cease persecution of the press" and withdraw a lawsuit against the daily *El Universo*.

Executives at the newspaper were sen-

tenced last week to three years in prison on libel charges and ordered to pay \$40 million in damages to Correa.

"President Rafael Correa is trying to take away our editorial independence," said *El Universo* publisher Carlos Perez, one of those found guilty.

The IAPA said "judicial harassment" was used in Brazil, El Salvador, Paraguay and Venezuela, where journalists and news media have been censored.

Cuba came in for special criticism, with the group saying it remains the "most restrictive" country in terms of press freedom in the hemisphere where "independent journalists are still hounded, arrested and temporarily jailed." — AFP

UNAUDITED FINANCIALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2010

Report of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I have the pleasure to present the un-audited financial results for the three months period ended 30th June 2011.

Operating & Financial Performance

The company made a net profit of RO. 663K for the three months period ended June 30, 2011 compared to RO. 664K reported during the corresponding period of the previous year.

The key performance highlights for the period are summarized below:

- Commission income grew by 5.5% to RO. 2,522 million from RO. 2,391 million compared to the same period of the previous year.
- Sale of prepaid cards during the period amounted to RO. 0,981 million compared to RO. 3,467 million in the corresponding period of previous year. We also expect that there will be significant reduction in the sale of prepaid cards over the next few quarters, as this business is not viable in the current model.
- Operating expenses excluding depreciation, interest and provisions was higher by 7.1% at RO. 1,427 million compared to RO. 1,332 million in the corresponding period of the previous year. Inspite of reduction in other operating costs, due to various initiatives taken over the period, overall operating costs increased mainly due to increase in staff costs.
- Profits from operations reduced by 13.5% to RO. 0,954 million compared to RO. 1,097 million in the corresponding period of the previous year. This was mainly due to increase in operational costs and provisions.
- Net Finance costs marginally reduced by 18.5% to RO. 52K from RO. 64K in the corresponding period of the previous year, mainly due to decrease in use of Overdraft facilities and better rates for Guarantee commission. This reduction was achieved even though there was increase in credit card collections and related bank charges.
- Depreciation costs increased by 12.6% to RO. 85K compared to RO. 75K in the corresponding period of the previous year mainly on account of addition to assets.
- Investment loss during the current year was RO. 61K against the investment loss of RO. 177K in previous year.

Business Outlook

The company's core business is expected to record a modest growth. The management is actively targeting areas for pruning costs and increase efficiencies to improve its current operations.

During the month of June 2011 the Company signed the Contract with Omantel for a period of 4 years effective from January 1, 2011 for "Factoring Services of Omantel's and Oman Mobile's Private Accounts Receivables".

Also, during the month of June 2011, the Company was awarded by the Tender Board & Muscat Electricity Distribution Co. SAOC., the contract for a period of 3 Years from June 1, 2011 for Meter Reading, billing, collection and disconnection/ reconnection for Electricity accounts in Muscat Governorate.

During February 2011, the Company had announced its participation up to U.S. \$ 5.0 million in Rasmla MENA Private Equity Fund 2. During June 2011 the Company withdrew the participation in the fund and there are no commitments or liabilities to the fund.

Acknowledgement

The Board of Directors wishes to express its sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. The Company would further like to place on record its appreciation of the support received from Oman Telecommunications Co. SAOG, Public Authority for Electricity & Water, Muscat Electricity Distribution Co. SAOC, Oman Wastewater Services Company SAOC (Haya Water), Muscat Municipality, the Company's bankers, Capital Market Authority, Muscat Securities Market and Muscat Depository and Securities Registration Co. SAOC.

Mohamed Abdulla Al Khonji

Chairman - Board of Directors

Unaudited Statement of Income for the 3 month period ended 30th June 2011

	Period ended 30-Jun-11 (RO.'000)	Period ended 30-Jun-10 (RO.'000)
Operating income	2,522	2,391
Sale of prepaid cards	981	3,467
Cost of sales of prepaid cards	(990)	(3,396)
Operating expenses	(1,427)	(1,332)
Doubtful debts	(132)	(33)
Operating profit	954	1,097
Depreciation	(85)	(75)
Finance charges	(52)	(64)
Investment income	(61)	(177)
Interest income	4	3
Other Income	21	1
Profit before taxation	781	785
Taxation	(118)	(121)
Net profit attributable to OIFC shareholders	663	664

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income 3 months ended 30th June 2011

	Period ended 30-Jun-11 (RO.'000)	Period ended 30-Jun-10 (RO.'000)
Profit/(Loss) for the period	663	664
Other Comprehensive Income		
Net Unrealised Income on Available for Sale Investments Net Unrealised Gains transferred to Statement of Income on Disposal of Available for Sale Investments		
Share of other Comprehensive Income of Associates Exchange Difference on Translation of Foreign Operations Other Comprehensive Income for the period		
Total Comprehensive Income for the period	663	664
Profit/(Loss) for the period	663	664
Basic Earnings per share (RO) Annualised	0.022	0.022

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 30th June 2011

	As on 30-Jun-11 (RO.'000)	As on 30-Jun-10 (RO.'000)
ASSETS		
Non-Current Assets		
Fixed assets	2,075	2,104
Capital Work-in-Progress	-	1,800
Investment properties	1,434	-
Deferred Tax asset	749	660
Investment in associates	2,278	-
Other non-current assets	20	20
	6,556	4,584
Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	26,202	27,274
Investments	2,831	2,464
Inventories	277	4,557
Bank & cash	5,009	1,571
	34,319	35,866
Total Assets	40,875	40,450
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Shareholders Funds		
Share Capital	12,000	12,000
Legal Reserve	2,480	2,199
General reserve	-	-
Special reserve	697	444
Revaluation reserve	769	804
Retained earnings	692	779
Total Equity	16,638	16,226
Non-current liabilities		
End of service benefits	265	269
Deferred tax liability	105	110
	370	379
Current liabilities		
Trade and other creditors	23,682	22,233
Bank Overdraft	67	1,491
Taxation	118	121
	23,867	23,845
Total Liabilities	24,237	24,224
Total Equity and Liabilities	40,875	40,450
Net Assets	16,638	16,226
Net assets per share (RO)	0.139	0.135

OMAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE Co. SAOG

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Two civilians killed in Philippine attack

TWO civilians were killed yesterday when communist rebels attacked a police station in the southern Philippines, a provincial police chief said.

Two police officers were also wounded in the dawn attack in the town of Trento in Agusan del Sur province, 890 kilometres south of Manila, according to Senior Superintendent Jerome Baxinela.

He said more than 200 guerrillas in three trucks attacked the station but were repulsed by 30 policemen on duty.

“Two civilians, including one who was working in the station, were caught in the crossfire and were killed,” he said.

Baxinela said government troops recovered one of the trucks used by the guerrillas. — dpa

Death toll from Nock-Ten storm rises to 50

THE death toll from a tropical storm that battered the Philippines earlier in the week rose to 50, as rescuers and aid workers penetrated hard-to-reach areas inundated by floods and blocked by landslides, the government said yesterday.

The Office of Civil Defence said 25 people remained missing and feared dead in the aftermath of the Nock-Ten storm, which caused heavy rain and triggered massive floods and landslides, especially in the eastern Bicol region.

The office said estimated damage to infrastructure and agriculture was 1.46 billion pesos (\$34 million).

Aid workers and rescuers continued to deliver food and medicine and clothes to more than 700,000 people displaced by the storm which pummelled the country from Tuesday through Thursday. The weather bureau was closely monitoring another storm which approached on Friday and was moving towards the northern provinces.

The bureau said storm Muifa, with maximum sustained winds of 95 km per hour and gusts of up to 120 kmph, would remain at sea and would not likely make landfall in any part of the country. — dpa

Sri Lankan journalist attacked ‘with iron bars’

A TAMIL journalist in Sri Lanka’s formerly embattled north was attacked with iron bars, police said yesterday.

Gnanasundaram Kuhanathan, news editor of the Tamil-language daily *Uthayan*, was attacked by a gang of men wielding iron bars on Friday near his home in the area formerly held by separatist Tamil rebels, police said.

“The man is in intensive care in hospital” with serious head injuries, police spokesman Prishantha Jayakody said, adding no arrests had yet been made.

At least six workers at the Jaffna-based *Uthayan* newspaper, including four journalists, have been killed since 2006.

“This attack is aimed at scaring our employees so they will leave journalism,” *Uthayan* publisher E Sarvanapavan said.

Some 17 journalists and media employees have been killed in Sri Lanka in the past decade, with none of the murders being solved, according to rights groups.

The latest assault came a day after police found the body of Pattani Razeek, a human rights activist who disappeared in 2010. — AFP

Nepal Maoists threaten to end government support

NEPAL’S Maoist party yesterday vowed to pull out of the government if the premier fails to appoint its lawmakers as cabinet ministers, threatening fresh political turmoil in the Himalayan nation.

“We will withdraw our support to the government if the prime minister fails to administer the oath of office (to our members) by Sunday,” said Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma.

The withdrawal of Maoist backing would mean the collapse of Prime Minister Jhalanath Khanal’s administration.

The Maoists want Khanal to appoint 19 of the party’s members to the cabinet, swelling its membership to more than 40.

Khanal, of the Unified Marxist Leninist party, was chosen as premier by lawmakers in February after winning the support of the Maoists.

The Maoist declaration came after a meeting of the party’s senior leaders following a month of bitter internal negotiations over the distribution of ministerial portfolios. — AFP

Afghan officer held over ‘Taliban plots’: agency

AN Afghan army officer has been arrested on accusations of being a member of the Taliban and plotting suicide attacks in Kabul, the country’s intelligence agency said yesterday.

The officer was named as Gul Mohammad by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), which said he had confessed to the claims.

“The National Directorate of Security arrested Gul Mohammad... who was an officer with the Afghan National Army and was intending to organise suicide and terrorist attacks,” said NDS spokesman Lutfullah Mashal.

Mashal told a press conference that the arrested man was “a member of the Taliban group in Kabul city.” — AFP



THE relatives of Philippine soldiers who died in an encounter against militants on a remote island in the south cry as their remains are carried out of the plane on arrival at the Villamor Air Base in Manila yesterday. Seven soldiers were killed and 21 wounded on Thursday in the heaviest fighting in months between government troops and militants on a remote southern island, an army spokesman said. — Reuters

President Aquino vows to punish killers of marines

MANILA — Philippine President Benigno Aquino III vowed to pursue militants who killed seven Marines during a clash on a southern island two days ago, his office said yesterday.

Twenty one soldiers were also wounded on Thursday in the clash with Abu Sayyaf rebels in Patikul town on Jolo Island, 1,000 kilometres south of Manila.

“Mark my words, to those of you who perpetrated this atrocity, know that you are

now number one in my radar. It might take some time, but make no mistake about it, you will be brought to justice to answer for your crimes,” Aquino said. The military confirmed that two of the troops were decapitated and the others were mutilated.

Aquino also said the government would intensify its efforts to pursue peace efforts with the main Muslim rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

“As a tribute to our brave soldiers, we will redouble our efforts to attain peace. If nothing changes, then their sacrifices would have been in vain,” he said. “Our efforts to put in place the conditions for sustained peace and security for our people will not waver.” The Abu Sayyaf has been blamed for some of the worst terrorist attacks in the Philippines, as well as high-profile kidnappings involving foreign hostages. — dpa

Ramadhan food packs for the poor

ISLAMABAD — An INGO Forum Pakistan (MIF) operating in Pakistan announced yesterday that this Ramadhan they are joining together to distribute Ramadhan food packs to poor families in Baluchistan.

Initially, 20,000 people will benefit from these Ramadhan food packs, which contain enough supplies for one month for a family of 6-8 members. The MIF spokesperson said during a Press Conference held here yesterday that the food packs contain dates, flour, lentils, cooking oil, sugar, tea and milk.

“Ramadhan is a time for reflection and doing what we can to help those less fortunate than ourselves,” mentioned the MIF spokesperson.

“Each year Muslim INGOs distribute food packs individually but this year as a pilot project, all Muslim INGOs in Pakistan are uniting to work together deliver more and the experience of working together has proven to be successful. The purpose of these distributions is to ensure that timely food packs should be given to poor families to help them in Ramadhan, which will increase food security for the most vulnerable households in food deficient areas of Baluchistan.

While highlighting food security in Pakistan, MIF members said about one third of the population do not have access to food needed for adequate nutrition which is manifested by the widespread incidence of malnutrition.

Policy makers, planners and development agencies must address the issues of food security and malnutrition in children and mothers that has reached 27 per cent in Sindh. MIF stressed the need to develop policies for sustainable household food security, assessment of nutritional needs, strengthening of food control

system and improving preparedness and disasters response.

MIF members said that Pakistan is a great country with a great potential but suffers from natural and man-made disasters where the poor have suffered the most. Those living in the rural areas comprising 60 to 70 per cent of the population who contribute greatly to the economy of the country but they do not have enough food to eat.”

“MIF aims to support and help build communities especially when they are affected by big calamities like last year’s floods,” All Muslim donor countries and INGOs helped their Pakistani brethren in their time of trial and distress.

MIF urges the media to help us highlighting the issue of the poor and give objective coverage to those Muslim NGOs who are doing a marvellous job here in Pakistan without regard to caste, religion or political affiliation. During earthquake and floods, Muslims INGOs have been on the forefront to cope with the disasters and we are still engaged to rehabilitate flood-hit communities.

To address food security, MIF member organisations have supported over 50,000 households in Pakistan with agriculture inputs. Over 20,000 households are already benefited with livestock veterinary and feed support while over 10,000 schools, hospitals, drainages schemes, and houses have been constructed for the deserving communities.

All together approximately an amount of \$30 million has been spent by Muslim INGOs under Pakistan Flood Response Programme. We will continue our support to the Pakistani communities in the future as well, MIF pledged. — Internews

Pakistan to provide online work visa for investors

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani yesterday launched an investor-focused and interactive Online Work Visa Application for investors so that they can get visas without delays.

The prime minister said that the new service would lead the Board of Investment (BoI) towards automation of investment procedures.

The initiative of visa on-line would eliminate unnecessary delays in providing services and support to investors and help improve work efficiency of the BoI, he said.

Gilani asked the BoI to bring to his notice immediately any hindrance in the process of new investment whether public or private. All measures must be taken to create a conducive environment so that pace of local and foreign investment could be accelerated. The facility of online registration

through BoI website and allocation of tracking number to users after submission of required information is a positive step to attract investment, Gilani said.

He said while revamping and updating the Investment Policy 1997, it should be ensured that it is made more practicable by involving the private sector, the provincial governments and all stakeholders.

Explaining the online work visa, BoI Chairman Saleem H Mandviwalla said it would lessen the hassle of long documentation and delays in issuing a visa to investors and they would submit and process visa application online and would also be able to view the application’s status as it is changed by the BoI staff.

In this way, investors can work legally in Pakistan for their companies that are the subject of the

investment.

They can travel freely and stay on a prolonged basis with unlimited two-year visa extensions. He further said that soon the Ministry of Interior and other stakeholders involved in the visa process would be linked to the visa online service of BoI to provide the visa immediately.

The features of the new service being launched by the BoI include online services to foreign investors for application submission and processing of business visa applications; new branch; airport entry pass; real-time updates about application status; online discussion forums to help investment seekers and investors; registration of local businesses in online directory; and providing matchmaking services to foreign investors and local businesses. — Internews



VEHICLES are set ablaze by angry mobs in reaction to a shootout by unidentified gunmen in Quetta yesterday on a vehicle in Pakistan’s southwestern Baluchistan province that left 11 dead and wounded three, police said. — Reuters

Unknown gunmen kill 11

ISLAMABAD — At least 11 people were killed yesterday and three injured when unknown gunmen attacked a passenger vehicle in southwestern Pakistan, police and health officials said.

The attack occurred near a bus stop in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province.

“Gunmen opened fire on a passenger van. Ten passengers and a passer-by were killed and four injured in the attack,” a senior police officer said by telephone.

He said the unidentified gunmen stood by the roadside spraying bullets at the van before they fled the scene in a waiting car.

“One woman was among the dead while another was injured in the attack,” he added.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Baluchistan is rife with sectarian violence between

Pakistan’s majority Sunni and minority Shiite Muslims, as well as Islamist militancy and an insurgency waged by separatists.

Zain ullah Kakar, head of the Bolan Medical College, said by phone that the hospital had received “11 dead including a woman and three injured.”

It was the second deadliest day of killing after seven pilgrims were killed Friday. Banned outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for that attack. Gunmen killed seven at a bus stop also in Quetta. Police said the victims had been waiting for a coach to travel to neighbouring Iran.

Local intelligence and administrative officials confirmed yesterday’s shootings and casualties.

The attack triggered an angry protest by about 700, some of them armed with sticks and guns, in front

of the city’s main Bolan Medical Complex, where the dead and injured were taken.

The demonstrators blocked roads and a small group went on the rampage, trying to set fire to a hotel and shops before being dispersed by police wielding batons and firing tear gas.

A reporter in the city said protesters and relatives of the victims fired bullets in the air, threw stones at private vehicles and torched a motorcycle and two cars.

“The situation is now under our control, the dead bodies have been handed over and burial will continue,” Hamid Shakeel, a senior city police officer, said.

The Tahafuz Azadari Council announced 40-days of mourning over the incident. Police said all those killed yesterday belonged to the Hazara community. — Agencies

UN adds Pakistani group to sanctions list

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations on Friday slapped sanctions on the Pakistani Taliban for having links with Al Qaeda.

The UN Security Council said its sanctions committee dealing with Al Qaeda had imposed an assets freeze as well as a travel ban and arms embargo on the Pakistani group, also known by its Urdu name of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

A council statement said the committee, which maintains a list of sanctioned groups and individuals, had also imposed the same measures on the Caucasus Emirate organisation, an insurgent group based in Russia’s North Caucasus.

Founded in 2007 as a merger of some dozen groups, the TTP is based in tribal areas along Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan and is led by Hakimullah Mehsud, who is already on the sanctions list. A Pakistani newspaper reported this month that Mehsud’s control of the group may now be weakening.

The TTP claimed responsibility for a botched attempt by Pakistani-born American Faisal Shahzad to explode a crude bomb packed into a sport utility vehicle in Times Square in May of last year. The bomb failed to go off and Shahzad was jailed for life in the United States.

In Pakistan, the TTP has claimed

responsibility for a string of attacks including a 2009 strike on a police academy in Lahore that killed eight cadets and an assault on a Karachi naval base two months ago. It also claimed it carried out a suicide attack that killed seven CIA employees at a US base in Afghanistan in December, 2009.

Both the TTP and the Caucasus Emirate are on the US list of foreign terrorist organisations.

Security Council diplomats said the designation of the TTP on the UN sanctions list had been supported by Pakistan’s government.

Britain’s UN Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said “sends a powerful signal of the international community’s solidarity and resolve in the fight against international terrorism.”

The Security Council formerly kept a joint sanctions list for Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban but recently split them into two and took 14 names off the Afghan Taliban list in what envoys said was a bid to entice the group into peace talks.

The Caucasus Emirate, founded in 2007, is led by Doku Umarov, Russia’s most wanted militant. Chechen-born Umarov, who has a \$5 million US bounty on his head, claimed responsibility for masterminding a January suicide bombing of Moscow’s Domodedovo airport, which killed 37 people.

‘Margalla Tourist Train’ launched

ISLAMABAD — Islamabad launched Margalla Tourist Train yesterday for people to see the beautiful tourist points of the city.

Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Imtiaz Inayat Elahi boarded the train along with media persons and dignitaries on its first round to the landmarks of Islamabad to formally inaugurate this service.

The tourist train started its journey from Rose and Jasmine Garden with a speed of 20 to 25 kilometres per hour and cover different landmarks of the city including Kashmir Highway, National Monument, Zero Point, Faisal Mosque, Zoo, Japanese Park (stop-over for 30 minutes), Saidpur Village, Jinnah Super Market, 7th Avenue and Fatima Jinnah Park and back to Rose and Jasmine Garden.

The ticket for adults is \$2.5 and \$2 for children (up to 10 years). There will be special concession for the disabled. The CDA has offered 50 per cent discount to the people for boarding the train during the first month.

Anxiety in Afghanistan over troops pay if US defaults

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — It is unclear if the United States will be able to pay troops on time in the event of a debt default, the top US military officer told troops in Afghanistan yesterday.

Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the US military’s Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Pentagon officials were working hard to plan for a potential default but cautioned that the circumstances were extraordinary.

“So I honestly can’t answer that question,” he told troops at Kandahar air base in southern Afghanistan, as several expressed anxiety over budget wrangling in Washington.

Potentially suspending pay to US forces stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq is an extremely sensitive subject in the United States and Mullen acknowledged that many troops lived paycheque to paycheque.

“So if paycheques were to stop, it would have a devastating impact,” Mullen said, answering questions from troops.

“I’d like to give you a better answer than that right now, I just honestly don’t know,” he

said.

The United States has warned that it will run out of money to pay all of its bills after August 2 without a deal from Congress to raise a \$14.3 trillion debt ceiling. Where US troops fall in priority for payment in a default has not been made clear.

With \$172 billion of revenue between August 3 and August 31, the US Treasury could fully fund Social Security payments, Medicare and Medicaid, interest on the debt, defence vendor payments and unemployment insurance, found a study by the Washington-based Bipartisan Policy Center.

But that would leave entire government departments — such as Labour, Commerce, Energy and Justice — unfunded, and many others unpaid, like active-duty troops and the federal workforce.

Mullen said he believed that troops would be paid eventually, regardless of what happens.

“I have confidence that at some point in time whatever compensation you were owed you will be given,” he said.

“But I don’t know mechanically exactly how that would happen. And it is a huge concern.”

He played down the possibility that a default would undercut military operations or force the US defence department into a partial shutdown, saying “we’re going to continue to come to work”.

“I don’t expect it will affect — certainly in the short term — operations here or operations around the world,” Mullen later told another gathering of troops at Camp Leatherneck, in Helmand province.

While a group of congressmen pushed forward a bill this week to ensure that the active military servicemen still get paid in the case of default, there’s no firm plan yet.

The White House hasn’t made any assurances and neither has the Treasury Department.

Some financial organisations that service military clients, like USAA and the Andrews Federal Credit Union, have stepped up to say that they will advance pay if there is a default. — Reuters

Libyan fighters probe general's murder, Nato hits TV

BENGAZI — Libyan fighters yesterday probed the killing of their army chief, a murder the Gaddafi regime said proved Al Qaeda was behind the uprising, as Nato targeted the strongman's "terror broadcasts."

"The NTC has appointed an investigative committee and we will publish all the facts of this investigation," said Ali Tarhuni, who handles economic affairs for the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC).

General Abdel Fatah Yunis was the faithful right-hand man of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, participating in the 1969 coup that brought him to power, before defecting to the fighters fighting to oust the strongman since February.

Tarhuni said Yunis's bullet-ridden and partly burned body was found early on Friday on Benghazi's outskirts, but that the NTC had received news of his death late on Thursday when the head of a militia behind the crime confessed.

"The head of the militia is imprisoned now," Tarhuni said, adding that some of the perpetrators, who he said belonged to Jirah Ibn al Obeidi brigade, were yet to be incarcerated, and the motive for the killing remained unclear. "We don't know who they work for," he said.

Tripoli pinned the blame squarely on Al Qaeda and argued that the killing exposed the impotence of the NTC.

"By this act, Al Qaeda wanted to mark out its presence and its influence in this region" of eastern Libya controlled by the fighters, regime spokesman Mussa Ibrahim told reporters in Tripoli.



KHALED Basilia, director of the Libyan English-language TV, addressing the press in Tripoli yesterday.

"The other members of the National Transitional Council knew about it but could not react because they are terrified of Al Qaeda," he added.

Nato in Brussels said in a statement yesterday its warplanes had launched precision strikes on three Libyan television transmitter dishes to silence "terror broadcasts" on state television.

"Our intervention was necessary as TV was being used as an integral component of the regime apparatus designed to systematically oppress and threaten civilians and to incite

attacks against them," it quoted alliance spokesman Colonel Roland Lavoie as saying.

"Nato conducted a precision air strike that disabled three ground-based Libyan state TV satellite transmission dishes in Tripoli," Lavoie said.

"In light of our (UN) mandate to protect civilian lives, we had to act," he said, adding that the strikes followed "careful planning to minimise the risks of casualties or long-term damage to television transmission capabilities."

A journalist in Tripoli said a dozen

explosions shook the Libyan capital on Friday night — the latest of many blasts in a city which has been targeted almost daily by Nato air raids.

The military alliance, in its daily update, said warplanes also hit 13 military targets in the strategic oil town of Brega and 12 in Zliten, west of the rebel-held city of Misrata, among a total of 56 strike sorties on Friday.

Yunis's death, and that of two officers with him, left the fighters facing a military leadership crisis on the same day they made fresh gains in the western Nafusa mountain range.

The United States urged the fighters to stand united and stay focused on ousting Gaddafi, and blamed the veteran Libyan leader for creating the conditions that led to the murder.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the fighters should "work both diligently and transparently to ensure the unity of the Libyan opposition."

"Such tragedies speak to the situation that's been created by Gaddafi and his regime. It underscores why he needs to leave power and do so immediately," said Toner.

The assassination of Yunis, Libya's former interior minister, sparked speculation that he had been killed as a traitor by one of the two warring camps or as a form of revenge for his past role in crushing them.

A senior opposition figure in the rebel capital of Benghazi accused Gaddafi of playing a role in the murder in an attempt to press fighters to back off from Brega.

Yunis was killed as he returned to Benghazi from the front line near Brega on the orders of the NTC. "Whoever took part in this crime will be brought to justice no matter who they are," Tarhuni said.

The unity of fighters in the east — where there are more than 30 brigades — is crucial for the many Western powers which have recognised the NTC as the sole legitimate authority in Libya.

The fighters, meanwhile, said a loan from Turkey had arrived and that they hoped to reach out with food and monetary aid to fighters and their families in the west during Ramadan which starts next week. — AFP

Mubarak's trial moved to outside Cairo

CAIRO — The trial of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, originally planned to be held in eastern Cairo on Wednesday, will be moved to outside the Egyptian capital, Justice Minister Mohamed Abdel Aziz al Guindy said in remarks published yesterday.

"A final decision has been made that the trial will not be held in a hall in the area of Nasr City because it will be hard to secure the place," he told the semi-official newspaper *Al Ahram*. He added that the trial would instead be held at the Police Academy on the outskirts of Cairo, starting on Wednesday.

Mubarak, his two sons, ex-interior minister Habib al Adli and six senior policemen are to face charges of ordering the killing of anti-government protesters earlier this year.

At least 846 people were killed and more than 6,000 injured in the crackdown during a revolt that eventually ousted Mubarak in February, according to a fact-finding commission.

The 83-year-old Mubarak has not been seen in public since. He was undergoing treatment at a hospital in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el Sheikh since April 13, when he reportedly suffered a heart attack. Mubarak's sons, Alaa and Gamal, are being held at a prison in Cairo.

Six dead, 21 injured in clash in Egypt's Sinai

CAIRO — An Egyptian army officer and six civilian bystanders were shot dead in fighting between an armed group and security forces in northern Sinai, security sources said yesterday.

About 100 armed men rode through the town of El Arish on Friday on motorcycles and in cars, waving flags with Islamic slogans and firing in the air, Sinai security sources said.

They then attacked a police station, engaging in a shootout with the police and army in which the army officer died.

In a statement released yesterday, the armed forces said they had arrested five suspects. The identity of the attackers has not been released.

Three civilians, a 70-year-old man, a 13-year-old boy and an 18-year-old youth were caught up in the shooting and died from bullet wounds, the ministry of health said in a statement.

Four army officers, nine security guards and six civilians were wounded in the attack and taken to an army hospital for treatment, Mena state news agency reported.

Witnesses said the attackers, many of whom wore masks, did not seem to be from the area as they lost their way several times before reaching the police station

Iraq less safe than a year ago: US watchdog

BAGHDAD — Iraq is a less safe place than it was one year ago as security continues to deteriorate, an American watchdog warned yesterday, just months ahead of a US withdrawal from the country.

The assessment by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) contrasts markedly from the more optimistic view often voiced by senior US army officers who argue that Iraqi security forces are able to maintain internal security. He also noted that efforts by the American Embassy to train Iraq's fledgling police force would be "challenging."

While the military has been in charge of developing Iraq's policemen, that responsibility is being transferred to the US State Department.

"Iraq remains an extraordinarily dangerous place to work," Stuart Bowen said in the report published yesterday. "It is less safe, in my judgement, than 12 months ago."

He added that the transition of responsibility for reconstruction from the US military to the embassy was occurring "against the backdrop of a security situation in Iraq that continues to deteriorate."

Bowen noted June was the deadliest month for US military personnel since April 2009, and that the April to July period saw the highest number of assassinations of senior Iraqi officials since SIGIR began tracking such figures.

Tribal shaikh among 3 killed in US-Iraq raid

BALAD — A US-Iraqi raid north of Baghdad yesterday killed a tribal shaikh and two of his family members, police said, as local leaders condemned what they branded a "massacre" of civilians.

US forces said the operation aimed to nab a wanted insurgent but officials in the village of Rufayat, 70 kilometres from the capital, said the raid targeted a family with no ties to insurgent groups.

"A joint raid using helicopters took place in Rufayat at around 1 am against the house of Hamid Hassan," said police Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed al Baladawi.

"They killed three people, including the shaikh, and seven were wounded," he added, noting that four of the wounded were women. All of the casualties were members of the same family. Hassan, 65, is the leader of a branch of the Rufayat tribe. US forces confirmed that the raid took place, but did not give precise casualty figures, and said it was carried out to detain a wanted insurgent. "Earlier this morning, there was an ISF (Iraqi Security Forces) counter-terrorism operation in Balad in search of fighters wanted by an Iraqi warrant," Colonel Barry Johnson said.

"US advisers were there at the request of the government of Iraq to assist in the operation. As the team came near the house, they received fire and fired back in self defence."

Rufayat tribal shaikh Yusuf Ahmed Hussein, however, said the family only opened fire "because they thought they (US and Iraqi forces) were insurgents."

Egypt gas pipeline to Israel attacked again

ALARISH — Egypt's gas pipeline to Israel was attacked yesterday, as witnesses said they heard heavy gunfire at the gas station that was destroyed in an attack earlier this month.

Witnesses said the station had not been repaired since the blast earlier in July. The gunfire spread panic among people in the area. This is the third attack on the pipeline this month and the fifth since the ouster of president Hosni Mubarak in February. No group claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Gas exports to Israel are unpopular in Egypt, which has been sending gas under preferential terms to Israel since 2008 in forms of a 15-year deal.

Six former Egyptian officials, including former petroleum minister Sameh Fahmy, were charged in April with harming the public interest and corruption related to the deal. Egyptian officials have been trying to amend the deal since Mubarak was forced out. — Agencies

More than 40 dead in south Yemen violence

ADEN — At least 42 people have died in violence near Yemen's southern city of Zinjibar, most of which has fallen under the control of suspected Al Qaeda militants, military and local sources said yesterday.

Eleven people including top officers were killed in fierce clashes between the army and militants in Dofas, a village 15 kilometres south of Abyan's provincial capital of Zinjibar, they said.

"Al Qaeda elements stationed in Dofas attacked army units there using machine-guns on Friday, killing two officers and four soldiers, and wounding nine others," a military official in the village said.

Medics at a military hospital in the southern port city of Aden confirmed the casualty toll.

A local official in Dofas said five members of the

Islamist network were also killed and four wounded in the attack.

Also on Friday, an air raid and clashes with militants left 29 tribesmen killed and dozens wounded in eastern Zinjibar, tribal sources said, adding that several others went missing.

Twelve of the tribesmen were killed and 20 others wounded in clashes with the militants, a top security official in the area said.

"Around 200 tribesmen came from the (coastal) village of Shaqra heading towards Zinjibar when they clashed with Al Qaeda elements" on the city's outskirts, Abdullah Naser al Jadani said.

Tribal sources said the militants forced the tribesmen into a government building seized by the network, prompting the army to launch an air raid. — AFP

Syrian security forces kill 20 protesters

DAMASCUS — Syrian security forces killed at least 20 people and wounded 35 others on Friday as hundreds of thousands turned out for anti-regime protests, activists said.

The deaths were reported yesterday by two Syrian human rights organisations, one of them also saying that hundreds of people were arrested by security forces in Damascus.

"Nineteen martyrs fell on Friday," the National Organisation for Human Rights said in a statement received in Nicosia. "The Syrian authorities had decided to go ahead and kill protesters during the day marked by demonstrations dubbed 'Your silence is killing us,'" it said.

The toll included one person killed in Damascus and seven in the region around the capital, including five in Kiswah and two in Douma, said Ammar Qorabi, who heads the human rights group.

Another three were killed in the flashpoint southern town of Daraa, three more died in the eastern city Deir Ezzor, two others in the nearby town of Bukamal, and one in the western coastal city of Latakia. One person was killed in a village in the central governorate of Homs and another in the flashpoint city of Hama, also in central Syria, said Qorabi, adding that he had a list of names for those killed on Friday. — AFP

Gul says no crisis as top generals quit

ISTANBUL — President Abdullah Gul denied yesterday that Turkey faced a crisis after the resignation of the country's four most senior military commanders, but acknowledged this had created an "extraordinary" situation.

The departure of the generals has caused turmoil in the military, giving Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan an opportunity to extend his authority over the once — dominant armed forces, the second biggest in Nato.

Chief of General Staff General Isik Kosaner stepped down on Friday evening along with the army, navy and air force commanders in protest over the detention of 250 officers on charges of conspiring against Erdogan's government.

In a farewell message to "brothers in arms", Kosaner

said it was impossible to continue in his job as he could not defend the rights of men who had been detained as a consequence of a flawed judicial process.

Relations between the secularist military and Erdogan's socially conservative Justice and Development Party (AK) have been fraught since it first won power in 2002, due to mistrust of the AK's Islamist roots.

While the departures are embarrassing, they could give Erdogan a decisive victory over a military that sees itself as guardian of the secularist state envisioned by the soldier statesman and founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Analysts perceive little political threat to Erdogan's supremacy. AK won a third consecutive term, taking 50

per cent of the vote, in a parliamentary election in June.

"Nobody should view this as any sort of crisis or continuing problem in Turkey," Gul, a former top AK member, told reporters yesterday. "Undoubtedly events yesterday were an extraordinary situation in themselves, but everything is on course."

Erdogan designated Kosaner's successor on Friday, as his office put out a statement naming paramilitary Gendarmerie commander General Necdet Ozel as new head of land forces and acting deputy chief of general staff, effectively making him next in line when Kosaner handed over the baton.

In years gone by, Turkey's generals were more likely to seize power than quit. They have staged three coups since 1960 and pushed an Islamist-

led government from power in 1997.

Some founders of AK, including Erdogan, were members of the Welfare Party, a party whose coalition was forced out 14 years ago. But as prime minister, Erdogan has ended the military's dominance through a series of reforms aimed at advancing Turkey's chances of joining the European Union.

"Four-star earthquake," a headline in *Sabah* newspaper said of the generals' decision, while papers also highlighted Kosaner's criticism of media reporting on the military.

"They tried to create the impression that the Turkish Armed Forces were a criminal organisation and... the biased media encouraged this with all kinds of false stories, smears and allegations," Kosaner's statement said. — AFP



SOLDIERS who joined sides with the anti-regime protesters walk ahead of a rally in Sanaa yesterday. — Reuters

What use are Tunisia's trials of former leader Ben Ali?

TUNIS — With three trials in a month and prison terms of more than 66 years handed down, many Tunisians have started to wonder what use it is to try toppled president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in his absence.

More than 100 court cases remain open against the former dictator, who was ousted by a popular uprising and fled with family and close aides on January 14 to Saudi Arabia, which refuses to extradite him.

Ben Ali has already been convicted of embezzlement, illegal possession of weapons and narcotics, housing frauds and abuse of power.

His close family, particu-

larly his wife Leila Trabelsi and his son-in-law Sakhr al Materi, have also been sentenced in absentia for some of these crimes.

But the symbolic impact of the first trial, on June 30, which aroused widespread curiosity, rapidly gave way to diminishing interest and then to growing criticism of the day-long hearings which inevitably end up with convictions.

"This serves to calm the crowds and win time. But at the end of the day, we no longer even know what it's about, when what is needed is a trial to set down in history," commented former judge Mokhtar Yahyaoui.

While acknowledging that trials in the absence of the accused were "pure formalities" and that cases would reopen were Ben Ali present, he deplored the quick nature of the hearings.

"Those mainly responsible, the key people, have not been summoned to appear, when they should at least be heard as witnesses," Yahyaoui said, adding that he suspected that there was "a deliberate desire to cover things up, to protect people."

That view is shared by Omar Mestiri, a journalist and human rights activist who was persecuted under Ben Ali's regime in the north African

country.

"These are trials to play to the gallery, when we need something more serious. It's too easy and dangerous to blame everything on one man, who is moreover no longer there to answer for his actions," Mestiri said.

"What we want is a trial of the Ben Ali system. We need to build up cases, put the machinery in place. We must also allow for the right to a legal defence and enable cross-examination," added Mestiri, who runs the Kalima radio station.

"Let's take the system of electoral frauds. Ben Ali was the main beneficiary but there

are hundreds of members of parliament who owe their places to this system. Let's take the business tenders that enabled the (Ben Ali) clan to establish their hold over the economy.

"Administrators were accomplices in this. Where are those responsible? Who launched the defamation campaigns, who bought off the media? Who tortured thousands of citizens?"

"All those questions, we avoid speaking about them and we avoid raising them," Mestiri stated.

"These trials serve no purpose at all," said Hosni Beji, a lawyer for the Ben Ali family in several cases. "What use

will sentences of 700 or 800 years be in the end?"

Beji also denounced the "execrable atmosphere" prevailing during hearings. The courtrooms are packed, the noise is considerable and the public boos the defendants and tries to yell questions at the lawyers. "These are not the conditions for a peaceful and fair justice," Beji stressed.

But prosecution lawyers say these trials "serve to let the Tunisian people know what happened in this country" and could perhaps also put pressure on Saudi Arabia, which has so far turned a deaf ear to requests to extradite Ben Ali. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

‘Athletes should do regular blood tests’

CANADIAN sprinter Ben Johnson, a double Olympic bronze medalist, says it is best for Indian athletes to get their blood tested every month by a certified doctor and keep the record to prove their innocence if they have taken any banned substance unknowingly.

Johnson, who was stripped of his 100 meters gold medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics for testing positive, offered to help out the dope-tainted Indian athletes and he is even willing to train the country's track stars.

He asked the eight suspended Indian athletes to learn from his life as it is a perfect example for them.

Johnson said it is difficult to find a clean athlete in today's world and, worse, those on dope are getting away scot free.

Agency ropes in schools for anti-dengue drive

STEPPING up its drive against vector borne diseases such as dengue and malaria, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi yesterday announced it is roping in primary schools for prevention of the diseases.

“The public health department has been seeking support from the education department for raising community awareness. Nodal teachers have been designated for ensuring all measures for prevention and control of vector borne diseases in schools,” said V K Monga, chairman of the MCD's public health committee.

Over 2,500 dengue cases were recorded in the city last year. This year, five dengue cases have been reported so far, according to MCD officials.

Pankaj Advani wins fifth billiards title

PANKAJ Advani (PSPB) raced to his fifth title in the senior National billiards championship with a 5-1 drubbing of Balachandra Bhaskar of Karnataka who was playing in his maiden final.

After a sluggish start when he conceded the first frame, the 26-year-old Advani took a firm grip on the match with some high quality billiards that left his fellow-Bangalorean Bhaskar rooted to his chair for much of the contest.

The 39-year old Bhaskar, for long on the fringes of the big league, had done extremely well to reach the final, scalping the more fancied Dhruv Sitwala in the semi-finals and veteran Devendra Joshi in the quarter-finals.

But pitted against the seven-time world champion Advani, who was virtually unstoppable, Bhaskar was forced to play second fiddle and paid dearly every time he missed a shot.

Three held for killing biker road rage incident

THREE people were arrested yesterday for thrashing a 28-year-old man to death in a road rage incident, police said.

Anshu Tyagi 21, Lucky Tyagi, 22, and Somnath, 31, all residents of Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, were arrested for killing Tarun, a resident of New Ashok Nagar, a police officer said.

Police said Tarun was on his way home when his bike brushed past Anshu near the Shyam Lal College.

“Anshu abused Tarun, following which an argument ensued between the two and Anshu, along with Lucky and Somnath, brutally stoned to death,” said the officer

Maharashtra opposition calls off shutdown

MAHARASHTRA'S opposition parties yesterday called off a shutdown scheduled for tomorrow after Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan said the government was open to providing housing to displaced mill workers in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Shiv Sena executive president Uddhav Thackeray, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Gopinath Munde and Republican Party of India (RPI) chief Ramdas Athawale called off the shutdown.

“We shall resume the agitation if the demands are not met,” Thackeray told reporters.

Thousands of mill workers took part in a protest march on Thursday from Byculla in south-central Mumbai to Azad Maidan in south Mumbai.

The chief minister has, however, ruled out providing free housing.

Ex-insurgents demand education for kids

INSURGENTS who have surrendered yesterday urged Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar to provide education for their kids.

“Besides rehabilitations of all ex-insurgents, we have urged the government to ... educate our children in government schools,” said Daniel Borok, leader of the former guerrillas.

After handing to the chief minister a memorandum listing their demands, Borok said: “Around 1,000 children of erstwhile guerrillas need education. Otherwise their future would be ruined.”



RESCUE workers walk near the debris of a passenger bus that fell into a 70-metre gorge at Langanbal in Pahalgam, around 82 km south of Srinagar, yesterday. At least 10 people were killed and nearly 50 more injured when an over-crowded bus plunged into a fast-flowing Lidder stream after its driver failed to negotiate a sharp curve. — AFP

Rajiv Awas Yojana to begin in 250 cities, transform urban landscape

NEW DELHI — With an estimated 95 million people expected to be living in shanties by next year, the government has drawn up an “ambitious”, but “achievable” scheme to transform the urban landscape of the country by providing affordable houses and better amenities for the urban poor.

“Rajiv Awas Yojana, which is called RAY, has the potential to radically transform the urban landscape of India and the living conditions of the urban poor,” said Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Selja yesterday while inaugurating the state minister's conference on RAY.

In a bid to make the country free of slums, the central govern-

ment on June 2 approved RAY, which envisages building affordable housing and basic facilities for the urban poor. RAY is part of the government's ambitious Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

RAY will cover 250 cities with a population of more than 100,000 by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). The scheme aims to help re-develop slums, stop their proliferation and provide a dignified life and property rights to the dwellers. The government will bear 50 per cent of the cost of the slum projects and Rs 1,000 crore will be provided as capital for mortgage guarantee facilities under the scheme.

Selja said the scheme “envisions an inclusive and equitable urban India where every citizen has access to the basic civic and social services and decent shelter”.

She said the scheme was drawn up in response to the need that India's urban population is going to double — from 286 million in 2001 to 573 million by 2030.

The 2011 Census figures place country's urban population at 377 million, representing 31.16 per cent of the total population.

Selja said it is estimated that although the percentage of the urban poor had declined from around 49 per cent in 1993-1994 to 25.7 per cent in 2004-05, yet the urban poor have grown in absolute numbers

from 76.3 million to 80.7 million in this period.

“The majority of these urban poor live in slums and squatter settlements in conditions of squalor and deprivation. Slums are growing with the cities' growth. The slum population in India is projected to be 95 million by next year, and 104 million by the year 2017,” she said. “We must recognise that people who are counted as urban poor today play a significant role in the functioning, productivity and competitiveness of cities. At present, the wealth and prosperity generated in urban centres is hardly ever shared with these people. This trend has to be changed,” she stressed. — IANS

Farmers to get six times more cash for land sales

NEW DELHI — Indian farmers could get six times more cash for their properties under a new land acquisition bill aimed at accelerating industrial development in Asia's third-largest economy.

The draft bill is seen as key to defusing longstanding tensions over land purchases, a politically charged issue that has delayed mega-projects such as South Korea's planned \$12-billion steel plant to be built in eastern India. Industrialisation has been touted by economists as a way to create faster growth and pull hundreds of millions out of poverty.

But acquiring land for factories, roads, housing and other projects has created battlegrounds across traditionally agrarian India.

The legislation aims to “balance the need for facilitating land acquisition” for infrastructure, industrialisation and other development while “addressing the concerns” of farm-

ers, a government statement said.

The bill, intended to replace a more than century-old law framed by India's former British colonial rulers, proposes giving owners as much as six times the market rate for their land when it is taken over for development purposes.

Also the consent of 80 per cent of project-affected families would be required if the government acquires land for industrial or other public use under the legislation unveiled by Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh.

The legislation is seen as vital to the ruling Congress party's bid to win support from farmers in local elections next year in country's most populous state Uttar Pradesh and national polls in 2014.

Farmers say their land is being taken away too cheaply and that they are being left with no other means of livelihood.

“We will have a formal process of consultation” on the legislation, said Ramesh, who was due to discuss the bill with West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Banerjee at the weekend. Before being elected chief minister, Banerjee led a successful and sometimes violent drive in 2008 against plans by Indian industrial giant Tata Group to build the world's cheapest car, the Nano, on farmland in West Bengal.

The Confederation of Indian Industry called the bill a “positive” step but farmers voiced discontent.

“We want ownership of the entire land with industry getting the land on lease,” Rajesh Bhati, who has been spearheading a battle for improved land rights in Haryana, told India's Business Standard.

“This still amounts to a farmland grab,” Devinder Sharma, author of books on Indian agricultural issues, said. — AFP

PM's ‘missing’ degree: PU orders probe

CHANDIGARH — Panjab University authorities yesterday suspended an employee and ordered a five-member committee to probe the omission of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's name in the list of distinguished people awarded honorary doctorates in the past over 60 years.

The list of 74 distinguished people, who have been awarded various honorary degrees by the university was supplied recently by the university to Right to Information (RTI) activist Rajinder K Singla.

Manmohan Singh was awarded the Doctor of Laws degree (honoris causa) at a special convocation November 2009. But this information was missing from an otherwise complete list of 74 names provided to the applicant. — IANS

Star Alliance to decide AI's induction date

NEW DELHI — After much delay, Air India's formal entry into Star Alliance will be announced in Frankfurt today, paving the way for the flag carrier to become the first from this country to join the largest global interline accord among 27 airlines.

“Star Alliance will decide Air India's induction date in Frankfurt at their executive board meet,” an Air India official said. “We have concluded all the integration conditions set by Star Alliance.”

The national carrier was extended an invitation to join Star Alliance in December 2007 in Beijing, with Lufthansa as the sponsor. But delays in software and other operational integration after the merger of Indian Airlines into Air India put paid to the plans.

The alliance members also had grand plans for the

formal induction ceremony against the backdrop of the Taj Mahal, just as Egypt Air had next to the pyramids on the outskirts of Cairo.

Global interline packs like Oneworld and Star Alliance entail several benefits to member carriers like improved product offering, better service standards, access to new markets and premium customers and partnership with leading global carriers.

Vijay Mallya's Kingfisher Airlines is the only other Indian carrier that is joining a global alliance — called Oneworld.

Such pacts also allow sharing of airport lounges across airports, common rewards schemes and synchronised flight schedules that will permit seamless travel for a passenger on a single air ticket, even if it requires flying several carriers on a single journey. — IANS

Dam safety bill against state's interests: Jaya

CHENNAI — Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa has urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to modify certain provisions of the proposed Dam Safety Bill, 2010, in order to protect the interests of the state.

In a letter to the prime minister, copies of which were released to the media here yesterday, Jayalalithaa said: “... certain provisions of the Dam Safety Bill 2010, currently referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on water resources, are detrimental to the interests of Tamil Nadu.”

According to the provisions of the proposed bill, all specified dams should fall under the jurisdiction of the

state dam safety organisation (SDSO) or state dam safety cell (SDSC) of the state in which the dams are located.

The SDSO or SDSC will be responsible for the dam inspections, analysis of information, recommendation reports regarding safety status and remedial measures to be undertaken to improve dam safety.

The proposed bill states that full co-operation should be extended by the concerned non-state dam safety organisation or the non-state dam safety cell and the owner of the specified dam.

Jayalalithaa said the provisions will interfere with the safety and functioning of the dams owned by Tamil Nadu.

Indian students warned about ‘predatory visa fraud rings’

WASHINGTON — As another US university came under the scanner, the US asked Indian students to be alert to the existence of “predatory visa fraud rings and fraudulent document vendors.”

“We are looking into this matter, we're following the case closely, and we're in communication with the Government of India officials on it,” State Department spokesman Mark Toner said, after a raid on the University of Northern Virginia.

Based in Annandale, a Washington suburb, the unaccredited, for-profit private university has some 2,400 students of which 90 per cent are from India, mostly from Andhra Pradesh, registered at three locations in northern Virginia.

The US embassy in New Delhi has briefed the Ministry of External Affairs and the US Department of Homeland Security and the State Department have been in contact with the Indian Embassy here, Toner said.

Declining to give details as an investigation is ongoing, the spokesman said “it's important to note that a hundred thousand Indians are receiving a good education at certified US institutions each year, and we certainly welcome the contribution of Indian students wishing to study in the United States.”

“And of course, as always, we caution them to be alert to the existence of these so-called predatory visa fraud rings and fraudulent document vendors,” he said.

Asked how US consulates or embassies in India issued visas for study at such institutions, Toner again declined comment in view of “an ongoing investigation”. — IANS

Stalin detained, DMK protests across TN

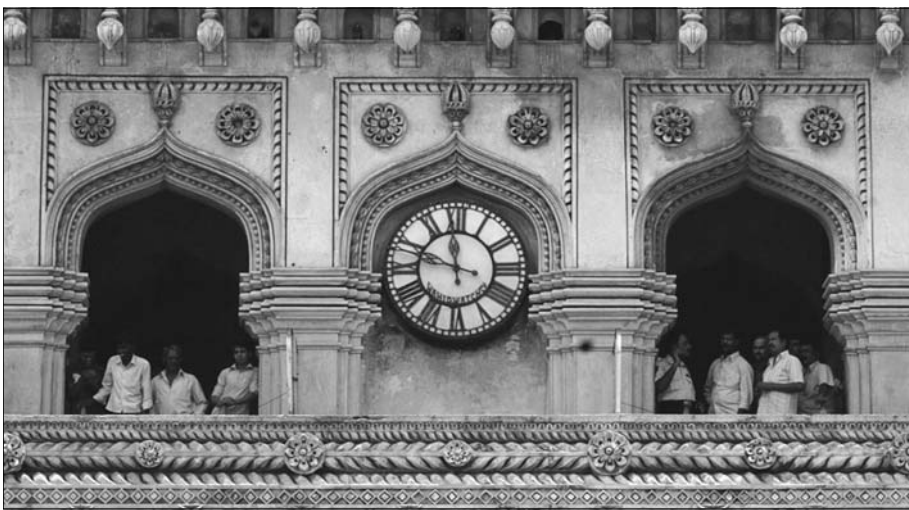
CHENNAI — DMK leader and former deputy chief minister M K Stalin was briefly detained yesterday at Tiruvallur in Tamil Nadu during a protest. His detention came on the day two other DMK leaders, including a former minister, were arrested on charges of seizing land.

Former minister and senior leader Veerapandi S Arumugam was arrested in Salem, 350 km from here, where he had gone to mark his attendance as he was out on bail since July 27 in another land grabbing case, a police officer said.

Arumugam was arrested on the basis of a new land grab complaint, the officer said. A local court remanded Arumugam in judicial custody for 15 days and he was lodged in Coimbatore central prison.

DMK legislator from Chepauk constituency, J Anbazhagan, was also arrested here and was taken to Tirupur, around 380 km away, in another land grab case.

When police went to arrest Kalaiyannan, the DMK men



TOURISTS explore the historical monument Charminar in Hyderabad. — Reuters

Draw for flats for poor cancelled

CHANDIGARH — The Haryana government's town and country planning department yesterday ordered the cancellation of the draw of lots for allotment of flats to economically weaker sections (EWS) built by a leading private builder in Gurgaon.

The draw of lots for flats in the Ansal API Sushant Lok

Sector 28 of Gurgaon was cancelled because the scheme was not properly publicised by the developer, a spokesman of the state government said.

The spokesman said that not many people knew about the scheme. Department officials found that only 23 applications were received for the 25 flats available.

Gurgaon Deputy Commissioner P C Meena had brought the matter to the notice of town and country planning department.

The spokesman said that Meena, on enquiry, found that the developer had not properly advertised about the flats and plots, due to which the number of applicants was quite low.

NRI IT professionals move back to India

NEW DELHI — With declining wages abroad, an increasing number of non-resident Indian IT professionals are moving back to their home country, says a survey.

IT and IT-enabled firms in India hired 28 per cent more non-resident Indian (NRI) professionals in the first quarter of 2011-12, according to the survey conducted by recruitment consulting firm MyHiringClub.com.

Among 11 surveyed industries, IT and IT-enabled services registered highest growth, with 28 per cent increase year-on-year in the first quarter of the current fiscal. It is followed by pharma and healthcare, up by 20 per cent, automobile and manufacturing, up by 18 per cent, telecom, up by 14 per cent, banking and financial services, up by 10 per cent and FMCG, up by six per cent.

“The high economic growth in India with many good opportunities has fuelled the NRI thought process to head back. In addition to that, many US companies are opening their offices in India and hiring more to target the growing market in Asia,” Rajesh Kumar, CEO of MyHiringClub.com, said in the survey report.

He said an increasing number of high value NRI professional recruitment is likely to take place in the coming years as wage gaps have declined sharply.

“Increasing number of people are now returning because now the advantages of returning back to India outweigh the disadvantages by far,” said Kumar.

The highest number of NRIs who returned home found jobs in Bangalore, followed by Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad. — IANS



BULLS march in a parade during the opening ceremony of ‘Saputara Monsoon Festival’ at Saputara, Gujarat’s only hill station, yesterday. — AFP

Governors are political agents of UPA: Gadkari

CHANDIGARH — Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Nitin Gadkari yesterday came down heavily on state governors, saying that they were acting like political agents of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the centre.

“Governors are acting like political agents of the UPA government. Deliberate attempts are made to negate the plans and programmes of the BJP governments,” Gadkari alleged in his address at a regional conference on “Policies of UPA — A Threat to Indian Federalism”, organised by the legal cell of the BJP.

“Several legislations passed by the state assemblies have not been given assent

by the governors in non-Congress states. Governors are neither rejecting nor accepting these legislations, thereby diluting the federal structure of the constitution at the behest of the UPA,” he said.

Gadkari alleged the central government is misusing investigative agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to attack states, as well as usurping powers of the states. He accused the UPA of discriminating against BJP-ruled states.

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal called for setting up a genuinely federal structure in the country “to make India the most advanced and powerful country in the world”. — IANS

Karnataka CM to quit today

BANGALORE — The chief minister of a southern Indian state who is accused of being at the centre of a \$3.6-billion mining fraud will resign today, he said yesterday.

B S Yeddyurappa, 68, head of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Karnataka state, announced he would quit in an official statement after national party chiefs demanded he step down.

“As per the decision taken by the senior leaders of the party and the parliamentary board in New Delhi, I will resign from the chief minister’s post,” Yeddyurappa said in the statement.

A report into corrupt mining practices by the Karnataka state ombudsman named him in the scandal.

Judge Santosh Hegde accused the chief minister of enabling illicit mining of iron ore in the state, which cost the public exchequer Rs 160.8 billion (\$3.6 billion) between 2006 and 2010.

Hegde said his probe uncovered “involvement of some 100 mining companies, about 600 officials, powerful politicians including the



chief minister”.

The report said the federal and state governments lost money due in the form of royalties, central excise duties, value-added taxes and other levies.

The report also said Yeddyurappa’s family, including one who is a BJP member of the national parliament, benefited from the fraud.

Yeddyurappa also faces allegations of selling government land at below market value to family members.

The mining graft is the latest in a slew of corruption scandals in India, which is still reeling from the allegedly fraudulent sale of telecom licences in 2008 estimated to have cost the country up to \$40 billion.

The ombudsman’s explosive findings have cast a shadow on the BJP, which has been leading an anti-graft campaign nationally against the Congress-led government of Premier Manmohan Singh.

On Friday, India’s top court halted the extraction of iron ore in Karnataka after the mining fraud revelations. — AFP



AN Indian techie takes part in ‘Open Hack India’, a 24-hour non-stop hacking event, organised by Yahoo! India R&D in Bangalore yesterday. Open Hack provides a platform for the developer community to build applications and product ideas from scratch using market-leading technologies from Yahoo! as well as other technologies to develop innovative new products. — AFP

Scholarships, sops for West Bengal Muslims

KOLKATA — West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, unveiling scholarships and sops for the state’s minorities, yesterday accused the previous Left government of sowing confusion by announcing a “hurried and erroneous” quota in government jobs for Muslims.

Addressing a programme organised by the West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, Banerjee declared that loans totalling Rs 82 crore will be given this year to the minorities, besides scholarships and stipends worth Rs 122 crore.

“This year, 7.5 lakh minority students will get loans for studies. Next year, we will raise this figure to more than eight lakh students,” Banerjee told the gathering at the Netaji Indoor Stadium here.

She said 7,200 Anganwadi centres will be set up in areas which have a large concentration of minorities.

“We will build 37,300

houses under Indira Awas Yojna in those areas. We have also plans of building 5,000 houses for minorities in Kolkata only,” said Banerjee.

Banerjee alleged that the previous government has made a lot of confusion regarding the introduction of 10 per cent reservation in government jobs for the 53 backward classes among Muslims and vowed that her new government will fix up the problem.

“Vote is a big compulsion. They (Left Front) did that reservation system in haste and it is full of errors. As far as I know, the governor has not signed it till now. Nobody has got any benefit from that till now as it is full of errors. We will also look into that thing.”

“We will fix it up in a new way so that you people get the benefit. You all have to keep faith on the new government. We will not desert you,” said Banerjee. — IANS

Police detain online survey firm officials

MUMBAI — Indian police have arrested two top officials of Singapore-based online survey company Speak Asia in Mumbai for allegedly duping investors of \$294 million, reports said yesterday.

Police identified those arrested as Tarak Bajpai, Speak Asia’s chief operating officer in India, and financial manager Ravi Khanna, according to the Press Trust of India and other media. Two web technicians were also held.

The suspects were arrested “in connection with a financial fraud”, said joint crime police commissioner Himanshu Roy, according to the *Times of India*.

Roy told the Press Trust of India the company had allegedly told investors they would get Rs 54,000 (\$1,221) a year in return for investing Rs 11,000 annually, cheating investors out of Rs 13 billion (\$294 million).

Speak Asia is a Singapore-based online survey company which pays its members to take part in surveys for their clients. The firm claims to have more than one million people in India participating in its surveys.

Its bank accounts in India have reportedly been frozen.

The accused appeared at a Mumbai court on Friday and were remanded in police custody until August 4, Roy was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India and other media. — AFP

‘2G scam will die its own death’

NEW DELHI — The second generation (2G) spectrum allocation scam will die its own death like the mid-1980s Bofors gun deal scandal, jailed former communications minister Andimuthu Raja’s ex-personal secretary R K Chandolia told a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) special court here yesterday.

Chandolia’s counsel said in the beginning of the Bofors deal scandal, there was a huge “hue and cry” but the case died its own death.

“Similar is the situation in the 2G case. It will also die its own death,” Chandolia’s counsel told CBI Special Judge O P Saini.

He claimed that the probe agency gave him the choice of becoming a witness or an accused in the case.

Defending himself, Chandolia said he was not the decision making authority for spectrum allocation.

“I was assisting my minister. Can an assistant ask his lord what decision have you made. I am not concerned whether their decision

is right or wrong. I am no one, just a pawn in the chess game. I challenge the CBI. Let them show one sign on a single document. There are a number of people who have signed on papers but the CBI has not called them in,” said Chandolia.

“I am like a child, who is asked to deliver the bag to someone. I have only done that, then what is wrong in it. Why should I be prosecuted?” defence counsel asked.

“I was used by the minister (Raja)...I used to carry out his instruction,” said Chandolia, concluding the arguments on the charges levelled against him.

“The CBI should prove where have I forged any documents to favour Swan (Telecom) or Unitech (Wireless),” said Chandolia.

“In the Delhi circle, Swan was given preference as due to the Idea and Spice merger, they were not eligible,” he said.

Chandolia said his arrest on February 2 was illegal as nowhere did the witnesses’ statements recorded by the CBI in January and

February showed his involvement.

“His name only figured in the statements in the month of March,” said defence counsel, adding that how was it possible that the same witness gave two different statements.

“The CBI manipulated the charge sheet with a predetermined mind to prosecute me,” Chandolia said.

He said the CBI showed a loss of Rs 30,000 crore to the exchequer in spectrum allocation but there was no word on the loss caused by him.

“I do not know the amount of loss I caused to the government of India, for which I am prosecuted,” said Chandolia, adding that since he had been charged with cheating he must be told about the loss allegedly caused by his actions.

Chandolia is currently lodged in the Tihar Jail along with 13 others involved in the case. Swam Telecom promoter Shahid Usman Balwa would begin his arguments on charges tomorrow. — IANS

Forex reserves jump \$2.29 bn

MUMBAI — India’s foreign exchange (forex) reserves jumped by \$2.29 billion to \$316.80 billion for the week ended July 22, against \$314.50 billion in the previous week,

on the back of a sharp increase in foreign currency assets, official data showed yesterday.

The forex reserves have risen after declining in the previous two weeks. The foreign

exchange kitty had declined by \$112 million during the week ending July 15.

After declined sharply during the previous two weeks, foreign currency assets, the biggest component of the forex reserves kitty, rose by \$2.22 billion to \$284.52 billion during the week ended July 22, according to the weekly statistical supplement

of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The foreign currency assets had declined by \$115 million in the previous week.

The foreign currency assets expressed in US dollar terms include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US currencies such as the pound sterling, euro and yen held in reserve.



PARTICIPANTS carrying paddles stand on a boat on Dal Lake during the opening ceremony of ‘Jashan-e-Dal’ in Srinagar. Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday opened ‘Jashan-e-Dal’, a three-day-long water sports event. — Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mountaineers conquer Mount Thalay Sagar

A STRENUOUS ascent of around 15 days and gashes due to falling rocks could not deter nine mountaineers to successfully scale Mount Thalay Sagar, which according to some experts is more difficult to scale than the Mt Everest.

At an altitude of 6,904 metres in the western Garhwal Himalayas, the peak belongs to the Gangotri group of mountains and is steep on all sides, said an official of the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) in Uttarakhand, which organised the expedition.

The group was felicitated by Defence Minister A K Antony at a special ceremony yesterday.

Praising the efforts of the team, Antony said the achievement was a proof of the high standards of the NIM, its excellence and popularity.

Protests in Jammu for central varsity

SEVERAL social and political organisations held protest rallies in Jammu yesterday to demand early start of the Central University, which was announced in 2007.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu Bar Association, Panun Kashmir and several other groups held sit-ins, took out processions and clashed with the police.

The protesters alleged that both the central and state governments were “discriminating against Jammu region”.

While the Jammu Bar Association and Panun Kashmir staged sit-ins, BJP workers took out a protest march in the walled city area. The police, however, dispersed the agitators.

“We are unable to understand why the government is not appointing the vice-chancellor of the Central University-Jammu, so that the varsity could become functional,” asked Rajinder Jamwal, one of the protesters.

BSF told to open fire only in self defence

INDIA’S Border Security Force (BSF) has been instructed not to fire at people trying to cross over, but they may open fire to protect themselves and in self-defence, Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram said yesterday.

Chidambaram said that “clear instructions” have been given to the Indian border guards not to open fire on any unarmed people at the border, the Daily Star reported.

“Let me make it very clear, we have issued strict instructions to our border security forces that in no circumstances should they fire upon anyone trying to cross either from Bangladesh to India or India to Bangladesh. The message has gone down to the last jawan,” he said.

“After the instructions, the numbers of incidents came down dramatically. There are only seven cases this year compared to last year’s 33,” he added at a press conference here after holding talks with his Bangladeshi Home Minister Sahara Khatun.

One lakh Bengal youths to get skills training

THE National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in partnership with a city-based social enterprise is to impart skill development training to over a lakh West Bengal youths in ten years at a cost of Rs 1.40 crore.

“The objective of this partnership is to form skilled workforce by training over one lakh men and women across West Bengal, covering all districts, leading to their employment. Such a programme is essential for fulfilling the requirements of a growing economy,” said NSDC managing director Dilip Chenoy.

The NSDC will bear 75 per cent of the project cost through debt financing, and the rest will be funded by the Britti Proshikshan Pvt Ltd (BPPL) through equity.

Altogether 106,640 men and women would be trained at 78 centres across the state to upgrade their skills.

Nigerian held for duping Indian

A 25-YEAR-OLD Nigerian has been arrested in Delhi on charges of duping an Indian, police said yesterday.

Nnadi Chijibuzor Nicholas was arrested on Friday near the Select City Walk Mall in south Delhi.

Vishwajeet Biswas, 20, received a message from an international mobile number saying he had won a prize of Rs 5.6 crore. He was directed to contact the sender. “After e-mailing proof of his identification, the victim was informed that a representative would come to India on July 11 to hand over the amount,” a police officer said.

Directed by Nicholas, Biswas on July 11 deposited Rs 19,500 in a bank account. “A few hours later, Nicholas asked Biswas to deposit another Rs 35,000 for obtaining a supposedly anti-terrorist and drug clearance certificate. Biswas did that,” the officer said.

It was a third demand for Rs 190,000 that made Biswas suspicious, and he alerted the police.

Positive trend

By William James and Carmel Crimmins

IRELAND'S insistence that it is different from Greece and the rest of the euro zone periphery appears finally to be striking a chord among investors. Irish sovereign debt prices staged an impressive rally last week in spite of growing bond market volatility elsewhere in the euro zone, which was hit by doubt over the effectiveness of the latest bailout plan for Athens and concern about the ability of Italy and Spain to weather the storm.

While Madrid and Rome have only come under heavy market pressure over the past several weeks, Dublin is a veteran of the regional debt crisis, and its long-running efforts to tackle its banking and fiscal problems — together with a relaxation of the terms of its 85 billion euro (\$122 billion) international bailout — are encouraging investors to take a second look.

"I think there is a re-rating by the market of Ireland," said Fergal O'Leary, head of capital markets at Glas Securities in Dublin. "There is a growing feeling among international guys that Ireland has faced up to its problems, it is doing what it needs to do."

Unlike fellow bailout recipients Greece and Portugal, Ireland is meeting its budget deficit targets and has been singled out for praise by the International Monetary Fund and the European Union for its determination to get its annual deficit, still the largest in the euro zone as a proportion of gross domestic product, under control.

Although Ireland is mid-way through an unprecedented eight-year cycle of austerity, social unrest is almost non-existent and unlike Greece and Portugal, Ireland is expected to return to economic growth this year because of a vibrant export sector and the flexibility of its economy.

The Irish government has been trumpeting these points for months, but it is only in recent days — during which Europe agreed to relax the terms of Dublin's bailout as part of a new approach to Greece, and a group of US and Canadian investors saved Ireland's largest bank from effective nationalisation — that investors took notice.

Yields on Irish 10-year government bonds have tumbled to around 11 per cent from a euro-era high of over 14 per cent hit last week. Trading volumes have risen to over three times usual levels. Portugal's 10-year yield has dropped more slowly, by about 2 percentage points to 12.7 per cent. Spanish and Italian yields are much lower, in the area of 6 per cent, but they have risen sharply in the past week.

"It's real money and hedge funds coming in to cover shorts, but I would suppose the market is still extremely short there," said one bond trader of Irish debt. "It's funny, there are no offers in the market now, whereas before there were no bids."

Bank of Ireland's surprise announcement last week that a consortium of investors, including Canada's Fairfax Financial Holdings and Wilbur Ross' New York buyout firm, had agreed to pour 1.1 billion euros into the lender meant at least one Irish bank had avoided state control.

"I don't think the importance of that can be under-estimated for the international credibility of Ireland," said Ryan McGrath, a bond dealer at Dolmen Securities in Dublin. "It put confidence back into the Irish story."

The scale of Ireland's banking crisis has been a major deterrent for investors, but Dublin's shock-and-awe response has impressed. The decision to purge the banks of their risky land and development loans, shrink the sector from six players to just two and put a 70 billion euro price tag on bailing out the sector, has persuaded many investors that there are no further nasty surprises lurking.

Suspicion stirred

By Joe Brock

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan's plan to change Nigerian presidential tenures to a single, longer term could tackle some of the country's electoral problems but the announcement's timing and lack of clarity have provoked criticism. A statement from the presidency last week said Jonathan will send a constitutional amendment bill to parliament changing presidential and state governors' tenures to a single term, taking effect from 2015 elections.

Nigeria's president and governors of the 36 states in Africa's most populous nation now serve a maximum of two four-year terms, running for re-election between stretches. The law plans to strengthen democracy by focusing politicians on governance rather than re-election, reduce campaign costs and temper the unrest caused by elections.

It was not clear how long the new terms would last, although presidential sources have said it is likely to be six years. The announcement followed reports in the local media that Jonathan was hatching a plan to extend his tenure, an accusation his team deny.

"The proposed bill will not be for his personal interest, if the proposal scales through, the president will not be a beneficiary," said Reuben Abatihe, the president's senior communications adviser. "Mr president is resolute in upholding his statement that he will not seek for re-election in 2015."

Nigeria has a history of controversy over tenure length and power sharing that makes the announcement of this plan without full disclosure of terms likely to stir suspicion among Jonathan's opponents and the public.

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo pushed for a third term before his second-term was due to end in 2007 and was only stopped by fierce opposition, particularly from areas in the north. Jonathan won an election in April that international observers and many Nigerians said was the fairest Nigeria has held since the end of military rule in 1999.

But his campaign broke an unwritten "zoning" arrangement within the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which says power should rotate between the south and the north every two terms. He inherited office when his predecessor President Umaru Yar'Adua died during what would have been the first term of a northern cycle. Unless the law specifically states that Jonathan cannot elongate his tenure or run in 2015 there are always likely to be question marks over him standing.

"Despite many of his aides stating that Jonathan will not run in 2015, it may be very hard closer to the time to resist the pressure/temptation to run especially if his government can point to some successes in the economy," said Kayode Akindele, partner at Lagos-based advisory firm JMH-TIA Capital.

Opposition parties have been quick to cry foul. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) released a statement describing the proposed law as "fraudulent, deceptively self serving and a terrible misadventure." Another party said it was an attempt to "elongate his tenure through the back door." But the law would have many supporters.

Nigerian politicians are often criticised for spending their first term trying to get re-elected and using funds supposed to go into social benefits to win favour for future campaigns. Infrastructure plans, legislation proposals and contract negotiations are often left unfinished between terms and progress can be painfully slow across many areas of sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest economy.

"There is an argument to say you can't change a bad politician by changing legislation but there is equally an argument to say continuity and consistency without distraction could be positive," one senior western diplomat said.

Protest movement begins transforming politics

By Sinikka Tarvainen

WHEN a new Spanish protest movement spearheaded by young people began calling for far-reaching changes in the Western political and economic system, many people dismissed it with a scornful smile.

The movement was overly idealistic, heterogeneous, without clear ideas or leaders, critics argued. Two-and-a-half months on, however, the movement is being taken more seriously as it has started having a concrete impact on Spanish politics.

The government is taking decisions in line with some of the movement's demands, politicians are adopting its language, and even bankers are beginning to lend an ear to the protesters.

"We are living through times comparable to the (1930s) Great Depression," sociology professor Jose

Felix Tezanos said. "The system has to change throughout, and the Indignant Ones have taken the first step," Tezanos told the daily *El Pais*.

The Indignant Ones is a name for the movement also known as 15-M, in a reference to the date of May 15, when tens of thousands of people took to the streets to vent their anger and frustration.

Those feelings are the driving force of the movement in Spain, where the 21 per cent unemployment rate is the euro zone's highest, 45 per cent of people between 16 and 25 have no jobs, and hundreds of thousands of people have lost or are in danger of losing their homes because of unpaid mortgages.

The recent economic crisis plunged 800,000 more people into poverty between 2007 and 2010, according to the Catholic organisation Caritas, which puts the number of poor people in Spain at nearly

10 million. The 15-M was launched by young Internet activists, but it has drawn all sorts of people, ranging from the elderly to families with children and intellectuals.

The movement has staged a string of protests with strong media impact, ranging from protest camps on city squares to rallies, one of which drew an estimated 35,000 people to Madrid recently.

Hundreds of the protesters had walked hundreds of kilometres to the capital from points all over the country. They were fed and lodged by residents of villages along their route, in a reflection of widespread popular support for the movement. Nearly 80 per cent of Spaniards see the protests as being justified, according to one poll.

"The economic crisis has revealed the problems" suffered by modern capitalism, said Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning US economist

who attended a 15-M meeting in Madrid. "The experience of the past three decades shows us that there is a need for states to recover an important role and for markets to be regulated," Stiglitz told about 300 protesters at Madrid's Retiro park.

Many thought the movement's neighbourhood assemblies would get bogged down in endless debates, but 15-M representatives recently handed over a document of proposals to parliament. The demands included an end to corruption, greater political and economic transparency, better public services and a system allowing citizens to participate more directly in politics.

Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, the Socialist Party candidate to succeed Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in the November 20 elections, pledged to make banks renounce a part of their profits to create employment. Banks also should not

demand mortgage repayments "at the expense of people who are having a hard time" economically, Rubalcaba said.

A few days earlier, the government had adopted measures increasing the financial protection of people unable to pay mortgages. There are also plans to increase the transparency of public finances, and to make it more difficult for politicians to take lucrative posts.

The Indignant Ones have joined forces with campaigners targeting mortgage foreclosures, staging rallies in front of homes of people about to be evicted. Protesters have already prevented the expulsion of more than 60 families from their homes.

Recently, however, the movement suffered a setback when Spain's Constitutional Court ruled that evictions over unpaid mortgages did not violate defaulters' right to decent housing.



SLOVENIA'S KFOR soldiers stand on the road blockade in the village of Rudare near Zvecan. — Reuters

A miscalculated move

By Adam Tanner and Justyna Pawlak

KOSOVO'S escalation of tensions over an ethnically Serb area last week appears aimed at pushing the West to allow Pristina to expand its authority but is likely to backfire by frustrating its European backers.

Last Monday, Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians are in the overwhelming majority, seized border posts in the Serbian-populated north to enforce a ban on imports from Serbia — retaliation for its block on Kosovo's exports.

The action triggered the fatal shooting of a Kosovar policeman and clashes with local Serbs who burned down a customs border post and fired at Nato's KFOR peacekeeping force.

Kosovo officials, who face domestic pressure over their lack of authority in the north and the poor economy, say they acted to establish control

over a mineral-rich part of what they consider their own territory.

"At the moment, we are facing difficulties and challenges, but we will not withdraw under any circumstances and at any price, this is our land, our country, it is our constitutional and legal right," Prime Minister Hashim Thaci told parliament.

With domestic politics playing a vital role, European diplomats say Pristina may have jumped at a chance to contest Serb policies to assert its international standing.

In a largely miscalculated move, it may have tried to underline problems it is facing in difficult dialogue with Serbia, from which it declared independence three years ago.

The tensions came a week after Serbia blocked a round of talks mediated by the European Union which was meant to improve customs co-operation between Belgrade and Pristina.

The tiny Balkan state depends largely on international

support but its aspirations to forge closer ties with the EU have been hurt by the opposition of several EU governments to recognising Kosovo's independence.

A new bout of tensions might complicate its efforts to garner stronger support in Europe, where evidence of good regional co-operation is seen as essential to joining the bloc.

It will likely underscore the region's difficulties in overcoming ethnic hostility, the legacy of wars that tore through the Balkans after Yugoslavia collapsed in the 1990s.

"Serbia and Kosovo will have to come back to the negotiating table and it will be more difficult now," an EU diplomat said.

Until now, Kosovo and Serbia have made patchy progress, if any, in mending ties with the northern part of Kosovo, EU diplomats say. Serbia does not recognise Kosovan independence and the Serbs in the north consider

Belgrade their capital.

In the region which runs north from the main city of Mitrovica, Serbia finances the municipality, utilities, schools and hospitals. Kosovo runs courts, police and customs aided by the EU's EULEX justice mission.

The hazy legal status means that many of the 60,000 local Serbs in that region drive cars without licence plates and do not have to comply with rules such as local parking regulations.

Most people do not pay sales or income taxes and can use either the Serbian dinar currency or the euro which Kosovo has adopted.

In addition, crime and drug trafficking flourish in the administrative vacuum.

EU-mandated dialogue on resolving many issues started this year. But while many EU diplomats feel Serbia may have acted belligerently during last week's round of talks, some feel Kosovo's government is taking international backing for granted.

Fortunes differ among refugees

By Richard Lough

EVEN among refugees fleeing famine-stricken Somalia there are the "haves" and "have-nots" — those who cross the border in a battle for survival and those who can pay for a car. "I paid \$150 to be brought to Liboi from Mogadishu," said Abshira Abdullahi, speaking in the courtyard of a guesthouse after emerging from a crowded mini-van.

For most of the destitute families trekking through fighter-controlled southern Somalia, their livelihoods destroyed by the triple shock of conflict, the worst drought in decades and a lack of food aid, that is a princely sum beyond dreams.

Abdullahi left her five children in the care of her younger brother, saying life had become unbearable in Mogadishu's Madina district, near the capital's old quarter where once-majestic colonial facades now tumble into the turquoise ocean. Two decades of civil war in the anarchic Horn of Africa country have reduced much of the city to rubble.

An insurgency started in 2007 still rages on, with almost daily tit-for-tat artillery fire and gun battles between al Qaeda-linked fighters and Somali forces.

"Life in Mogadishu was like being under house arrest," said Abdullahi, a 30-year-old divorcee. The United Nations has declared famine in two regions of Somalia and says 3.7 million people in the country are going hungry due to drought.

In a report for countries sending aid, the UN's umbrella humanitarian agency OCHA said the crisis was expected to continue to worsen through 2011, with the whole of the south slipping into famine.

The sandy, windswept town of Liboi, a small trading centre patrolled by marabout storks less than 20 km from the border, was Abdullahi's final stopping point en route to the overflowing Dadaab refugee camp 80 km

deeper inside Kenya. In early 2007, Kenya officially closed its frontier with Somalia, marked outside Liboi by a single concrete pillar and two makeshift military road-blocks, in an effort to block the movement of Somali dissidents.

The closure forced the shutdown of a transit centre in Liboi where the UN refugee agency screened, registered and handed out food rations to incoming asylum seekers before transporting them to Dadaab.

Several lodges have sprung up in the dusty alleyways behind the main drag, owned by Liboi's bigwigs who see money to be made from the wealthier refugees before their final push to Dadaab. Business has boomed with the recent influx of refugees.

"We run this as a private lodge," said a local administrator in the courtyard of another guesthouse, where as many as 10 family members were squeezed into a single room with three beds.

A young boy collecting cash said the charge was 100 Kenyan shillings (\$1.10) per person, though for a couple with five children this was discounted to 400 shillings.

Over a mug of sweet milky tea, some residents muttered that it was not surprising that some officials were reluctant to throw their weight behind re-opening the transit centre given that it would likely kill the lodges' business.

Hassan Mahmoud Mohamed would have welcomed a UN reception centre. His family sat exhausted in the grounds of Liboi's clinic, the children's feet deeply cracked after dragging their scrawny limbs for 15 days from southern Somalia's Lower Shabelle region, the famine's epicentre.

"We walked up to 12 hours a day without anything to drink, no water, no milk, only what people we passed gave us," the father-of-seven said. "The children don't understand what is going on. At least we're told here we'll get assistance," he said.

Return of military may threaten war crimes probes

By Mike McDonald

THE uphill struggle of Guatemala's ruling leftists to field a candidate puts the military establishment on the verge of regaining the presidency just as probes into the country's brutal civil war begin.

The centre-left Union of Hope Party (UNE) may have no candidate at all for September's election if an appeal by former first lady Sandra Torres fails to overturn a court decision barring her from the presidency.

Already well behind in polls, her absence would nearly guarantee victory for former general Otto Perez, 61, of the right-wing Patriot Party (PP), raising fears that nascent efforts to prosecute military officials for crimes committed during the war will founder.

Nearly a quarter million mostly Mayan villagers died in the 1960-1996 conflict. Jennifer Harbury, a hu-

man rights lawyer, said she expected Perez to obstruct ongoing civil war cases if elected.

"He'll suggest that the war is over and everyone should get together. But without any justice that's exactly the same as saying everyone should get together after World War Two without Nuremberg" where Nazis leaders were tried, she said.

UNE hopeful Torres has been the closest rival to Perez in the presidential race, albeit an unpopular one. A June survey by Guatemalan pollster Produtos showed her lagging the frontrunner with 15.1 per cent support to Perez's 42.5 per cent.

Torres's bid has been in serious doubt since there is a constitutional rule that prevents family members of the president from taking power. To skirt this, Torres in March tearfully announced she had divorced President Alvaro Colom, who by law cannot run for a consecutive term. But

a court ruled against her last month and unless her appeal succeeds and her popularity recovers, Perez could win in a first round vote on September 11.

In a country deeply scarred by the army's role in the civil war, many voters back Perez in the hope he can restore law and order in areas ravaged by violent incursions by Mexican drug gangs. "Guatemala needs a strong man to govern this country," said Juan Mancilla, 54, a thrift store owner among thousands of cheering Perez supporters at a recent rally in the capital.

Perez has pledged to act against organised crime in one of Latin America's most troubled countries with an "iron fist". Colom's government denies crime is growing in Guatemala, citing a drop in murders to 6,502 in 2010 from 6,948 in 2009. But that is still more than 44 murders per every 100,000 people, nearly nine

times the rate in the United States.

Voters are worried about the violence. In a recent poll, two-thirds of Guatemalans said security was their biggest concern heading into the election. Mindful of the need to strengthen the army against cartels, Colom has said he would repeal a law passed in 2004 limiting the military budget to 0.33 per cent of Guatemala's GDP. Watchdogs fear the army may exploit this under Perez.

During Guatemala's civil war, a UN-backed truth commission found 85 per cent of the rights violations were committed by the military, and after years of prevarication, the government has begun to prosecute implicated officials.

On July 25, four former special forces officers became the first suspects to stand trial for the massacre of over 200 people in the village of Las Dos Erres in late 1982. Human rights groups say Perez, who served

in the army until 1998, was involved in wartime abuses, an accusation he denies. In July, the Guatemalan indigenous group, Waqib Kej presented a letter to the United Nations accusing Perez of human rights violations in the Quiche region during the war.

Perez has dismissed his detractors. "If there are accusations, I don't know about them," he told the Guatemalan daily *Prensa Libre*. "I was director of intelligence and my job was to uphold the constitution."

The war remains a touchy subject in Guatemala. Although the government in June declassified over 12,000 military documents from 1956-1996, it has kept information secret from 1982-83, the war's bloodiest phase. Critics say Colom has been reluctant to investigate war crimes.

But some political analysts say Guatemala has enough laws in place to prevent abuses if Perez wins a four-year term.

Minissha lashes out at *Bheja Fry 2* director

By Subhash K Jha in Mumbai

MINISSHA Lamba is miffed with Sagar Ballary, the director of *Bheja Fry 2* and her forthcoming *Hum Tum Aur Shabana*, who has been reportedly bad-mouthing her.

Shocked and hurt, Minissha feels it is Ballary's attempt to publicise his films.

"I used to consider Ballary a friend. But if by maligning me he is trying to get publicity, then he's hardly a friend," she says.

Minissha also feels this is Ballary's way of getting even with his *Bheja Fry 2* producer Mukul Deora, with whom Ballary was apparently at loggerheads during the shoot.

Ballary has accused Minissha of shooting a promotional video for *Bheja Fry 2* behind his back.

Minissha retaliates: "I think I got caught in the cross-fire between Ballary and the producer of *Bheja Fry 2*. Since he couldn't hurt the producer in any way, he has chosen to make me a scapegoat."

"If the producer asked me to do a video I'd naturally do it. Why was Ballary opposed to it? It's so sad I've done two films with him. I play the title role in *Hum Tum Aur Shabana*. So how can he threaten to chop off my role?" Minissha asks.

Minissha believes Ballary should have been "more responsible" with his words.

Minissha replies, "I worked in two of his films. I did *Bheja Fry 2* although I had a small role. I did it for Sagar Ballary. And this is what he does!"

"I can understand him wanting publicity for his film. But at my cost? Not by destroying my reputation," she insists.

"If Sagar Ballary had a problem with me, he



I think I got caught in the cross-fire between the director Sagar Ballary and the producer of *Bheja Fry 2*. Since he couldn't hurt the producer in any way, he has chosen to make me a scapegoat, says Minissha Lamba

could've told me personally about it. It takes years to build a friendship. It takes just a few careless remarks to ruin it," Minissha says.

After Ballary's outburst, Minissha has not bothered to get in touch with him. "What is there to ask him? Does he feel negative publicity would help the film? I've spoken to the producer and he's pretty upset."

Minissha is equally aghast at reports suggesting her rivalry with Pia Trivedi during the making of *Hum Tum Aur Shabana*.

"Pia is a lovely girl and she has a wonderful role in *Hum Tum Aur Shabana*. I had absolutely no problems with her during the film," the actor clarifies.

"I am playing the title role, so why should I get insecure? I've worked in a film like *Bachna Ae Haseeno* which had Bipasha Basu and Deepika Padukone. So what's there to be insecure about?" retorts Minissha. — IANS

Bruce Lee items on auction

THIRTEEN items belonging to the late kung fu legend Bruce Lee, including a 1966 letter he wrote and a fur-lined coat will go under the hammer in a Hong Kong auction next week, a report said yesterday.

The sale, which could raise up to HK\$880,000 (\$112,900), is believed to be the largest-scale auction of his memorabilia in the southern Chinese city, where Lee was raised before moving to the United States in his late teens.

Items to be sold from his estate include a letter he wrote 45 years ago to a friend in which the martial arts specialist talked about the television series *The Green Hornet*, in which he played Kato, a confidant of the superhero.

Other items to be sold at the August 6 auction include a dark-blue fur-lined coat which was made around 1973 for Lee's film *Game of Death*, a membership card for his kung fu institute, and a name card of Lee. — AFP

Actress Monica Spear back to her roots in 'wild' role



VENEZUELAN actress Monica Spear returns to her roots as the star of the telenovela *Flor Salvaje (Wildflower)*. One of the series' main attractions for Spear, who spent much of her childhood on her father's ranch in her native Maracaibo, was the chance to play a character living close to nature.

"I remember that before they offered me the project, I told my dad that I longed to be back on a ranch, in touch with nature and surrounded by animals. I needed that smell of wet grass after the rain and feeling that wild creature we have inside," she told EFE in a telephone interview from Colombia, where the series is in production.

In this adaptation for television of a novel by Laura Restrepo, the 27-year-old actress and model plays Amanda Monteverde, an innocent young girl who, after a family tragedy, flees with her three little sisters to a village where she meets three very different men.

There she has a love affair which is, as the novela's title suggests, wild and pure. And, naturally, full of drama and exciting twists and turns of the plot. "The role is very rich, very nuanced. And I didn't get it by chance — I felt it was the universe that sent it to me," the actress crowned Miss Venezuela 2004 said.

Nicky Hilton splits with boyfriend Katzenberg

AMERICAN

model Nicky Hilton has ended her four-year relationship with boyfriend David Katzenberg because of work schedule. "They broke up quietly after four years together. The main reason was that they have been busy with their work schedules, and it has made it difficult to spend time together," contactmusic.com quoted a source as saying.

"Nicky has been back and forth travelling overseas a lot with her business. She has recently been in Asia promoting her jewellery line, and David is starting a new production company. Their schedules never seemed to match," the source added.

In spite of the split, the pair is still in touch and treat each other as friends. "There is no scandal or any third person — they remain close friends, they have been friends since they were teenagers," said the source.

Lara doesn't like her body



MODEL Lara Stone admits she has hang-ups about her body and some times doesn't like her figure. "Like most women, I have days where I feel like today I'm not leaving the house — you know days where you've got a spot on your nose or when you've just got off a flight, eaten fish and chips and feel really bloated — that one happens a lot to me," femalefirst.co.uk

quoted Stone as saying. "You have to accept yourself though, and accept that there will always be something to worry about. It's much easier just to accept things," she added.

Beyonce in no hurry for a baby

SINGER Beyonce Knowles has left it to god as to when she will have a baby. Knowles, 29, is not putting any pressure on herself to start a family with husband Jay-Z, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The *Halo* singer said: "That's something that god has to decide. When it happens, it happens. I'm just so happy to be in this place in my life." The couple got married in 2008. — IANS



Cowboys and Aliens an adrenaline rush



Film: *Cowboys and Aliens*; **Director:** Jon Favreau; **Actors:** Daniel Craig, Harrison Ford and Olivia Wilde; **Rating:** ***

By Satyen K Bordoloi

THERE isn't much to say about a film where before the protagonist even utters his first word, he has killed three strong men. Such a film becomes a wish-fulfilment for action and adrenaline junkies. Though *Cowboys and Aliens* fulfils that promise in the first half, the clichéd plot progress and execution mars the second half of the film.



Jake (Daniel Craig) wakes up in the wilderness of the "Wild Wild West" without no recollection of his past and with a strange gadget stuck to his left wrist. As he finds more about his murderous past, there are things much more brutal lurking in the night sky than men who shoot before they speak. When these rugged cowboys realise that these aliens plan to take over the world, they ready up for a fight even though their pistols are no match for superior alien weaponry.

The first-half of *Cowboys And Aliens* is indeed a thrilling ride through a landscape that has been dealt with before in countless films. But director Jon Favreau's steady pace, and the addition of a seemingly magical bracelet on the wrist

of the protagonist, adds a different dimension to this familiar landscape. Here, though the name, and obviously the bracelet, foreshadows the arrival of aliens, the tension and mystery is palpable.

Sadly, once the mystery about the aliens and their purpose on Earth is revealed, the film takes a nosedive towards a land of clichés and barely manages to crash-land itself in the end.

A little more attention during the writing stage would have ironed out a lot of these flaws and let the film live out its potential.

The other major problem with the film is that many things are left unexplained: like the fitting in of huge aliens in small ships, and the true identity and form of a crucial character.

People in the film are

Actress Huerta pleads guilty to harassment



ACTRESS Paz de la Huerta, one of the stars of the television series *Boardwalk Empire*, pleaded guilty in a Manhattan court to a minor harassment charge for a fight she had last March with model Samantha Swetra at a New York hotel.

The US actress, 26, will not go to jail but must serve a day of community service and take classes of alcohol counselling for 10 weeks, since the ruckus occurred while she was inebriated, the daily *New York Post* said.

De la Huerta was arrested on the night of March 20 for allegedly throwing a glass and some punches at Swetra, known for her part in the MTV reality show *The City*, giving her a bloody nose and mouth injuries.

According to the accusation, De la Huerta tried to avoid arrest on the night of the dispute, telling cops that "I'm a real actress on HBO!" referring to the TV network that airs her series, and called Swetra "a fake actress publicity-seeker", the *New York Post* said.

The TMZ celebrity website said in turn that what sparked the dispute was De la Huerta coming on to a male friend of the model, so that "Sam got defensive".

The site said that Swetra's sarcastic comments about about how boozed up the actress was got De la Huerta so incensed she threw a glass at her and punched her in the face. — IANS

The Tree Of Life a masterful saga



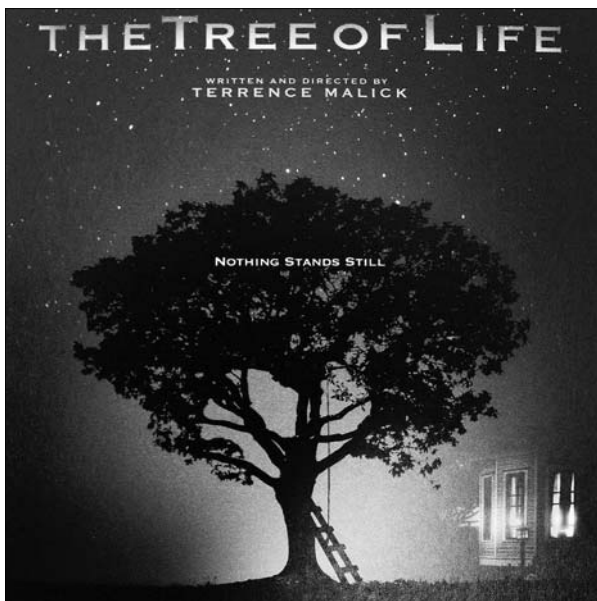
Film: *The Tree Of Life*; **Director:** Terrence Malick; **Actors:** Brad Pitt, Sean Penn, Jessica Chastain; **Rating:** ****

WE might leave our childhood, but it never leaves us. It follows us and haunts us, presenting no scope for absolution. And it is this haunting that auteur Terrence Malick presents with a camera that is as discerningly close to his characters as it is detached from the entire human condition when it looks at life and creation in both microscopic and macroscopic visions.

Through a series of hallucinations, Jack (Sean Penn) recollects his childhood of growing up in a small town and a younger brother he was close to and who died when he was still young. Through the agony of Jack, the film travels back in time, into the childhood of planet earth itself, right from its creation, infancy to the time when it became the *Tree of Life*.

For a film of just over two hours, this has the ambitions of one that never ends. In its short span, it tries to encompass everything — love, bliss, agony, loss, pain, ambition, control, origin of earth, life, violence, death... to create a film that is as much grounded as it is a fantasy.

Terrence Malick is a man



in control of his medium. He has demonstrated his artistry in films selectively made, it seems, only when he has something to say, leading once to a gap of two decades in his career. And here, in *The Tree of Life* you see Malick at the helm of his craft so far. Only a man in total awareness of the grammar of cinema can attempt to bend them or even try and create something more as he does here.

Yet, the film can also be blamed for indulgence with the main flaw being that it uses words far too many. That might seem a strange accusation for a film that has very few dialogues anyway. But when something is in short supply, whatever is presented acquires greater significance.

Malick tries his hands at

explanation and resolution, using religion and the *Book of Job* and that is where he falters.

Indeed, the film can be called a modern interpretation of the *Book of Job* with Job's character being played by Jack, who like Job, has theological discussions albeit with himself on the nature of life, his suffering and his anger with god for making him suffer.

Thus, if you are the religious kind, or if one of your overarching concerns is why bad things happen to good people, this is a film custom-made for you. Indeed, in the galactic scenes, or of the earth's history that Malick presents, you might even find god's response to your queries like Job does at the end of his trials. — IANS

Kids ask about marriage more and more, says Brad Pitt

By Priyanka Sharma in New Delhi

HOLLYWOOD star Brad Pitt, who is raising six children with partner Angelina Jolie, reveals that his choices have changed after becoming a father. Now, before signing on any movie, he thinks about what his kids will see.

"I think that after becoming a father, I am changing in my choices. Today, everything I do, I look

at in the context of what my kids are going to see and feel. I think about everything I do now — what my kids are gonna see, how they're gonna feel. But I think they know me as a dad; I hope they would just think I'm a pretty damn good actor," Pitt said in an e-mail interaction from Los Angeles.

Pitt and Jolie have been together since 2005. They are raising six kids — adopted children Maddox, 9, Pax, 7, and Zahara, 6, and biological children Shiloh, 5, and two-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne.

The 47-year-old also hinted that there are chances of him marrying his actress girlfriend as they are being pressurised by their children to do so.

"The kids ask about marriage. It's meaning more and more to them. So it's something we've got to look at. If Angie and I feel it's



peacefully."

He enjoyed being in India but when he comes to Bollywood movies, Pitt says, "I don't know a lot. I can't sing and dance."

The actor is upbeat about his new film, *Tree of Life* that released in India on Friday. Directed by Terrence Malick, the film earned rave reviews at the Cannes Film Festival. It received the prestigious 2011 Golden Palm (Palme d'Or) award at film festival.

"For me, the adults that we are are the direct result of the children we were. In this sense *The Tree of Life* follows the lives of three brothers who move between a loving mother, who represents the purest goodness, and a father, who is a human with his own faults," he said.

The film also stars Sean Penn and Jessica Chastain. — IANS

I'm nervous about TV debut: Sanjay

SANJAY Dutt is excited about his TV debut with reality show *Bigg Boss 5*, but admits he is nervous too!

"I'm pretty nervous doing it. I've never done it, I don't know what it will be but I know one thing that it will be very different," Sanjay, who turned 52, said.

The actor, who is said to be teaming up with Salman Khan for the controversial show, reveals Salman won't be with him throughout the season. Nevertheless, he promises to try to make it fun.

"Salman will introduce me in the show and will do two episodes with me and then I'll be on my own. Salman asked me to do it and I thought I should do it. It's something new for me. It's a good plat-



form. I'm going to have fun. That is the way I am. I will not make it serious," he added.

Bigg Boss is a reality show where celebrity contestants stay in a single house for about three months, with no connection to the outside world. They are overseen by a mysterious person known as *Bigg Boss*,

whose only presence in the house is through his voice.

Rajeev Khandelwal's directorial dreams! Actor Rajeev Khandelwal, who made a successful transition from the small screen to the big screen, now wants to go behind the camera.

He says he loves learning about different aspects of film-making and would like to turn director some day.

"I love knowing about the different aspects of film-making. Even after the shoot, I check the rushes, I go for colour correction, to learn new things. It's basically my love for the art of cinema that takes to all this. Some day I would want to direct," Rajeev said.

The 35-year-old actor made his Bollywood debut in 2008. — IANS

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Supercars slice through traffic in convoy

CHANDIGARH — Get out of the way: boy racers in India are using escort vehicles to ensure their souped-up sports cars have a clear run along India's potholed and congested public roads.

Weaving through trucks, horse carts and clapped-out hatchbacks on one recent rainy Sunday afternoon, members of the Cannonball Club sped down a state highway on a terrifying 30-minute dash.

The 25 luxury cars, including Porsches, Ferraris, Lamborghinis and Jaguars were led by a large SUV (sports utility vehicle) which helped find a route through the busy traffic outside the northern city of Chandigarh.

For its rich, young members, the Delhi-based club is a chance to drive in a convoy with other top-brand models and to compare notes afterwards on the pleasures of owning cars worth up to seven million rupees (\$160,000).

Drivers are told the club events are not races and that they must stay behind the lead escort vehicle, but members are united by a love of speed and talk often about how to evade the police and keep their licences.

"Our idea is to make driving stress-free for the members," Paritosh Gupta, 26, the club's founder, said.

"To cope with the numerous perils of owning a supercar in India, we arrange drives on national highways, where our cars are escorted by two SUVs, one in the front and the other at the rear."

Gupta, who drives a Porsche Panamera, said that despite punitive import tariffs of more than 100 per cent, more Indians are buying sports cars — but then end up leaving them in



A HORSE is seen riding past a BMW Z4 sportscar on a street in Chandigarh. Boy racers in India these days are using escort vehicles to ensure their souped-up sports cars have a clear run along India's potholed and congested public roads. — AFP

the garage.

"Owners restrict the usage. Either they drive it to their office or just take it out when they head to a luxury hotel," explained Gupta. "I want club members to have more fun with their expensive cars."

Dhruv Talwar, 24, a gem trader and jewellery exporter from a prosperous business family in Chandigarh, said he had encouraged his friends to buy a car and join the club for the "pure thrill of enjoying a mean machine."

"I love my car but I must say that driving a sports car can be a rat race in India," said Talwar, who owns a Porsche 911 in Delhi — and a Mustang at his other home in Los Angeles.

He admits India's roads are often unsuitable and that sports cars can look out of place among the other travellers.

"Chaotic traffic and potholes are not the only problems. The very presence of a sports car excites people and generates mixed emotions on the road," he said.

"Motorbikes accelerate when they see these cars to race us, often risking their lives. Some even take pictures as they ride. There are others who ogle and a few get annoyed with the noise and try to scratch the car's paint."

"Owning an expensive car is matter of pride but driving is a matter of persistence," he said.

The club, founded last year, already has more than 100 members from three states and has plans to expand with an Internet site and to develop into a one-stop consultancy for supercar owners.

"Having a club exclusive to super cars indi-

cates a healthy sign," Ashish Chordia, a director of Porsche in India, said. "It gives everyone a common platform to interact and experience different products."

Chordia, who also heads conglomerate luxury brand the Shreyans Group importing sport cars, designer clothes and jewellery, believes the potential for top-end goods in India is huge.

"The premium car sector grew by 70 per cent last year," he pointed out.

In May, Ferrari became the latest sports car firm to open a showroom in India, attracted by the country's growing wealth.

Aston Martin, Lamborghini, Bentley, Jaguar, Porsche already have dealerships despite the massive taxes.

With clubs like the Cannonball likely to become more popular, the police say its activities are not illegal, but that anyone caught speeding or dangerous driving faces large fines or a court hearing.

Gupta is keen to stress that members are trying to strike a balance between rules of the road and getting the most out of their cars.

"We want our members to explore all the possibilities the cars offer but in a responsible manner," Gupta said. "Posh cars are not just meant to be parked. Flaunt them if you have them." — AFP

Intl documentary fest to pay homage to Raveendran, Kaul

By Ashraf Padanna

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM — The fourth International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala (IDSFFK) beginning here today will pay tributes to Raveendran, the writer, journalist, film critic and film maker popularly known as Chintha Ravi and renowned film-maker Mani Kaul.

Select episodes of Ente Keralam, the television travelogue that Ravi did for Asianet travelling along the length and breadth of the state, will be screened during the five-day festival. Sasikumar, filmmaker, media person and institution builder, will remember his friend who died on July 4 at the age of 65.

One of the highlights of this year's festival is Diaspora Films featuring works about the third generation Indians who have migrated to the US and are now living totally a different life ignorant of their roots. Over 100 film-makers from different parts of the world are expected to take part in India's only international documentary festival.

K B Ganesh Kumar, the minister for sports and cinema who is also a popular film and television actor, will inaugurate the festival at Kairali theatre at 6.30 pm while transport and temple affairs minister V S Sivakumar will preside over the function.

Celebrated film-maker S Priyadarshan (pictured) who heads the Kerala Chalchitra Academy will make the introductory remarks at the first official function after he assumed office early this month. The ceremony will be followed by the screening of the inaugural film *The Old Partner* directed by Korean film-maker Lee Chung-Ryoul.

Jaichandiram, the first Asian president of



International Association Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) and former deputy director-general of Doordarshan, will introduce the package to the audience which comprises women directors from Afghanistan, Thailand, Iran, Jordan, Philippines and other countries.

A separate section is also planned in memory of filmmaker Mani Kaul who died two days after Raveendran's death. Nauraus Contractor, Kaul's cinematographer in the early years, will deliver the memorial address. It will be followed by the screening of Kaul's renowned documentary *Dripud*.

In all, more than 200 films from 25 countries will be screened at the festival while 70 of them will compete for prizes in the sections such as documentary, short fiction, animation, music video and campus films.

A separate section will showcase films depicting the importance of Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India's first international art festival to be held in the historic buildings and locations of the Kerala port city in November and December 2012 and January 2013.

"The festival will reflect social, cultural and political realities and tensions of diverse countries through their documentaries and short films," said Priyadarshan, director of some 70 films in Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil.

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OR170	A320	Doha	0315		WY237	B737-8	Hyderabad	0120	
EY384	A320	Abu Dhabi	0350		WY237	B737-8	Hyderabad	0120	
IX145	B737-8	Amritsar/Abu Dhabi	0350		WY223	B737-8	Cochin	0120	
EK866	A330	Dubai	0355		WY261	B737-8	Lucknow	0125	
F2041	B737-8	Dubai	0415		WY661	B737-7	Doha	0130	
GF569	E190	Bahrain	0425		F2042	B737-8	Trivandrum	0130	
RJ600	A319	Amman	0505		WY123	A330-300	Munich	0200	
WY662	B737-7	Doha	0600		WY273	B737-8	Japur	0205	
WY114	A330-200	Frankfurt	0725		NL666	B737-2	Sialkot	0215	
F2043	B737-8	Dubai	0740		WY133	A330-200	Paris	0220	
WY620	B737-8	Abu Dhabi/Dubai	0800		WY335	B737-8	Kathmandu	0225	
WY914	B737-8	Salalah	0800		PK230	A310	Peshawar/Sialkot	0330	
WY202	B737-8	Bombay	0800		IX818	B737-8	Mangalore	0430	
NL669	B737-2	Sialkot	0830		F2042	B737-8	Dubai	0500	
WY224	B737-8	Japur	0855		EK867	A330	Dubai	0500	
WY238	B737-8	Hyderabad	0850		EY385	A320	Abu Dhabi	0525	
WY102	A330-300	London-Heathrow	0900		KU678	A320	Dubai/Kuwait	0550	
WY262	B737-8	Lucknow	0920		QR171	B737-8	Cochin	0550	
WY254	B737-8	Madras	0920		GF561	E190	Bahrain	0700	
WY224	B737-8	Cochin	0925		RJ601	A319	Amman	0715	
WY218	B737-8	Trivandrum	0925		WY3301	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	0715	
EK862	A330	Dubai	0930		WY242	B737-8	Dubai	0845	
WY242	B737-8	Japur	0945		F2044	B737-8	Dubai	0820	
OR166	A321	Doha	0950		WY315	B737-8	Chittagong	0850	
GN113	A320	Sharjah	0955		NL772	B737-2	Peshawar	0950	
EY382	A320	Abu Dhabi	1000		WY273	B737-8	Calicut	1000	
WY3302	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	1045		WY297	B737-8	Calicut	1005	
IX549	E175AR	Trivandrum	1050		WY615	A330-200	Bangkok	1010	
WY604	E175AR	Dubai	1100		WY283	B737-8	Kathmandu	1015	
WY336	B737-8	Kalhrandu	1140		WY323	B737-8	Karachi	1020	
GF562	E190	Bahrain	1235		WY917	ATRA2	Khasab	1030	
IX337	B737-8	Calicut	1255		WY605	B737-8	Cochin	1030	
WY918	ATRA2	Khasab	1315		WY923	B737-8	Salalah	1035	
WY625	B737-8	Dubai	1330		GN114	A320	Sharjah	1035	
WY924	B737-8	Salalah	1440		WY203	B737-8	Bombay	1040	
WY324	B737-8	Karachi	1440		EK863	A330	Dubai	1045	
WY3304	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	1445		EY383	A320	Abu Dhabi	1055	
MP197	B747F	Amsterdam	1600		OR167	A321	Doha	1055	
WY338	ATRA2	Abu Dhabi	1655		WY3303	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	1115	
WY204	B737-8	Bombay	1655		WY553	B737-8	Cochin	1145	
WY654	E175AR	Bahrain	1715		IX554	B737-8	Cochin/Trivandrum	1150	
OR164	A321	Doha	1735		WY715	B737-8	Dar-es-Salaam	1230	
WY638	B737-8	Dubai	1740		WY623	A330-300	Kuala Lumpur	1310	
WY298	B737-8	Calicut	1750		WY423	B737-8	Berail/Amman	1310	
WY284	B737-8	Bangalore	1800		GF563	E190	Bahrain	1315	
WY654	B737-8	Doha	1800		WY653	E175AR	Bahrain	1315	
GF564	A319	Bahrain	1855		WY663	B737-8	Doha	1330	
WY3306	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	1845		WY637	ATRA2	Abu Dhabi	1345	
TG507	A330	Bangkok/Karachi	1900		IX350	B737-8	Calicut	1355	
WY374	B737-8	Colombo	1905		WY101	A330-300	London-Heathrow	1400	
GN117	A320	Sharjah	1907		WY607	B737-8	Dubai	1440	
WY316	B737-8	Chittagong	1910		WY3305	ATRA2	Mukhaizna	1515	
WY926	B737-8	Salalah	1945		WY925	B737-8	Salalah	1540	
F2047	B737-8	Dubai	2020		WY671	B737-8	Jeddah	1540	
WY124	A330-300	Paris	2030		MP197	B747F	Shanghai/Hong Kong	1800	
WY134	A330-200	Paris	2045		WY615	B737-8	Dubai	1805	
KL449	A330	Amsterdam/Abu Dhabi	2045		OR165	A321	Doha	1840	
AI873	A320	Delhi	2125		GF565	A319	Bahrain	1855	
BA073	B777	London-Heathrow/Abu Dhabi	2145		WY695	B737-8	Dammam	1905	
WY616	B737-8	Dubai	2145		WY647	B737-8	Kuwait	1905	
AI807	A319	Madras	2200		WY927	E175AR	Salalah	1905	
WY406	B737-8	Caro	2215		WY681	B737-8	Riyadh	1910	
LH618	A340	Frankfurt/Abu Dhabi	2215		WY667	B737-7	Doha	1910	
OR168	A320	Doha	2235		WY655	B737-7	Bahrain	1915	
EY388	A320	Abu Dhabi	2235		GN118	A320	Sharjah	1945	
LC242	A330	Zurich/Dubai	2235		WY635	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2005	
GF566	B737-7	Bahrain	2235		WY613	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2015	
WY624	ATRA2	Al-Ain	2305		F2048	B737-8	Dubai	2105	
WY656	B737-7	Bahrain	2305		KL450	A330	Abu Dhabi/Amsterdam	2205	
WY688	B737-7	Doha	2310		WY817	A330-300	Bangkok	2205	
WY928	E175AR	Salalah	2310		WY913	B737-8	Salalah	2245	
WY636	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2315		AI808	A319	Madras	2300	
WY672	B737-8	Jeddah	2315		AI874	A320	Delhi	2310	
WY423	B737-8	Berail/Amman	2325		EY381	A320	Abu Dhabi	2325	
WY616	B737-8	Bangkok	2330		QR169	A320	Cochin	2330	
WY650	A330-200	Bombay	2340		LC243	A330	Dubai/Zurich	2335	
AI865	A319	Ahmedabad/Bombay	2345		GF567	B737-7	Bahrain	2345	
					LH619	A340	Abu Dhabi/Frankfurt	2355	

PHARMACIES

24-HOUR SERVICE

Al Hashar ph, Ruwi 24783334

Muscat ph, Ruwi, 24702542

Al Sarooj, 24695536

Scientific ph, Qurum, 24566601

Ruwi, 24702850

DAY DUTY

Muscat Capital 24456760

Sagar 24393696

Middle East 24540924

Muscat 24713778

Sur Aukadh 25540643

Buraimi Yass 1 25653855

Ibri Al Zaiyana 25694458

Nizwa Nizwa 25412323

Salalah International 23292450

NIGHT DUTY

Muscat Al Jabry 24420761

Atlas 24503585

Capital 24543513

Muscat 24833323

Ibn Saleem 25543770

Sur Yass 1 25653855

Buraimi Al Aryaf Al Omania 25691389

Ibri Al Zaiyana 25694458

Rustaq Scientific 26883673

Barka Qarn Al Rawdah 25425012

Nizwa Balsm 25351064

Salalah Muscat 23291635

KHOULA HOSPITAL VISITING HOURS

Private & Other Wards

Working Days: 16:00-18:00. Weekends & Public Holidays: 10-12:00, 16:00-18:00

ICU

Working Days: 16:00-17:00. Weekends & Public Holidays: 16:00-17:00

Special Care Baby Unit

Working Days: Parents may visit at any time. Weekends & Public Holidays: Parents may visit at any time

OMAN NATIONAL TRANSPORT COMPANY(S.O.A.C)									
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
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Al Buraimi</u>					<u>Daily Services From Al Buraimi To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
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
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Sinaw</u>					<u>Daily Services From Sinaw To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
52	17:30	Samad Hosp	19:50	Daily	52	7:00	Al Mudhaili	7:20	Daily
52	17:30	Al Mudhaili	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
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Yanqul</u>					<u>Daily Services From Yanqul To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
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
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Ibri (Araql)</u>					<u>Daily Services From Ibri (Araql) To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
54	8:00	Nizwa Suq	10:20	Daily	54	15:40	Ibri Suq	15:55	Daily
54	8:00	Ibri Suq	12:15	Daily	54	15:40	Nizwa Suq	17:50	Daily
54	8:00	Al Araql	12:30	Daily	54	15:40	Ruwi	20:20	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Sur</u>					<u>Daily Services From Sur To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
55	7:30	Ibri	9:45	Daily	55	6:00	Al Mintrib	7:20	Daily
55	7:30	Al Mintrib	10:25	Daily	55	6:00	Ibri	7:50	Daily
55	7:30	Sur	11:45	Daily	55	6:00	Ruwi	10:10	Daily
55	14:30	Ibri	16:45	Daily	55	14:30	Al Mintrib	15:50	Daily
55	14:30	Al Mintrib	17:25	Daily	55	14:30	Ibri	16:20	Daily
55	14:30	Sur	18:45	Daily	55	14:30	Ruwi	18:40	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Fahud - Jibal</u>					<u>Daily Services From Jibal - Fahud To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
62	6:30	Izki	8:05	Daily	62	12:30	Fahud	13:15	Daily
62	6:30	Firq	8:25	Daily	62	12:30	Firq	15:35	Daily
62	6:30	Fahud	10:30	Daily	62	12:30	Izki	15:55	Daily
62	6:30	Jibal	11:15	Daily	62	12:30	Ruwi	17:30	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Salalah</u>					<u>Daily Services From Salalah To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
100	6:00	Salalah	19:00	Daily	100	7:00	Muscat	19:50	Daily
100	12:00	Salalah	1:00	Daily	100	19:00	Muscat	22:50	Daily
100	19:00	Salalah	7:40	Daily	100	19:00	Muscat	7:30	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Marmul</u>					<u>Daily Services From Marmul To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
101	6:30	Marmul	17:20	Daily	101	6:30	Muscat	17:20	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Salalah To Dubai</u>					<u>Daily Services From Dubai To Salalah</u>				
102	15:00	Thamrait	16:35	Daily	102	15:00	Buraimi	16:30	Daily
102	15:00	Haima	21:00	Daily	102	15:00	Hafet 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	Hafet Check Post	4:30	Daily	102	15:00	Haima	1:20	Daily
102	15:00	Buraimi	6:30	Daily	102	15:00	Thamrait	5:05	Daily
102	15:00	Dubai	7:00	Daily	102	15:00	Sohar	7:00	Daily
<u>Daily Services From Ruwi To Dubai</u>					<u>Daily Services From Dubai To Muscat (Ruwi)</u>				
201	7:00	Dubai	12:30	Daily	201	7:30	Muscat	13:40	Daily
201	14:30	Dubai	22:25	Daily	201	15:30	Muscat	21:45	Daily
For more information or booking please contact the below numbers: Ruwi Bus Station 24701294 - 24705522, Burj Salwa Office: 24510438, Head Office/Ho Tel: 24492948, Salalah Office: 23229773 Website: www.ontcan.com - Email: ont@ontcanel.net									

All Blacks open title defence with crushing win over Boks

WELLINGTON — The All Blacks opened their Tri-Nations title defence with a 40-7 hammering of the injury-ravaged Springboks yesterday, falling just four points short of a record test victory over the South Africans.

After a stop-start performance in their season-opening 60-14 win over Fiji last week, the World Cup favourites moved up another notch and were rewarded with six tries, including two each for wingers Cory Jane and Zac Guildford.

"It was a big improvement on last week," said coach Graham Henry.

"It's important for us to keep improving... I'm pleased with the performance, still things to work on ... but overall seven out of 10."

Flyhalf Dan Carter added 10 points from two penalties and two conversions to edge back ahead of England's Jonny Wilkinson in the battle for the test points world record on 1,204.

South Africa, who scored their one try through skipper John Smit, put in an improved performance after being embarrassed 39-20 by Australia last week but were simply

no match for the power and pace of the home side.

With more than 20 frontline players recuperating back in South Africa, the world champions just managed to avoid the ignominy of a worse defeat than the 52-16 drubbing they suffered in 2003.

"The All Blacks looked very good and deserve their tag as favourites for the World Cup," said coach Peter de Villiers.

"At time our execution looked very, very good when we had the ball but you can't give the All Blacks turnover ball and they punished us."

After the All Blacks had trotted out in their new World Cup strip with smart white collars, Carter wasted no time regaining the world record for most test points with a penalty in the third minute.

It was not until 10 minutes later that the home side managed to get across the Springboks try line, however, with prop Wyatt Crockett touching down in the corner for his first test try.

The 30,000 crowd did not have to wait long for the second, however, with the All Blacks taking the



ZAC Guildford (left) of All Blacks heads for the try line as he brushes off the tackle of Gerhard Mostert of Springboks during their Tri-Nations rugby match in Wellington yesterday. — Reuters

game straight to the South Africans from the restart.

Carter's neat grubber kick was hauled in by Ma'a Nonu and, when the centre was finally hauled down, the All Blacks recycled and Carter broke again before feeding winger Guildford to score.

The Springboks struck back just before the half hour mark when they kicked a penalty for the corner, won the lineout and Smit barrelled through under the posts to celebrate his 104th test with a try.

"It was about the only enjoyable moment of the game," said Smit. "It's always terrible to lose a test match, even more so against the All Blacks and 40 points was not what we had in mind... we'll be gutted with the effort of the last two weeks."

The All Blacks stormed further ahead five minutes later when Jane scored the pick of his tries by sprinting 50 metres and rounding his marker to touch down in the corner, sending the home side into the break 18-7 up.

Jane, under pressure for his place in the side because of New Zealand's surfeit of talent in the back

three positions, scored his second four minutes after halftime, scooping up a bouncing ball to touch down after the Springbok defence had gambled on a blitz.

Carter finally kicked his first conversion of the night, adding a penalty five minutes later to extend the lead to 28-7 and the All Blacks started bringing on their replacements, including Sonny Bill Williams for his first home test.

It was his rival for the inside centre spot Nonu, however, whose hard running set up the field position for Guildford's second try after 64 minutes.

Guildford then turned provider to put Colin Slade over 10 minutes from time and from then on it was just a question of whether the Springboks could hold out and prevent further embarrassment.

"I thought Zac Guildford and Cory Jane were both outstanding tonight," Henry added.

"They played exceptionally well in all aspects of the game. We've got probably nine guys for five positions so we're gonna have to make some important decisions." — Reuters

Pujols gets 2,000th career hit

ST LOUIS, Missouri — St Louis slugger Albert Pujols has notched the 2,000th hit of his career, becoming the 263rd Major League Baseball player to reach the milestone.

The hit was a double down the third-base line in the eighth inning of the Cardinals' 9-2 victory over the Chicago Cubs on Friday.

It came off Chicago relief pitcher Carlos Marmol and drove in a run, giving St. Louis a 9-2 lead that would prove to be the final tally.

The crowd of 42,042 responded with a standing ovation for the 10-year veteran. Pujols, at second base, waved his helmet to them.

"I think if they would have kept going, I think a couple of drops would have come out of my eyes," Pujols said. "To be able to share this moment with (fans) is incredible. Hopefully, I can continue to do it the rest of my career."

Pujols is the fifth Cardinals player to reach 2,000 hits and the first since Hall of Famer Lou Brock did so on July 28, 1974. — AFP

Fish advances, Del Potro ousted

LOS ANGELES — Top seed Mardy Fish and teenaged Ryan Harrison will face off in a semifinal for a second straight week on home hard-courts after both advanced at the ATP Los Angeles hard-court tournament on Friday.

Fish, who beat the 19-year-old ranked 94th and rising a week ago in Atlanta on the way to the title, booked his place in the final four as he put out Russian eighth seed Igor Kunitsyn 6-2, 6-4.

Harrison lived up to his reputation as a comeback artist, constructing his fourth fightback from six matches to reach his second ATP semifinal after defeating Lu Yen-Hsun of Taiwan 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Second seed Juan Del Potro, the 2008 champion was knocked out as Latvian Ernests Gulbis reached his first semifinal in six months with a 6-2, 6-4 victory featuring 31 winners.

The 2008 champion Del Potro saved three match points but was unable to close the gap.

"It was very difficult," said the Argentine. "I got frustrated in the second set when I broke his serve but he broke me back. He was playing with a lot of confidence and took his chances."

"When you play like I did



MARDY Fish hits a return to Igor Kunitsyn of Russia during their match at the ATP Los Angeles hard-court tournament in Los Angeles on Friday. — AFP

against a player like him, you lose."

Gulbis called the victory "one of the most important wins of my career."

"But I won, I'm happy and I'll play the semis. My tennis

is coming back to where it should be."

Brazilian fourth seed Thomaz Bellucci was upset 1-6, 6-4, 6-1 by American Alex Bogomolov, the next Gulbis opponent.

Fish spent 73 minutes in his victory over Kunitsyn, notching five aces and 21 winners.

Harrison did it tough after losing the first set, but rallied over nearly two and a half hours as he saved ten break points and moved through with 30 winners and 36 unforced errors against 40 mistakes for Taiwan's top player Lu.

Fish, playing a day match for the first time this week and a decade older than Harrison, is taking nothing for granted against an up-and-coming competitor.

"He's really improving, he's much further along at 19 than I was at that age."

"He was a bit nervous last week in Atlanta, so I'm expecting a much tougher match this time. It's kind of a lose-lose for me — I'm older and I'm expected to win; he's got nothing to lose and can just swing from the hip."

Harrison can't explain why he's so proficient at comebacks after producing his 12th of this ATP season. "I don't know if it's a bad start or just getting better during the match," said the teenager.

"I'm always figuring out the match, thinking what to do next," Harrison earned his tenth win of the season against 11 defeats as he goes into the Fish match. — dpa

De Jonge, Simpson share lead at Greenbrier

NEW YORK — Zimbabwe's Brendon de Jonge made the most of his growing comfort level on the Old White Course by charging into a tie for the lead in Friday's second round of the Greenbrier Classic in West Virginia.

The burly 31-year-old, who finished third in the event's inaugural edition here 12 months ago, fired a sparkling three-under-par 67 to vault to the top of the standings at the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs.

De Jonge rebounded from an early bogey with four birdies to post a seven-under total of 133, ending a sun-splashed day level with American Webb Simpson, who sank a six-foot birdie putt at the last for a 68.

Former Masters champion Trevor Immelman of South Africa, who set the first-round pace with a sizzling 64, was a further stroke back after carding a 70 while American world No 6 Phil Mickelson missed the cut after shooting a 73.

De Jonge, who had opened with a 66 in pursuit of a maiden victory on the PGA Tour, was delighted with his form at the picturesque resort venue

situated in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains.

"I started out a little bit shaky but I made some good pars at the beginning of the round and got some momentum going," de Jonge told reporters. "It was nice. I felt like I had pretty good control of the ball."

The Zimbabwean's best PGA Tour finish was his third place in last year's Greenbrier Classic and he said he had liked the par-70 layout when he first saw it.

"I felt comfortable here from the start and I love the changes (since last year)," added de Jonge, who went to university at nearby Virginia Tech. "It feels good out there. It's a comfortable place for me."

De Jonge posted three top-three finishes on the 2010 PGA Tour and believes he simply needs to stay out of his own way if he is to pull off a long-awaited breakthrough victory on the US circuit.

"It's very, very difficult to win out here; it's difficult to win anywhere," he said. "The biggest thing is just getting out of my own way."

"Staying in your own rou-

tine... is the best way to put it."

Britain's Brian Davis birdied five of his last nine holes for a scintillating 64 to lie two shots off the pace, level with Americans Gary Woodland (70), Michael Letzig (66), Derek Lamely (70) and Scott Stallings (65).

The cut fell at one-over 141 with four-times major champion Mickelson the biggest name to fall by the wayside — his first missed cut this year in 15 PGA Tour starts.

"I played really well, hit a lot of good golf shots," Mickelson said after mixing six bogeys with three consecutive birdies from the 12th. "I'm not disappointed at all."

"I hit a few shots on the front nine that were actually really good shots that left me no chance to recover and I ended up trying to come back, but fell a couple of shots shy there."

Former Major winners Justin Leonard, fellow American Davis Love III and Spaniard Jose Maria Olazabal, plus last year's Greenbrier Classic champion Stuart Appleby of Australia, also failed to advance. — Reuters

Halladay helps Phillies thump Pirates

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Phillies roared to an early lead and thumped the Pittsburgh Pirates 10-3 on Friday allowing Roy Halladay to win his National League-leading 13th game.

Halladay was in near perfect form, allowing just one hit while striking out five in seven innings. He retired the final 12 batters he faced.

Capping off the win was news that the Phillies had acquired Astros All-Star outfielder Hunter Pence.

"Out there, you're kind of in your own world... But it's nice, especially coming off a nice win and hear good news like that, it's always good," Halladay said of the Pence trade.

Philadelphia scored three runs in the first inning and added five more in the second inning led by a three-run home

run by Chase Utley. Utley went 3-for-5 in the game, driving in four runs and needed a double to complete the cycle.

Jimmy Rollins hit a two-run home run in the seventh inning to stretch the Phillies lead to 10-0 before the Pirates broke the shutout with three runs in the eighth inning off Phillies relief pitcher Drew Carpenter.

Charlie Morton took the loss for Pittsburgh to drop to 8-6 on the season, allowing eight runs on nine hits while striking out and walking four batters in four innings.

"The first two innings, he (Morton) couldn't get the ball down with consistency," Pirates manager Clint Hurdle said.

"Different guys are wired differently. Some pitchers go out with the mentality that they're going to go out and

make it happen.

"For Charlie, when he lets it happen, he's better served. I think tonight he tried to make it happen the first two innings."

MLB results: Baltimore Orioles bt NY Yankees 4-2; Kansas City Royals bt Cleveland Indians 12-0; Detroit Tigers bt LA Angels 12-2; NY Mets bt Washington Nationals 8-5; Philadelphia Phillies bt Pittsburgh Pirates 10-3; Toronto Raptors bt Texas Rangers 3-2; Cincinnati Reds bt San Francisco Giants 4-3 (13 innings); Atlanta Braves bt Florida Marlins 5-0; Milwaukee Brewers bt Houston Astros 4-0; Chicago White Sox bt Boston Red Sox 3-1; St Louis Cardinals bt Chicago Cubs 9-2; Colorado Rockies bt San Diego Padres 3-2; Minnesota Twins bt Oakland Athletics 9-5; Tampa Bay Devil Rays bt Seattle Mariners 8-0; LA Dodgers bt Arizona Diamondbacks 9-5.

Unseeded Serena sails past Sharapova

STANFORD, California — Serena Williams shrugged off her unseeded status and delivered a dominating 6-1, 6-3 victory over second-seeded Maria Sharapova on Friday to reach the semifinals of the WTA Stanford tournament.

Williams, a 13-time Grand Slam champion who is unseeded thanks to the slump in her ranking caused by a lengthy injury layoff, showed she's still a contender among the game's elite as she overpowered Sharapova, who struggled throughout with her serve.

Williams was playing just her third tournament since she won Wimbledon in 2010. She was then sidelined for 11 months by a series of health problems including a cut foot that required surgery and blood clots in her lungs.

Currently ranked 169th, Williams defeated Sharapova for the sixth straight time and improved to 7-2 overall against her.

Sharapova, ranked fifth in the world and fresh off a runner-up finish



SERENA Williams (right) of the US shakes hands with Russia's Maria Sharapova after their match at the Stanford Classic on Friday. — Reuters

at Wimbledon, hasn't beaten Williams since the 2004 WTA Championships.

Williams next faces big-hitting German Sabine Lisicki, a 7-6 (7/4), 2-6,

6-2 winner over fifth-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland. Lisicki made it to the semifinals at Wimbledon as a wildcard, but her dream run at the All

England Club was ended by eventual runner-up Sharapova.

"I'm looking forward to the match," Lisicki said. "I love competing in the big matches. I have nothing to lose."

Third-seeded Marion Bartoli reached the semifinals as Ayumi Morita retired with a right ankle injury after dropping the first set of their quarter-final 6-1.

It was a disappointing exit for Morita, who had beaten former world No 1 Ana Ivanovic of Serbia in the first round and survived two match points as she rallied to beat Polish qualifier Urszula Radwanska in the second round on Thursday.

France's Bartoli next faces eighth-seeded Slovakian Dominika Cibulkova, who breezed past New Zealand qualifier Marina Erakovic 6-1, 6-1.

Erakovic had stunned top seed and defending champion Victoria Azarenka on Thursday, but couldn't find an answer for Cibulkova, who needed little more than an hour to advance.

Marion Bartoli no longer needled by little voice of doubt

STANFORD, California — Marion Bartoli is no longer needled by the 'little voice' that told her she did not belong in the winner's circle at Grand Slams and finally regards herself a true contender ahead of next month's US Open.

Since announcing herself with a surprise final appearance at Wimbledon in 2007, the Frenchwoman struggled to reach those giddy heights in subsequent years.

She has re-emerged as a force this season, however, making her first French Open semifinal before following up with a last eight appearance at Wimbledon.

The 26-year-old said a day of rest after her upset of three-times champion Serena Williams and before her loss to German giantkiller Sabine Lisicki could have proved the difference between her quarter-final exit and a run to the title at Wimbledon.

"I could have won," Bartoli, who lost in three sets in a ferocious match with Lisicki, said at the Stanford Classic, where she has reached the semifinals.

"I was so close. It's not that before I didn't believe I could win a Grand Slam, but in a way there was a little voice saying, 'maybe you don't

belong there, maybe it's not your spot'."

"Now I really know I can be a grand slam champion. I beat Petra Kvitova in the final of Eastbourne and she won Wimbledon."

"I'm sure if I keep the same level and positive energy, I will be able to win a Grand Slam. But between thinking you can do it and actually doing it, there is also a gap."

Bartoli, who has won six career titles and amassed more than \$6 million in prize-money, feels she is now playing a better brand of tennis than in 2007 when she lost

the Wimbledon title to Venus Williams.

Part of that she attributed to her improved fitness, which enabled her to play 21 matches in seven weeks between Strasbourg and the end of Wimbledon and win 18 of them.

"It showed how much I improved physically," she said. "To be able to break all those barriers and to improve so much is surprising and exciting and now I know I can finish this season strong."

She also feels beloved in France for the first time. She left the country with her family when she was a teenager and moved to Switzerland,

and had differences with the French Tennis Federation, rarely playing Fed Cup.

This year, however, she decided to engage the public rather than put her head down and avoid them.

"It's really changed in France," she said. "I received really good press and everyone in the street recognised me, from the supermarket to the gas station."

"People said they were crying at how good my matches were. The way I was acting on the court this time was totally different. I was showing more my emotions and sharing with the crowd."

Bartoli said she would be happy to walk away from the game after her brilliant summer this year, but she has her eye on the US Open where she has never really found her stride.

"The main goal for me is to break the barrier at the US Open because for many reasons I haven't done great there," said Bartoli, who won the 2001 US Open junior title but has not gone past the fourth round at Flushing Meadows.

"This year I'm playing a smarter schedule and I will arrive fresher and be ready to fight." — Reuters

Phelps wins 25th title, Franklin emerges as star



GOLD medallist Michael Phelps of the US, silver medallist Poland's Konrad Czerniak (left) and bronze medallist Tyler McGill of the US pose during the medal ceremony for the men's 100m butterfly final at the 14th Fina World Championships in Shanghai yesterday. **PICTURE CENTRE:** Silver medallist Belinda Hocking of Australia, gold medallist Melissa Franklin of the US (centre) and bronze medallist Sharon van Rouwendaal of the Netherlands pose with their medals after the women's 200m backstroke final. **PICTURE RIGHT:** Brazil's Cesar Cielo Filho listens to his national anthem during the medal ceremony for the men's 50m freestyle final. — Reuters



SHANGHAI — Michael Phelps claimed his 25th swimming world title yesterday and the United States team also saw two more gold from new star Missy Franklin.

Phelps powered to his third straight 100m butterfly gold with a strong home leg before Franklin dominated the 200m breaststroke and less than an hour later anchored the 4x100m medley relay to gold.

Franklin, 16, took her tally to three gold, one silver and one bronze for the championships.

"She is unbelievable. She's never tired. She is a star and super good. She's the world's fastest swimmer," said Phelps in praise of Franklin.

Phelps also has three gold in Shanghai, the 100m and 200m butterfly double plus 4x200m freestyle relay; silver medals behind Ryan Lochte in the 200m freestyle and medley, and a 4x100m freestyle relay bronze.

The 14-time Olympic champion Phelps was third at the turn, but then used his strength to pull past Poland's Konrad Czerniak to win in 50.71 seconds.

Czerniak trailed by 0.44 in 51.15 and the bronze medal went to American Tyler McGill in a time of 51.26. Kenyan Jason Dunford, who was leading after 50m, faded to fourth place.

Phelps was not fully satisfied, saying he wanted to go

faster in the first half of the race in which he was third 0.36 seconds off the pace.

"I'm not in the right shape physically. I want to be faster. It's a tough race," he said.

"Sometimes I need to judge what I can do better. I need definitely to push in the first

50 metres."

Franklin took her first gold of the day in the breaststroke race in in two minutes 05.10 seconds — just 0.29 off the world record held by Zimbabwean Kristy Coventry.

Silver went to Australian Belinda Hocking in 2:06.06,

while Sharon van Rouwendaal from the Netherlands took the bronze in a time of 2:07.78.

Just over an hour later, Franklin anchored the US 4x100m medley relay team to gold, again coming agonizingly close to a first world record, as she managed to cut down a

0.66 deficit on the record split at her turn to just 0.17 at the end. The US winning time was 3:52.36.

Defending champions China got silver in 3:55.61 and Olympic champions Australia finished strongly to take bronze in 3:57.13.

Earlier, Cesar Cielo of Brazil added 50m freestyle gold to that from the 50m butterfly in 21.52 seconds.

Italian Luca Dotto secured his first medal at a major championships when he took the silver in 21.90, with Alain Bernard third for France in 21.92.

Cielo was only cleared to swim at the world championships last week by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) after the body turned down an appeal by swimming's governing body Fina against a decision taken by Brazilian officials to only issue Cielo and three others with a verbal warning after they had tested positive to the banned substance furosemide in May.

The swimmers said the forbidden substance came from a contaminated caffeine supplement.

"It's been a crazy week and a crazy situation," said Cielo. "For next year's Olympics, I must be a little bit faster. There is a little room to improve." The women's 50m butterfly title went to Dutch Inge Dekker in 25.71 seconds, her first individual title in Shanghai to go with 4x100m freestyle relay gold last weekend.

Defending champion and world record holder Therese Alshammar of Sweden took silver in 25.76 seconds. Melanie Henrique of France won the bronze in 25.86 seconds by the smallest possible mar-

gin, beating local favourite Lu Ying by just 0.01 seconds.

In the women's 800m freestyle race, Olympic champion Rebecca Adlington powered past the defending world champion Lotte Friis on the final 50m to win gold for Britain in 8:17.51.

Friis swam a 8:18.20, while Kate Ziegler took the bronze in 8:23.36.

World record holder Jessica Hardy, who missed the Beijing Olympics because of a one-year doping ban, but had been cleared to compete in London next year, headed the qualifiers into the 50m breaststroke final with 30.40 seconds, ahead of team-mate Rebecca Soni, Russian Yuliya Efimova and Australian Leiston Pickett.

In the evening's other semifinals Briton's defending champion in the men's 50m backstroke Liam Tancock led the field into today's final with a time of 24.62 ahead of France's Camille Lacourt, who had a 24.85, while Dutch Ranomi Kromowidjojo topped the qualifiers in the women's 50m in 24.56 seconds.

ITALY CAPTURE MEN'S WATER-POLO GOLD

Italy won their first men's water-polo world championships gold medal since 1994 when they beat Serbia 8-7 after extra time yesterday.

The final had finished locked at 6-6. Italy took the lead in the first period of extra time, only for Serbia, the win-

ners at the last world championships in Rome, to equalise when Filip Filipovic scored.

Maurizio Felugo grabbed the game-winning goal with 35 seconds remaining in the first period of overtime.

Croatia beat Hungary 12-11 earlier to win the bronze medal.

The championships in the Oriental Sports Center in Shanghai end today.

MEDALS TABLE				
OVERALL medals table after day 15 of the world swimming championships in Shanghai yesterday				
	G	S	B	T
China	14	13	8	35
United States	13	5	8	26
Russia	8	5	4	17
Brazil	4	0	0	4
Italy	3	4	2	9
Australia	2	9	3	14
France	2	3	5	10
Britain	2	2	0	4
Greece	2	1	1	4
Denmark	2	1	0	3
Netherlands	2	0	2	4
Germany	1	3	8	12
Hungary	1	0	3	4
Switzerland	1	0	0	1
Norway	1	0	0	1
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1
South Korea	1	0	0	1
Belarus	1	0	0	1
Japan	0	4	1	5
Canada	0	3	3	6
Spain	0	1	5	6
Sweden	0	1	0	0
Poland	0	1	0	0
Serbia	0	1	0	0
Mexico	0	0	2	2
South Africa	0	0	2	2
Ukraine	0	0	1	1
Croatia	0	0	1	1

Torres on target as Chelsea beat Villa to win Asia Trophy

HONG KONG — Record signing Fernando Torres scored only his second goal for Chelsea straight after coming on as a second-half substitute yesterday as his side beat Aston Villa 2-0 to win the Barclays Asia Trophy.

The stadium announcer was still reporting that Torres had come on the pitch in the 57th minute when Florent Malouda slipped as he took a long-range shot, allowing the Spaniard to race onto the ball and deftly redirect it past Shay Given.

Torres had scored just once in 18 appearances last season at Stamford Bridge and has been under pressure to justify the £50 million (\$82 million) fee Chelsea paid for him.

He gave a thumbs up to coach Andre Villas-Boas and smiled as he was mobbed by team-mates, but the manager downplayed the moment.

"This has a meaning only regarding the team performance and the collective performance," Villas-Boas said.

"When you find the back of the net you gain more confidence. But in the end it's not important who scores."

Teenager McEachran scored in the first minute on a steamy night in Hong Kong.

The victory means Chelsea and their Asian tour under their new manager with four wins from four and 11 goals scored to none conceded.

The capacity crowd in the 40,000-seater Hong Kong Stadium were still settling in their seats when 18-year-old McEachran thumped a rebound into the roof of the net after beating Given to the ball when the Irish stopper only managed to

parry a Malouda drive.

Villas-Boas is looking to rejuvenate his ageing squad and has suggested McEachran could be one of a couple of youth prospects who could jump straight into the first team.

The youngster started three of four matches in Asia, on a trip that saw Chelsea build on a disappointing 1-0 victory in Malaysia with successive 4-0 victories over a Thai select team and Hong Kong champions Kitchee.

Together with preseason victories against Portsmouth and Wycombe in England, Chelsea have won all six games so far under 33-year-old Villas-Boas and have yet to surrender a goal.

"Our defensive work is an offensive weapon and that's what we have been telling the players," Villas-Boas said.

"We want the ball more in our possession and we want to attack more."

Villas-Boas paired Anelka with Daniel Sturridge and Malouda, leaving Didier Drogba and Torres on the bench until mid-way through the second half.

The Torres substitution paid immediate dividends, as the striker seeks to rediscover a scoring touch that has deserted him since his big money move from Liverpool.

New Villa manager Alex McLeish said he was impressed with Chelsea's performance.

"You see the quality of players they brought on with Drogba and Torres, and it can be quite frightening if you're not up to the challenge," McLeish said.

Given, McLeish's first signing since his controversial move across

town from Birmingham City, re-deemed himself for the shock start by punching away a free kick from Frank Lampard and cradling a dangerous shot from Anelka.

Ireland's most capped international was crucial in keeping the score down in the second half, parrying away a Yuri Zhirkov shot and a point-blank header from Lampard.

"It's no surprise to see him pulling off saves like that, as long as he doesn't have to do that week in week out of the Premier league campaign," McLeish said.

Blackburn coasted to a 3-0 victory over Hong Kong champions Kitchee in the early game yesterday, giving them third place in the pre-season tournament, which the Premier League holds in a different Asian city every two years. — AFP



CHELSEA'S Fernando Torres (right) celebrates a goal against Aston Villa with team-mate Didier Drogba at the Barclays Asia Trophy soccer match in Hong Kong yesterday. — Reuters

Brazil's Ricardo Teixeira under fire from Pele and Fifa boss Blatter

RIO DE JANEIRO — Pele continued his long-running feud with Ricardo Teixeira when he was unveiled on Friday as the face of Brazil's 2014 World Cup after the Brazilian FA chief had snubbed him ahead of draw for the qualifying competition.

Teixeira did not invite him to the draw, the first major milestone on the way to the World Cup finals, but Pele will be there anyway after Brazil President Dilma Rousseff appointed him as the country's international World Cup ambassador this week.

Pele, 70, said: "You only go to a party if you are invited. If I wasn't invited, it's logical I wouldn't go. He is president of the federation... he decides who to invite or not... If he doesn't invite me, I don't go."

"I don't think this controversy is good for Brazil," Pele added.

"Unfortunately people say more

than they know... There's always some confusion or misunderstanding when he (Teixeira) replies or gives an interview."

"I hope from now on we can clear everything up and we can work properly for the World Cup."

The animosity between Pele, widely regarded as the world's greatest player, and Teixeira has its roots in the early 1990s when Pele was critical of Teixeira's then father-in-law Joao Havelange, president of Fifa at the time.

Havelange snubbed Pele by not inviting him when the draw for the 1994 World Cup finals was made in Las Vegas in late 1993 but with history appearing to repeat itself current Fifa head Sepp Blatter has stepped in as a possible peacemaker.

Blatter is planning to meet the outspoken Teixeira, president of the Brazilian Football Confederation

(CBF), over remarks he has made against England and for snubbing Pele.

Teixeira, 64, a Fifa executive committee member who has been

surrounded by controversy for years, recently accused the English of being "pirates" saying they "could go to hell."

On Friday he refused to talk to

English journalists, calling them "corrupt" after a media scuffle involving his entourage following a news conference.

Blatter told reporters that Teixeira's criticism of England was not good for Fifa's image.

Blatter said: "Sure I will speak to him but I have already said once, I'm not the man who is responsible for the moral or ethical approach of the members of Fifa or the members of the executive committee. I'm not their conscience."

Blatter added: "It is his responsibility, what he is doing. I am not so sure that all of that is in my spirit of fair play."

Teixeira is upset with the English after David Triesman, the former head of the English FA, accused him in a Parliamentary inquiry of asking for a bribe in return for his vote for England's bid to stage the 2018 World Cup finals.



FIFA'S President Joseph Blatter (right) and Brazilian Soccer Confederation (CBF) President Ricardo Teixeira attend the Team Seminar in Rio de Janeiro on Friday. — Reuters




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Vettel storms back to take Hungary pole

BUDAPEST — Formula One champion Sebastian Vettel roared back to form with pole position at the Hungarian Grand Prix yesterday after his Red Bull mechanics worked through the night to get his car up to speed.

The German had failed to win the last two races but made sure Red Bull snapped up their 11th pole in 11 races this season, and 12th in a row, with his eighth of the campaign and 23rd of his career. Australian teammate Mark Webber, second in the championship but a massive 77 points behind Vettel, qualified down in sixth place.

"I felt much more comfortable this morning," Vettel said. "I'm very pleased with the result, we changed a lot on the car overnight. The boys were working pretty hard and didn't get much sleep. I've got the confidence back."

McLaren's Lewis Hamilton, who won in Germany last Sunday when Red Bull's dominance from the first half of the season continued to ebb



RED BULL Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel of Germany drives during the third practice session of the Hungarian F1 Grand Prix at the Hungaroring circuit near Budapest yesterday. INSET: Sebastian Vettel celebrates at the Hungaroring circuit yesterday. — Reuters/AFP

away, was quickest early on in the final session but had to settle for second on the grid after Vettel's flying last lap.

"Still I think it is a great

achievement for us. Today they seemed to pick up a bit of pace," said the Briton, twice a winner at the Hungaroring.

Hamilton's team mate Jen-

son Button was third on the grid for his 200th grand prix but double world champion Fernando Alonso could only manage fifth for Ferrari behind

team-mate Felipe Massa.

Spaniard Alonso, who was 30 on Friday, appeared to be heading for pole on his final lap but again lost time in the

final sector as he feared. It was the first time this year that Massa had outqualified the Spaniard.

Vettel also took pole in Budapest last year, when Webber won, but Red Bull had not been sounding confident in the run-up to this race.

As fans filled the stands on the steep grassy bank next to the home straight, the usual suspects were knocked out in Q1 while Sergio Perez surprisingly beat Sauber team-mate Kamui Kobayashi in the second session and then qualified 10th.

Seven times champion Michael Schumacher was just ahead of the Mexican rookie as Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg again outqualified his German compatriot by taking seventh on the grid.

The sun had shone for the day's final practice where Vettel topped the timesheets. However, the overcast conditions from Friday, when Hamilton was twice quickest, returned during qualifying. — Reuters

McLaren hoping for more, says team boss

BUDAPEST — Although Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button qualified second and third for today's Hungarian Grand Prix, McLaren team boss Martin Whitmarsh said he had hoped for an even stronger result.

Briton Hamilton, world champion in 2008, looked likely to end Red Bull's run of pole positions after an impressive initial flying lap during the final qualifying session.

However, the 26-year-old ran wide on his final lap and eventually finished one tenth of a second shy of reigning champion and current championship leader Sebastian Vettel, who secured Red Bull's eleventh consecutive pole position.

Although Button, 31, finished third ahead of both Ferrari drivers Felipe Massa and Fernando Alonso, Whitmarsh admitted he was feeling downbeat. "It was tight, just disappointing," he said.

"It's not the result we wanted, but we've got both cars on the front two rows so it should be an exciting race."

"Hamilton ran a little wide at the last corner on the last lap, but neither were bad laps. It would just have been nice for him to have got pole."

In spite of this, Whitmarsh hinted that he was feeling optimistic about his team's chances in the race.

"At least we should be competitive in the race," he added.

"Both drivers had good runs on Friday, and we're not in a bad place. We'll try to make it exciting."

Meanwhile, Hamilton, currently third in the title race, was not too concerned by Vettel and hoped to be challenging for the win.



McLAREN Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after being placed second yesterday. — Reuters

tel and hoped to be challenging for the win.

"It's great to see the McLaren Mercedes team with both cars on the front two rows — it's a sign that there's real pace here now," he said.

"I'm very excited about the race, in fact, because we had quite a good long run yesterday and we'll work hard to build on that pace overnight and take it into tomorrow."

"We're in the fight — and, with a good start, we can definitely challenge for the win."

His compatriot Button has had a tough time during qualifying in recent races, but he was feeling much more optimistic about his chances.

"To be honest, qualifying has been a bit of an issue for me recently," he said.

"I guess you're always going to be playing catch-up if you start much farther back than the first two rows."

"So, this weekend, it's nice to be in a position to drive for a win from the outset, and that's definitely what I'll be attempting to do tomorrow."

— AFP

Ahmad confident ahead of season resumption

MUSCAT — Oman Air Racing Team driver Ahmad al Harthy made a flying visit to the UK this week for his first test at the new Snetterton 300 Circuit — essential mileage ahead of the resumption of the 2011 Porsche Carrera Cup GB Championship at the Norfolk venue next weekend on August 6 and 7.

Almost three weeks since he debuted in the Formula One World Championship-supporting Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup at Silverstone during British Grand Prix weekend, the 29-year-old's focus now returns to his regular commitments in the UK series.

On Thursday, Ahmad arrived for a full day of running at the newly configured 2.97-mile track and enjoyed a highly productive test in which he and the team worked on qualifying and race set-ups.



Delighted with the progress made, the Oman Air, Nawras, Na-

tional Bank of Oman, Brand Oman, Oman Ministry of Sports Affairs and

Oman Ministry of Tourism-backed racer now heads into the second half

of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB season feeling highly confident.

"I'm really, very pleased with the work we completed at Snetterton," said Ahmad. "The new track is a good challenge. We made some good progress with the set-up so hopefully we can begin the second half of the season strongly when we're back here next weekend."

Following pre-event practice next Friday, qualifying for rounds 10 and 11 of the season will take place on Saturday. Both races will be contested on Sunday (August 7).

Ahead of the resumption of the 2011 campaign, the Muscat ace is third in the Pro-Am 1 Class driver standings with one victory and a total of six podiums from the first nine races.

Winds deprive Lemaitre of French 200m record

ALBI, France — A strong following wind denied sprint champion Christophe Lemaitre another French record as he clocked 20.08secs to win the 200m at the national championships yesterday.

The time was some way quicker than the existing record of 20.16secs that Lemaitre shares with Gilles Quenherve but it does not count as the record because the wind speed registered at 2.3m/s.

"That's life," said the 21-year-old triple European sprint champion. "I had it in my legs but there are other factors such as the weather conditions that I cannot control."

"The most important thing is that I won the title. It has

been a great three days in the stadium."

The 200m remains the longest-standing record in France.

Quenherve ran it when he won the silver medal at the world championships in Rome in 1987 while Lemaitre, who was born three years after Quenherve set the record, matched it in Valence last year.

On Friday, Lemaitre produced a new French record for the 100m winning the event in 9.92secs.

It was three-tenths of a second quicker than the previous record which he set in Stockholm on June 18 — and was the third time this season that he has brought down the record. — AFP

Ramadhan Challengers Cup from August 11

MUSCAT — The fourth edition of the Ramadhan Challengers Cup to be played at Oman Club, Al Khuwair Ground will be held from August 11.

The final will be played on August 26.

The draws for this tournament will be conducted at McDonalds, Al Khuwair outlet on August 7.

The matches will be played every Thursday and Friday.

The organisers said: "We are ready with the fourth edition of Ramadhan cricket and there are a number of changes made this time."

The organisers have re-

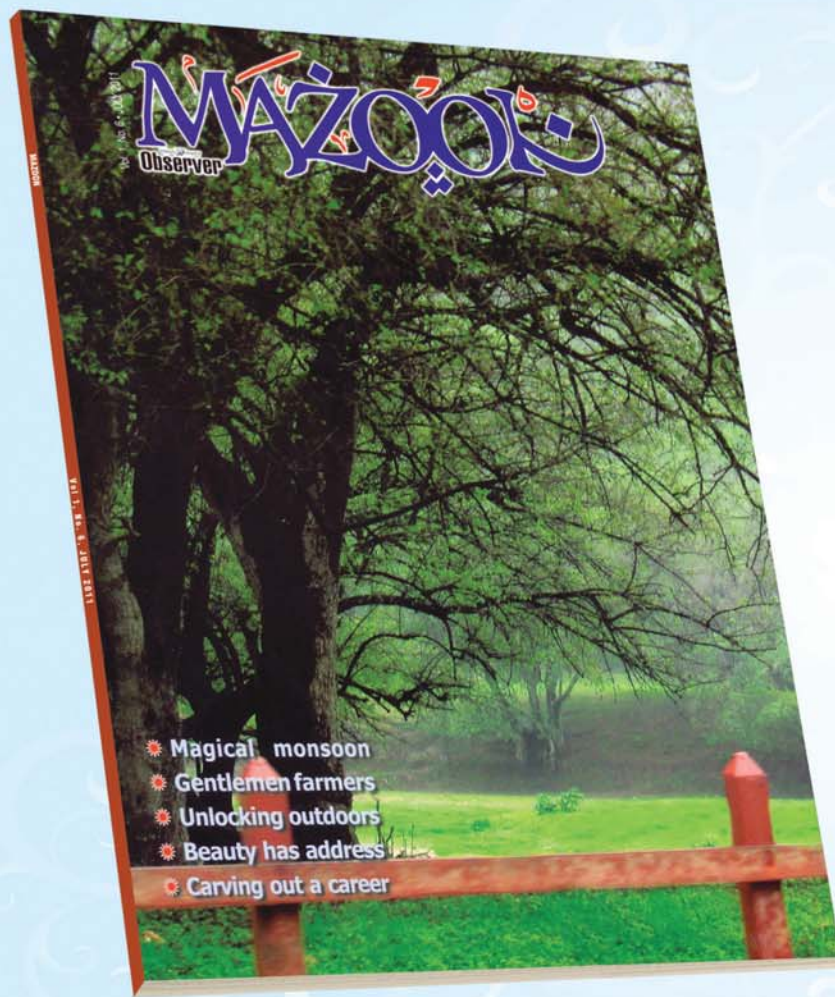
ceived a huge response from cricket loving community in Oman.

Registration will be done on first-come-first serve basis. Teams from Nizwa, Sohar and Salalah are keen to participate in this tournament.


One player from A and B division league player will be allowed in each team.

The complete match schedule will be updated on omanicricket.com.

This one-month cricket tournament is organised by Gulf Sports Club. The organisers are confident that this year's tournament will be a huge success.



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OFA leagues draw held; His Majesty's Cup to begin on September 14

MUSCAT — The competitions committee of the Oman Football Association (OFA) held a draw to determine the schedule of games for the upcoming Premier Division League and the Ahli Bank League at Seeb Sports Stadium yesterday.

A total of 17 clubs were present at the draw ceremony. Ahmed al Habsi, the current chairman of the competitions committee at the OFA, thanked the clubs that were present and explained the draw procedures as well as the starting dates of the leagues and the His Majesty's Cup.

The draw procedures



were simple, the club representatives were asked to pull out names of the clubs and a number to designate the



clubs position in the table. Ahmed al Habsi revealed

during the ceremony the dates of different competi-

tions for the coming season. While the 32-team His

Majesty's Cup will start on September 14, the Premier

Division League will begin on September 29, the First Division (Ahli Bank League) on September 30, and the 2nd Division League from October 6.

The teams for the Premier Division are: Sur, Al Talee'a, Salalah, Al Arouba, Ahli-Sidab, Al Shabab, Al Suwaiq, Fanja, Al Musannah, Oman Club, Dhofar, Al Nahda.

And for First Division (Ahli Bank League) the teams are: Bausher, Seeb, Al Bashayir, Yanqul, Muscat, Sohar, Al Salam, Al Nasr, Mirbat, Majees, Al Mudhaibi, Al Ittihad, Saham, Al Khabourah.

Ton-up Dravid, hat-trick man Broad hog limelight

From Andy Jalil
at Trent Bridge

TWO magnificent performances have dominated the second day's play in the second Test with India perhaps having the edge after Rahul Dravid's superb 34th Test century compiled over six hours to take India to 288 and ensuring his side's first innings lead of 67. An even greater effort came from Stuart Broad who claimed the first hat-trick ever in a Test match against India. His marvellous bowling spell in which he claimed four wickets without conceding a run.

By close of play England were 24 for one in their second innings, trailing by 43 runs.

Resuming on the overnight total of 24 for one, Dravid and V V S Laxman combined in a stand which gave solidity to the India innings. With cautious batting they seemed intent on making up for the loss of Abhinav Mukund's wicket to the first ball of the innings on the previous evening. Both batsmen were quick, however, to punish any loose balls with four consecutive boundaries being hit off James Anderson and Broad. Laxman played a cut and a square drive of Anderson while Dravid flicked Broad before driving him to extra cover.

On 27, Laxman survived

a confident appeal for a catch behind. Although there was no 'hot spot' on the replay there was a sound but not enough proof for the third umpire. While Dravid was more defensive Laxman played his shots and the 50 of the innings came from 158 balls with Dravid driving Broad to the mid-on boundary. A powerful pull followed by a flick soon after from Laxman off Anderson took him to 44 and he brought up his 54th Test half century with his tenth boundary, a lovely drive to extra cover.

Their second wicket partnership of 93 was ended by Tim Bresnan with a fine lifting outswinger which took the edge of Laxman's bat for a catch behind the stumps. His 54 had come in two and a half hours with India's innings progressing well at lunch on 117 for two and Sachin Tendulkar having joined Dravid. But after the break Broad struck in the first over with the prized wicket of Tendulkar who top edged his cut into the hands of Andrew Strauss at first slip. The England captain who had dropped Tendulkar in the previous Test was delighted to hold on to the ball this time.

India innings was soon reduced to 139 for four with the loss of the next wicket when Anderson claimed his second wicket. Suresh Raina, playing from the crease prodded a simple catch to gully. India had lost three wickets in a space of 46 runs including



ENGLAND'S Stuart Broad (left) celebrates after dismissing India's Sachin Tendulkar during the second day of their second Test at Trent Bridge in Nottingham yesterday. PICTURE RIGHT: India's Rahul Dravid raises his bat after completing his century as England's Matt Prior applauds yesterday. — AFP/Reuters

that of Tendulkar whom the capacity crowd that gave him a standing ovation on his way

to the crease, would like to have seen him score a century and achieve that extraordinary



landmark of reaching a hundred international hundreds. Shortly before Raina's

dismissal Dravid reached his 61st Test half century steering Broad to third man for his

tenth boundary. Yuvraj Singh gave Dravid the partnership that India needed to build a large first innings lead. They picked up runs steadily and at tea Dravid was on 83, his partner on 43 with India on 215 for four just six behind England's first innings total.

In the final session of play both batsmen played more freely in glorious afternoon sunshine for the first time in two days. Yuvraj brought up his tenth Test half century with his ninth boundary at mid wicket while Dravid took his score into the nineties.

A beautiful cover drive off the back foot took him to 95 and then after three singles he swept Swann to long leg for four to reach three figures in nearly five and a half hours of determination and application at the crease. He celebrated the hundred with two more boundaries and that proved to be an expensive over from the off spinner with 14 runs coming off it. Yuvraj's last scoring shot was the best of his innings. A stylish square drive to the point boundary off Anderson and on 62 from 115 balls he attempted to cut Broad but edged his shot behind the stumps and India were 267 for five.

Thereafter the rest of the India innings succumbed to Broad's superbly controlled bowling with the next five batsmen simply surrendering without showing any sign of resistance. On 273 the next four wickets fell. Unlucky

among them was Harbhajan Singh who had clearly got a thick edge on to his pad but umpire Erasmus made the error of giving him out lbw without scoring.

India lost six wickets for 21. When Dravid's was the penultimate wicket to fall, caught at third man from a slash, on 117 from 235 balls, India had lost four wickets in six balls without a run. It was a very poor effort from the middle-lower order.

SCOREBOARD

England 1st innings 221 (overnight 24 for 1)	
A Mukund c Pietersen b Anderson.....0	
R Dravid c Cook b Bresnan.....117	
V V S Laxman c Prior b Bresnan.....54	
S Tendulkar c Strauss b Broad.....16	
S Raina c Morgan b Anderson.....12	
Yuvraj Singh c Prior b Broad.....62	
M S Dhoni c Anderson b Broad.....5	
Harbhajan lbw Broad.....0	
P Kumar b Broad.....0	
I Sharma c Bell b Broad.....3	
S Sreesanth (not out).....7	
Extras: (b-4, lb-3, w-4, nb-1).....12	
Total: (all out, 91.1 overs).....288	
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-93, 3-119, 4-139, 5-267, 6-273, 7-273, 8-273, 9-273.	
Bowling: Anderson 26-8-80-2 (w-1); Broad 24.1-8-46-6 (w-1); Bresnan 21-6-48-2 (nb-1, w-2); Trott 4-1-18-0; Swann 12-0-76-0; Pietersen 4-0-13-0.	
England 2nd innings	
A Strauss (not out).....6	
A Cook c Yuvraj b Sharma.....5	
I Bell (not out).....9	
Extras: (b-4).....4	
Total: (1 wkt, 11 overs).....24	
Fall of wicket: 1-6.	
Bowling: P Kumar 4-1-9-0; I Sharma 5-3-9-1; S Sreesanth 2-0-2-0.	

Sri Lanka leave out injured Malinga

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka left out fast bowler Lasith Malinga due to a back injury when they named a 16-man squad to play Australia in two Twenty20 internationals at Pallakele, Kandy early next month.

"We are monitoring his progress carefully and if he is fit we will consider him for the one-day international series," said chairman of selectors Duleep Mendis.

Australia's T20 squad,

captained by Cameron White, is due to arrive in Sri Lanka today. The two T20 matches are on August 6 and 8. The five-match one-day series starts on August 10.

Sri Lanka T20 squad: Tillakaratne Dilshan (capt), Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Jeevan Mendis, Dilruwan Perera, Thisara Perera, Damika Prasad, Suranga Lakmal, Ajantha Mendis, Nuwan Kulasekara, Suraj Randiv, Rangana Herath, Chamara Silva, Shaminda Eranga. — Reuters

Loeb wins in Finland for the second time



CITROEN team director Olivier Quesnel (right) congratulates his French pilot Sebastien Loeb on winning Rally of Finland in Jyväskylä, Finland, yesterday. — AFP

HELSINKI — Citroen's world champion Sebastien Loeb won Rally Finland for the second time in his career yesterday to forge further ahead in the overall standings.

The French seven times world champion, who also won in Finland in 2008, was the first non-Nordic driver to win the rally on two occasions.

Loeb beat Ford's Finnish driver Jari-Matti Latvala by 8.1 seconds with Citroen's other French driver, Sebastien Ogier, in third place ahead of Ford's Mikko Hirvonen.

"I'm really happy with my performance because I've cleaned the road for three days but won," Loeb told the wrcc.com website after his 66th win of his world championship career. "It was the perfect rally." — Reuters



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Global Omani of the Year Award

DR Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman of MB Holding group of companies, received the AIWA Global Omani of the year Award at the AIWA awards for excellence held at Shangri-la's Barr al Jissah Spa and Resort recently. The Award was presented by His Highness Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib al Said. ● Page 22



Bosch launches Ramadhan offers

BOSCH is set to raise the bar in consumer products with its launching of a wide range of super-efficient home appliances for their Ramadhan festive offers, some of which were put on show at a specially held press meet at the Inter-Continental Hotel Muscat, yesterday. ● Page 23

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Contract for first strategic food storage complex shortly

By Conrad Prabhu

MUSCAT – A contract for the first of a series of grain storage complexes is due to be awarded shortly, signalling the start of a key phase in the implementation of the Omani government's food security strategy.

A complex of warehouses at Barka is expected to be built in the first of a network of strategic stockpiles of essential staples due to be established at key locations around the Sultanate.

A number of Omani engineering firms are bidding for a contract to build a vast storage complex at Barka, on behalf of the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserves (PASFR). The Authority is overseeing the implementation of the country's food security strategy.

The successful bidder will win a contract to build a vast storage complex comprising six air-conditioned warehouses each maintained at temperatures ranging from 18-24 degrees centigrade. In addition, there will be three 'dry' warehouses operated at ambient temperatures. All nine warehouses will boast a total floor space of around 50,000 sq metres.

According to officials, the pre-engineered structural steel warehouses are designed



(Picture for illustrative purposes only)

for the storage of palletised bagged commodities, such as rice, wheat and sugar. Also planned alongside the sheds are guardrooms, facilities for staff accommodation, and a helipad.

Well-known consultants Simon Engineering & Partners are the design and construction supervision consultants for the project. An 18-months timeframe has been specified for the completion of the complex.

Next off the block for construction is a similar complex of grain warehouses planned in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W' al Wafi in the Sharqiya region. In all, nine warehouses are envisaged as part of this complex. Ibn Khaldun is the design engineering and construction supervisor for the Al Kamil component of the

national strategic food stockpiles initiative.

In addition to Barka and Al Kamil, four other locations will host storage complexes as part of the country's strategic stockpiles initiative. Warehouse complexes are also planned at Sohar, Salalah, Nizwa and Rusayl. The six locations have been so chosen to ensure easy access to population centres in the event that an emergency distribution of food supplies becomes imperative.

Significantly, a total of 52 warehouses are envisioned as part of the national network of strategic food stockpiles. In addition to staples like rice, wheat and sugar, the warehouses also likely to stock emergency supplies of commodities such as cooking oil, powdered milk, lentil and tea.

The strategic stockpiles will serve as nerve centres of a wider food security infrastructure that will also include proposed grain terminals and silos at Sohar and Salalah ports. Greek agro-engineering firm TAME has been awarded a contract by PASFR to build a 200,000 tonnes capacity wheat silo at Sohar and a 100,000-tonne capacity silo at Salalah.

The Port of Sohar is also in discussion with the majority government-owned Oman Flour Mills for the development of a major Grain and Dry Bulk Foods Terminal at the industrial port. The terminal, whose scope and capacity is still the subject of evaluation, is proposed to be built on a reclaimed plot designated as part of the Future Container Terminal in Sohar Port.

الهيئة العامة للتأمينات الاجتماعية

Tender Notice

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following tender :

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids
6/2011	Supply, implementation and Support of Web Portal with (Intranet and Internet) Domain and SMS Solution	10 August 2011	07 September 2011

The Specialized companies that possess sufficient knowledge and qualifications may take a part in the tender bid as the following :

- Tender document (CD) may collect through (PASI) head office in Al Athaiba , during office hours (7.30 to 2.30) against a non refundable payment of RO. 50/- (fifty Omani Riyal only) for each copy, payable to PASI Bank Muscat account No (0333005994210016).
- Each bid offer should be accompanied with temporary Insurance, in form of bank guarantee covering Two percent (2%) of the total amount of bid offer valid for 90 days from the date of the proposal.
- The succeeded offer should ensure bank guarantee covering five percent (5%) of total amount of the offer valid for one year from the delivery date.
- Offer shall be submitted in closed envelopes and sealed with red wax, addressed to General Manager of Public Authority for Social Insurance and mentioning name and tender no.
- No reference on the outside of the envelopes shall be made as to the name of the Applicant bid offer documents . Applications shall be received on or before Wednesday 07th September 2011 by 12:00 afternoon.

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may be received

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f t YouTube

Apple turns top smartphone vendor

SAN FRANCISCO — Android, Shmandroid.

A new industry report has underlined the dominance of Apple's iPhone in the smartphone sector, identifying the cult device as the top selling smartphone in the world, and Apple as the world's biggest smartphone seller.

The report by research firm Strategy Analytics highlighted Nokia's stone-like plummet from the pinnacle of the smartphone world as it failed to jump on the Android bandwagon or develop its own Symbian and Meego operating systems as viable alternatives.

According to the report Nokia's second quarter smartphone sales dropped to 16.7 million units from 23.8 million units a year earlier while Apple's sales jumped from 8.4 million units to 20.3 million. The figures were released a day after widespread reports suggested that Apple's \$76 billion cash stockpile was now larger than the cash held by the US government - according to the US Treasury's estimate of its \$73.768 billion operating balance.

With Apple's share price breaking the \$400 mark this week for the first time, and the company closing in on Exxon Mobile as the world's most valuable corporation, much of the reason for its stunning success was reflected in the latest smartphone figures.

Google's Android operating system is by far the most popular worldwide with an estimated 46 per cent share of best global smartphone shipments, according to ABI



Research.

While this is far higher than Apple's estimated 18.5 per cent market share, the difference is that the Android sales are spread over numerous manufacturers, while Apple is the only company that makes and sells the iPhone.

According to Strategy Analytics, Apple's iPhone sales have more than doubled in the past year, to 20.3 million in the third quarter, when it registered the 18.5 per cent market share. This puts it just ahead of Samsung, whose smartphone sales rose by 519 per cent from 3.1 million to 19.2 million — the vast majority of them Android phones — for a market share of 17.5 million units.

"Apple's growth remained strong as it expanded distribution worldwide, particularly in China and Asia," noted Alex Spektor, Senior Analyst at Strategy Analytics.

Their strong growth allowed both Apple and Samsung to overtake Nokia, the ailing Finnish phone giant which saw its smartphone share slip from 38.1 per cent to just 15.2 per cent. Nokia is still the leader in the world market for mobile phones, but it still saw its share plummet from 33.8 per cent to 24.2 per cent, with Samsung breathing down its neck with a market share of 19.2 per cent.

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Global Omani of the Year Award for Dr Barwani

MUSCAT — Dr Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman of MB Holding group of companies, received the AIWA Global Omani of the Year Award at the AIWA awards for excellence held at Shangri-la's Barr al Jissah Spa and Resort recently. The Award was presented by His Highness Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib al Said, Director of the Renaissance Group.

MB Holding group of companies was founded in 1982 by Dr Al Barwani in Muscat. The group who entered their 30th year of operations in 2011 is now a successful multinational group of companies with businesses across drilling and oil field services, exploration and production, mining & minerals, investments, manufacturing and trading. It employs more 6,500 employees across more than 20 countries uniquely creating an Omani multinational group excelling across the globe.

Dr Al Barwani, in his journey towards success, has done very little by the book. In a surprising move, after studying microbiology, he opted for a job with Petroleum Development Oman in 1976 and when everything was going smoothly for him, he opted out of the secure job at PDO in 1986 to run his own business on a full time basis. Another example of doing things differently is his passion to develop and nurture local talent in every country



of operation. Across the MB group he has laid emphasis on localisation across the more than 20 countries the group is present in.

Unlike many Omani companies that have been content with operations in the Sultanate alone, he went out of Oman to enter uncharted territories despite the threat of cut-throat competition. Though he faltered at times, today he stands tall as the proud chairman of MB Holding Company LLC that has interests primarily in the oil & gas and mining besides investments in companies engaged in different industry segments in Oman and abroad.

On receiving the Award Dr Al Barwani mentioned: "Receiving this Award is both a privilege and an honour. It reaffirms the conviction I had in myself 30 years ago, when I took the decision to branch out on my own. My heart brims

with pride when our group of companies crosses even the smallest of milestones internationally, because then not only do I feel like a good businessman, but importantly also stand as a good ambassador of my country. I would surely like to build the MB Group further towards a wider global presence growing in every market and developing our nation's economy."

Dr Al Barwani who holds a master's degree in Petroleum engineering, has also recently been conferred an honorary doctorate by the Herriot Watt University, UK. The 4 main companies under the MB Holding umbrella are MB Petroleum Services (Drilling and Oilfield services), Petrogas (Exploration & Production), Mawarid Mining (Mining & Exploration) and United Engineering Services (Manufacturing and Trading).

Omanexpo partners with City Seasons

MUSCAT — The new City Seasons Hotel Muscat has allied with pioneer exhibitions and conferences management company Omanexpo to offer its world-class hotel and room services for two of its events—MedHealth and Wellness Exhibition and Conference and Food and Hotel Oman 2011.

Speaking about the partnership, Nasser Diab, Omanexpo's General Manager said, "Our tie-up with City Seasons Hotel for their services serves to match our purpose of providing seamless and quality service to our exhibitors. With its recent opening as the newest five-star hotel in Muscat, we are, as well, promoting the growth of the hotel and tourism industry and showcasing Oman as a rising business and leisure destination."

As we are pleased to be affiliated with a prestigious group of hotels, we



hope that this will mark the start of a long-term relationship with them," he added.

City Seasons Hotel Muscat is the newest addition to the City Seasons Group of hotels' growing portfolio of hotels in the region. It is the fifth hotel to be added and first of the four hotels slated to become operational this year and in 2012. Destined to be the second largest hotel in the city and adjacent to a new shopping mall currently under construction, it boasts of 269 rooms, including 31 suites, four convention



rooms, contemporary restaurants and state-of-the-art facilities.

MedHealth and Wellness Conference and Exhibition, the pioneering health and wellness show in Oman, is set to be held from September 27 to 29. Food and Hotel Oman, recognised as the biggest event in Oman for the hospitality sector, will be held from December 5 to 7. Both international events will take place at the Oman International Exhibition Center.

MedHealth and Food and Hotel Oman will be introducing a high-pro-

file conference that will feature highly acclaimed local and international speakers. The MedHealth Conference, which is held in concurrence with the exhibition, will highlight the treatment and prevention of lifestyle diseases and healthcare development projects in Oman. Food and Hotel Oman's

Conference will tackle current issues in the Food industry, focusing on Food Safety Management and Best Practices as the key topics.

MedHealth and Wellness 2011 is supported by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oman Heart Association, National Association for Cancer Awareness and Private Hospitals Association. UFI-approved Food and Hotel Oman 2011 is supported by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Agility is the official logistics partner for both events.

BUSINESS ALERT

High performance by Toyota Hiace



MUSCAT — As the largest selling range of buses, vans and taxis in Oman, Toyota Hiace continues to set the standard in performance, reliability and advanced features.

In Oman, the 5th generation model of the Hiace remains in a class of its own, whether one considers its powerful engine, body appearance, stability, cargo space, occupant comfort, safety or driver ergonomics... Hiace has it all.

"In Oman, who does not know of the Hiace? Everyone wants this pick-up for doing business. It is merely a question of when and how soon one can get it, that is all," says an owner of Hiace. And this is only because Hiace satisfies the demands of every kind of customer.

Whether it is the standard 15-seater bus, or the luxurious high roof bus, the high roof van or the standard van, the Toyota Hiace offers distinct advantages.

When the Hiace is to be used as a bus or coaster, a wide body and high roof are available. For use as a delivery van, customers have the choice of the standard version or a high-roof version with options of panel type and glass type (STD only) windows. Furthermore, most of these combinations are available in either petrol or diesel versions (2.7 twin cam 16-valve petrol EFI engine with VVT-i or 2.5 litre turbo diesel engine with the sophisticated 'common rail direct injection' technology).

Tuned to meet the vehicle's dual usage either as a professional cargo hauler or as a people carrier, the Hiace suspension system provides the best possible ride comfort and handling.

A large volume 70-litre fuel tank offers long distance driving capacity.

Safety features include a crash resistant body, SRS dual airbags (on selected grades only), and Load Sensing Proportioning Valve (LSPV), amongst other features. No wonder then that Hiace is yet another favourite of the people, from Toyota.

The unmatched, nationwide parts and service support of Saud Bahwan Group makes 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.

Kenya Airways' Eid holidays package



KENYA Airways announced their fixed departure Safari package for those who plan their vacation during Eid Holidays in the first week of September.

This 5 days/ 4 nights package is priced at RO 539 per person and RO 389 per child. The attractive offer covers Muscat — Nairobi- Muscat economy class return tickets inclusive of all taxes, accommodation with full board, park entrance fees and conservation fees, transportation in luxury safari bus with pop-up roof hatch and the assistance of an English speaking guide throughout the trip. It gives a unique opportunity to visit Kenya, the ultimate destination for wildlife lovers.

Kenya Airways' fixed departure will start from Muscat on August 31 night and will return from Nairobi on September 5. This package covers one night in Baringo, one of the fresh water lakes in the rift valley in Kenya, one night in Lake Naivasha, another fresh water lake and a home to over 400 species of bird and

Nawras support for Summer Sailing School successful



MUSCAT — Nawras, Oman's customer friendly communications provider, has successfully supported Oman Sail's Summer Sailing School which offered 200 boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 16 the chance to learn about sailing while picking up some useful life skills along the way.

Held at Marina Bandar al Rowdha, the school ran on a weekly basis throughout July, hosting 50 participants every week.

Oman Sail's Summer Sailing School taught students about each and every element of a boat from bow to stern. While onshore, the groups learnt about teamwork, leadership, solving problems and knots skills. When a lack of

wind prevented sailing, the students were introduced to other water sport activities such as kayaking and swimming and they took part in educational competitions onshore.

Students also had an opportunity to visit the Jewel of Muscat Museum with Saleh al Jabri, the skipper of Oman Sail's *Jewel of Muscat*, who distributed certificates to all participants at the end of their weeklong course.

Summer is the time of year when young Omanis are offered the chance to get away from the heat and onto the water with Oman Sail Schools. Not only did this year's activities provide a fun and healthy way for the participants to

learn a new sport and make new friends but it also provided a very natural way for them to gain important life-skills such as teamwork, leadership and problem solving.

As part of the sponsorship, Nawras provided all the students with shirts, caps and bags during the programme.

Nawras, a member of Qtel Group, is dedicated to operating its business in a socially responsible manner by being an integral member of the Omani society. Nawras seeks to offer support by assisting voluntary organisations as well as central and regional government with a variety of social development activities.

Cyprus outlook negative, says S&P

NICOSIA — Standard & Poor's said it lowered its credit rating on the long-term sovereign credit of Cyprus to BBB+ from A- and affirmed the short-term A-2 rating, based on concern over the country's economy and

budget.

It said the outlook for the ratings remains negative.

The move comes two days after Moody's Investors Service cut its rating on Cypriot sovereign debt and a day after it lowered the ratings on two

of the island's major commercial lenders — Marfin Popular Bank and Bank of Cyprus.

The latest negative outlook follows the resignation on Thursday of the entire cabinet of President Dimitris Christofias. — AFP



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Bosch launches wide range of Ramadhan festive offers

The home appliances firm promotes energy and water savings with ‘Super Efficiency Portfolio’

By Ali Ahmed al Riyami

MUSCAT — Bosch is set to raise the bar in consumer products with its launching of a wide range of super-efficient home appliances for their Ramadhan festive offers, some of which were put on show at a specially held press meet at the Inter-Continental Hotel Muscat, yesterday.

A panel made up of Georg Kazantzidis, Marketing and Business Development Director; Ramzi Issa, Regional Sales Manager; Khubaib Khan, Regional Sales Manager, of BSH Home Appliances; VR Dilip, COO, Sandeep Attri, GM — EHA; and Ajit Manghat, Senior Manager Sales, EHS, of OTE Group of Companies, addressed member of the press corps.

Bosch's wide range of appliances covers 400 different products and includes Food Processors, Juice Extractors, Hand Mixers, Blenders, Choppers, Toasters, and Coffee Makers. They incorporate the very



latest technology for all of their appliances and with this launch, Bosch is further strengthening its kitchen appliances portfolio of products.

Bosch is already a popular choice for cookers, dishwashers and washing machines and is a leading player in built-in product range. It is the first home appliance brand to bring its most efficient appliances together into a "Super Efficiency Portfolio".

Through its super-efficient appliances, the group is making a direct contribution to cutting electricity and water consumption in households, and also to climate change challenges.

"We assume responsibility for the environment and society, and thus also contribute to sustainable development around the world," stated Dr Kurt-Ludwig Gutberlet, Chairman of the Board of the parent BSH group.

The new range of Bosch consumer products in Oman will embrace the development and production of home appliances that are particularly sparing with energy and water usage.

This reflects the fact that more than 90 per cent of the environmental impact occurring during product lifecycle arises in the usage phase — from the energy, water consumed.

"With our innovative and



super-efficient home appliances we can make a decisive contribution to climate and environmental protection," added Gutberlet.

Kazantzidis, noted "The demand for power and water is fast-growing in the Middle East region, led by the growth in population and investments in infrastructure development. The governments are currently focusing on promoting sustain-

able development initiatives that involve all stakeholders including the public. The use of energy-efficient products will go a long way in meeting the long-term growth goals of the region."

In the presentations given, it was noted: Bosch washing machines consume 30 per cent less energy than the best Energy Efficiency Class A demands.

Due to the innovative heat

pump technology and a condenser that cleans itself to maintain high energy efficiency, the dryer consumes 50 per cent less energy than the minimal requirement for qualifying for Efficiency Class A.

Bosch is also offering the most water efficient washer dryer in the world with the world novelty: air condensation technology. This means that the washer dryer dries without

water due to air condensation and saves up to 40 litres of water compared to conventional washer dryers.

Customer delight is our top priority and it is this philosophy of team OTE that comes together to make OTE — A symbol of care, stated Cyrus Vevaina, MD, OTE Group.

OTE Group is the exclusive dealer of Bosch range of consumer products in Oman. With a nationwide network of showrooms and service facilities, OTE Group ensures that Bosch customers are never far from getting a wide range of high quality after-sales service. It is this strong partnership that continues to lead more customers to join the OTE — Bosch family.

OTE Group is a part of the social fabric here in Oman and hence customer satisfaction is its top priority.

OTE's strength being always to offer top class product quality, as well as efficient service back up to satisfy the huge client base throughout Oman.

GPS marks Seeb wastewater project LTI milestone



GPS representatives receiving an award from Omar al Wahaibi of Haya Water

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Gulf Petrochemical Services & Trading LLC along with its partners Green Line Company and Vadnais Micro-tunnelling LLC celebrated 5 million man-hours without LTI in their A'Seeb Wastewater Project (C2) for Haya Water recently.

The scope of work in A'Seeb Wastewater Project (C2) included one of the longest micro-tunnelling activities ever undertaken in the Country. The main sewer collector system consists of 23 km long pipeline of various diameters ranging from 600 mm to 2,000 mm routing from Muscat City

Centre to Manuma (near Bait Al Barka roundabout) with related activities. The second part of the Project is 23 km long open cut pipeline from Royal Flight area to Al Athaiba Beach road.

The banquet meeting was attended by dignitaries including Omar al Wahaibi, CEO of Haya Water and officials from Muscat Municipality, Royal Oman Police along with senior management of Haya Water and Parsons International & Company.

On the occasion, Al Wahaibi expressed his appreciation on the completion of 5 million man-hours safely and congratulated the entire

project team on their successful efforts. Cecil Abreo, Director of GPS, Mohammed el Gemaiey, Senior Area Manager of Haya Water, and Demetrios and Sajeev, Manager and Resident Engineer respectively of Parsons, also spoke on the occasion.

N I Vahora, GPS General Manager, said the project had a number of technical challenges and achieved several milestones since its start in 2008. The team under the Contracts Manager Nilesh Shah with the support of project management team lead by Project Manager J N Tewari proved their commitment to this prestigious project.

Oman Mobile slashes prices on Android smartphones

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Oman Mobile, the mobile telecommunications arm of Omantel, has announced exciting discounts on Android smartphones that will help thousands of customers to enjoy the benefits of these popular devices.

Prices have been slashed on the two popular Android smartphones sold by Oman Mobile including the high-end Ideos x5 which has been reduced by

20 per cent from RO 149 to RO 120 and the Ideos U8150 to just RO 60 making it one of the most affordable smartphones in the world.

Commenting on the announcement of the new prices, Saleem Ahmed Abdullatif, General Manager of Marketing at Omantel's Consumer Business Unit, said: "Android is one of the most exciting and innovative products that Oman Mobile has introduced to the Omani market and we have been de-

lighted with the response from our customers to the launch of these Google-powered smartphones. "Now with the introduction of these new prices we are making Android more affordable than ever enabling increasing numbers of our customers to experience the amazing benefits that an Android smartphone can offer them."

Android smartphones have very advanced and high levels of computing power. These smartphones are unique in

bringing together all Google Internet based applications into the phone including their widely popular Gmail, YouTube, Google maps, Google Talk, Android Market where customers can download from more than 100,000 applications.

Android smartphones from Oman Mobile come with a full range of benefits and applications including 3.5G network capability, Wi-Fi connectivity, a Chrome lite browser, Google applications, file management

systems, Microsoft exchange, Gmail and Arabic inputs and display, icon interface and Arabic applications.

Today Android is the world's best selling smartphone operating system and has become the most popular with various devices in the market. Omantel brings individuals, families and businesses together and has successfully connected different parts of the country to each other and with the rest of the world.

Arab stocks plunge on US debt debacle

AMMAN — Arab stock markets continued their losses last week amid growing worries over the US debt ceiling standoff and the approach of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan, tentatively set to start today or tomorrow, financial analysts said.

They expected Arab bourses, particularly in the oil-rich Gulf region, to come under new pressure this week if Congress and the White House fail to reach a debt deal to avert a catastrophic US government default by the deadline of Tuesday. "I believe stock markets in the Gulf region stand to suffer more losses early next week if efforts fail to raise the US debt ceiling," an Amman-based portfolio manager said.

"Arab markets will also come under an additional pressure because the US economy grew at a pace slower than expected in the second quarter," he said, referring to the latest Labor Department data showing a growth rate of just 1.3 per cent.

Saudi shares lost fresh ground last week as investors continued to be obsessed by the US budget-cutting woes.

The Tadawul All Share Index (TASI) of the Arab world's largest stock exchange, shed 0.69 per cent on weekly basis, closing at 6,445.17 points.



WEEKLY REVIEW

"Apparently, the Saudi stock market has ignored the good results of Saudi firms in the second quarter and, instead, is watching what happens in the United States and Europe," said Mohammad Emran, member of the Saudi Economic Society.

"The ambiguity is expected to dominate the market this week as the community of Saudi investors will monitor

what kind of political agreement the Republicans and Democrats are going to strike by Tuesday," he added.

Emran expected stocks to be negatively affected in the coming weeks by the traditional liquidity crunch and the absence of moving factors in Ramadhan.

However, Emran said that Saudi stocks stood to gain in the medium

term, finding support from the Saudi economic fundamentals as the huge volume of public spending, high oil prices and good profits of listed firms.

Kuwaiti shares also closed in the red last week, led by the real estate, investment and services sectors.

Kuwait's KSE all-share index fell 0.68 per cent on weekly basis, closing at 6,036 points.

The benchmarks of the United Arab Emirates stock exchanges of Dubai and Abu Dhabi shed 1.13 per cent and 2.42 per cent to close week respectively at 1,506 points and 2,628 points.

Qatar's all-share index lost 0.19 per cent last week, closing at 8,377 points while Bahrain's benchmark closed 0.37 per cent in the red, at 1,298 points.

The all-share index of the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) closed week marginally lower at 2,089 points.

Egypt's AGX 30 index, which measures the performance of the market's 30 most active stocks, plunged for the seventh week in a row, losing 2.2 per cent on weekly basis and closing at 5,022 points. The Egyptian stock exchange came under pressure from foreign selling and worries over what could happen during Friday rallies, analysts said. — dpa

Gold hits record high as traders seek safety amid US debt crisis

LONDON — Gold hit a record high as traders sought out safe-haven investments amid mounting debt tensions in the United States and lingering concerns over high deficits for euro zone members.

PRECIOUS METALS: Gold reached an all-time peak of \$1,632.80 an ounce on Friday, extending the precious metal's recent record-breaking run on the London Bullion Market.

"The threat of default by the world largest economy has led gold to a fresh peak," said James Moore, an expert at commodities analysis group FastMarkets.

US President Barack Obama warned that his country was almost out of time to agree a debt ceiling deal as Republicans and Democrats scrambled to find a way out of an impasse and avoid a disastrous default.

With just days to go until the United States could be pushed into an unprecedented default, Obama insisted the warring sides could still reach an 11th-hour compromise on raising the \$14.3 trillion debt ceiling.

"This is not a situation where the two parties are miles apart," Obama said despite a

months-long bitter war of attrition now going down the wire to a Tuesday deadline when the US is set to run out of money to pay its bills.

"Should a default occur, gold will be vulnerable to a sharp correction as investors cut their risk exposure and use gold to generate cash, but ... once the initial sell-off is complete there are likely to be further upside gains," added Moore.

In recent weeks, gold has blazed a record-breaking trail as investors have also sought shelter from the intensifying euro zone debt crisis.

This week among other precious metals, silver reached \$41.45 an ounce, close to a three-month high, before easing on profit-taking. Palladium struck a five-month peak at \$846 an ounce.

By late Friday on the London Bullion Market, gold jumped to \$1,628.50 an ounce from \$1,602 the previous week.

Silver eased to \$39.63 an ounce from \$39.67.

On the London Platinum and Palladium Market, platinum dropped to \$1,779 an ounce from \$1,793.

Palladium increased to \$824 an ounce from \$807.



BASE METALS: Base or industrial metals mainly rose as tight supplies helped to mitigate debt concerns.

Copper gained as the world's biggest copper mine in northern Chile suspended shipments because of a strike.

The management of the Escondida mine said notices had gone out to its customers informing them that the company would not be able to meet contracts for copper concentrate.

Chile is the world's large-

est copper producer, with 5.6 million tonnes annually. More than a million tonnes a year — or 6.8 per cent of the world production — are produced at the Escondida mine.

"Copper prices have been firm, but it's surprising that they haven't been stronger in the face of a calamitous supply picture," said Barclays Capital analyst Gayle Berry.

By late Friday on the London Metal Exchange (LME), copper for delivery in three months climbed to \$9,737 a

tonne from \$9,652 the previous week. Three-month aluminium grew to \$2,616 a tonne from \$2,577.

Three-month lead dipped to \$2,631 a tonne from \$2,687.

Three-month tin decreased to \$28,100 a tonne from \$28,200.

Three-month zinc advanced to \$2,490 a tonne from \$2,474.

Three-month nickel expanded to \$24,475 a tonne from \$23,950.

COMMODITIES UPDATE

OIL: Crude futures slid amid fears of weaker demand for oil in the United States, the world's biggest consumer of oil.

"A lot of markets are trapped until we can get past this debt ceiling and all the bickering of Congress, the Senate, and the White House," said Rich Ilcyszyn, an analyst at brokers Lind-Wallock.

"You don't want to buy oil until you can figure out what's happening in the US. The market is preoccupied. Everything is hypersensitive right now."

By Friday on London's Intercontinental Exchange, Brent North Sea crude for delivery in September fell to \$115.91 a barrel from \$118.53 a week earlier.

On the New York Mercantile Exchange, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) or light sweet crude for September dropped to \$95.54 a barrel from \$99.81.

COCOA: Prices extended losses on expectations of large supplies in top cocoa producer Ivory Coast.

"Market players are evidently coming to recognise

that supplies are ample," said Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch.

By Friday on LIFFE, London's futures exchange, cocoa for delivery in September dropped to £1,853 a tonne from £1,913 the previous week.

In New York on the NYBOT-ICE, cocoa for September fell to \$2,971 a tonne from \$3,076.

COFFEE: Coffee futures diverged, as Arabica coffee prices hit six-month lows of 237.20 cents a pound in New York.

"Coffee futures continued to be influenced by macro events (such as US debt worries), in the absence of fresh fundamental (supply and demand) news," said Kona Haque, an analyst at Macquarie financial group.

By Friday on NYBOT-ICE, Arabica for delivery in September fell to 240.10 US cents a pound from 241.40 cents the previous week.

On LIFFE, Robusta for September increased to \$2,062 a tonne from \$2,028.

SUGAR: Prices slid on weak economy concerns af-

ter a strong start to the week, when sugar hit five-month highs of 31.68 cents a pound in New York amid a tight supply environment in major producer Brazil.

By Friday on NYBOT-ICE, the price of unrefined sugar for delivery in October dropped to 29.50 US cents a pound from 31.34 cents the previous week.

On LIFFE, the price of a tonne of white sugar for October slipped to £771 compared with £812.70 for the August contract the previous week.

GRAINS AND SOYA: Prices were mixed.

By Friday on the Chicago Board of Trade, maize for delivery in September declined to \$6.67 a bushel from \$6.90 a week earlier.

November-dated soyabean meal — used in animal feed — slipped to \$13.57 a bushel from \$13.88.

Wheat for September retreated to \$6.88 from \$6.92.

RUBBER: Rubber prices rose on the back of speculative buying.

The Malaysian Rubber Board's benchmark SMR20 increased to 469.65 US cents a kilo from 465 US cents the previous week. — AFP

Investors straddle US default line

LONDON — If ever there was a pivotal moment for financial markets, this could be it: The United States defaults and investors face the great unknown, or it doesn't and one of 2011's key risks is removed.

Not that the coming week does not hold other events of note. There are central bank rate decisions and a raft of significant economic reports, for example. The euro zone crisis is also rumbling on.

But far and away the most important issue for investors is Tuesday's deadline for Washington to raise its \$14.3 trillion debt limit. To investors' dismay, approval is being held up by a bitter partisan squabble between Democrats and Republicans.

Without agreement — and there was little sign of one, heading into the last few days — the vaulted triple A-rated US economy could default by not paying all its bills, at least temporarily.

The issue for investors is that what happens next is unclear. For one thing, the August 2 deadline is not necessarily inviolate. For another, the US Treasury could decide it was a priority to keep paying its debt obligations, avoiding any short-term default.

In theory, however, lack of agreement could prompt turmoil on financial markets, with investors selling US debt, dumping other dollar-denominated assets, running away from global risk assets and scrambling into already overcrowded safe havens.



TRADERS work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Gold, for example, has risen close to 10 per cent in July alone, hitting a series of all-time nominal highs as investors have fled the twin US and euro zone debt crises. Similarly, the Swiss franc has soared against both the dollar and the euro in the month.

“We are suggesting that there could well be some more volatility. But we are not inclined to believe that volatility will last long,” said Kevin Gardiner, Managing Director of Research and Economics at Barclays Wealth.

He said there might even be some opportunities created if assets such as US equities react negatively, making them cheaper. A default,

MARKETS WEEK AHEAD

nonetheless, would raise huge questions about the supposed sanctity of the world's largest economy, triggering immense stress on US money market funds, tempting banks to stop lending to each other as in the Lehman crisis, and potentially tipping the country back into recession.

If, on the other hand, negotiators in Washington succeed in raising the debt limit, an argument can be made that a relief rally of riskier assets would be in order. Some of the pre-deadline positioning would almost certainly un-

wind, for example.

Investors clearly want to start raising their risk profiles. Reuters asset allocation polls released in the past week showed a moderate rise in equity exposure for the second month in a row.

At the same time, returns on mainstream assets this year, while poor, do not come close to reflecting the kind of news that has been thrown at them, from Japan's earthquake and tsunami to the euro zone crisis and turmoil in the Arab world.

What has been holding in-

vestors back most recently are the twin debt crises. If agreement is reached in Washington, that could combine with the Greek bailout agreed by the euro zone to lift some of the barriers.

“I think they are going to come up with something. There will be a certain amount of relief. There will be a bounce,” said Christopher Potts, head of economics and strategy at brokers Cheuvreux.

But he said that for a longer-term return to the bull market, signs of diminishing inflation in emerging markets and better growth in the US economy were needed.

The debt issues, indeed, are not going to be solved simply by an agreement in Washington and the euro zone's second rescue package for Athens.

“We are going to be living with this for years,” Potts said.

The United States, for example, remains under threat of a credit rating downgrade whether it agrees on the debt ceiling or not, raising fundamental issues about what institutions can hold US Treasuries.

Attempts by euro zone leaders to draw a line under the bloc's debt crisis and avoid contagion, meanwhile, already appear to be stumbling.

Yields on Italian 10-year bonds were close to 6 per cent again on Friday and Moody's placed Spain's credit rating on review for possible downgrade, citing weak growth and funding pressures. — Reuters

IAG bucks industry trend with profit swing

LONDON — International Airlines Group, formed by the merger of BA and Iberia, defied the gloom in the airline sector by swinging to a profit in the first half and predicting full-year earnings growth.

Europe's second-biggest airline group by value behind Lufthansa said pre-tax profit in the six months to the end of June rose to 39 million euros (\$55.7 million) from a loss of 419 million euros on revenues 17.9 per cent higher at 7.8 billion euros.

IAG's Chief Executive Willie Walsh told reporters he expected the group to deliver “significant growth in operating profit this year” despite soaring fuel prices.

Earlier this week IAG's European rivals Air France and Lufthansa reported results battered by high fuel costs and said capacity would not grow as quickly as previously planned over the winter. In the US, shares in Delta Air Lines fell to a year low after it said fuel costs grew at a higher rate than



revenue. “Looking at the financial reports of some of our competitors, at first glance it would appear that we are doing slightly better... because we are working harder,” said Walsh.

“There's very little we can do about fuel costs but what we can do is try and manage our controllable costs in the non-fuel areas and I think we've done that well.”

The airline managed to shave 5.6 per cent off its non-fuel costs during

the period, helping offset some of the 34.8 per cent rise in fuel costs.

It expects its second half fuel costs to come in at around 2.8 billion euros, taking its annual bill to about 5.2 billion euros, up from 3.9 billion euros last year. Shares in IAG in London, which have fallen 18 per cent in 2011, were up 0.3 per cent at 233.2 pence on Friday, valuing the business at around £4.3 billion.

“These are good results at the upper

end of expectations but the year-ago period was depressed by the ash cloud crisis and strikes at BA,” said Charles Stanley analyst Douglas McNeill.

“We remain sceptical that through-the-cycle profitability is improving, and continue to rate the stock a 'hold' with some downside risk.”

IAG, whose traffic rose 15.7 per cent in the second quarter, said its long haul business remained stable, with strength in the premium sector, but that the short haul European market remains highly competitive.

“The environment in London is somewhat better than the rest of Europe,” said Walsh, who added that the deadlock over raising the US debt ceiling had created “uncertainty that everyone could do without” but said IAG's transatlantic business was performing well.

“The joint venture (between BA, Iberia and American Airlines) is gaining premium market share from pretty much everyone out there.” — Reuters

Port of Salalah

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BERTH	CODE	VESSEL NAME	CARGO	LASTPORT	NEXTPORT	BERTH/ANCHOR TIME	ETD/SAILED	AGENT	STATUS
01	M6QF	Maersk Miami (M6QF)	Containers	Suez	Colombo (Sri Lanka)	30-Jul-11 08:15		Maersk	Alongside
02	M58A	Maersk Warsaw (M58A)	Containers	TBA	TBA	29-Jul-11 14:10	29-Jul-11 23:00	Maersk	Alongside
04	M047	Maersk Montana (M047)	Containers	TBA	TBA	29-Jul-11 23:48		Maersk	Alongside
06	MJEN	MSC Jeanne (MJEN)	Containers	Sukhna	Djibouti	30-Jul-11 05:05		Sharaf	Alongside
21	NIWA	Niwa (NIWA)	Cable Communication	Port Sudan	High Sea	30-Jul-11 11:25		GAC	Alongside
D	M3JL	E R Elsfleth (M3JL)	Containers	TBA	TBA	29-Jul-11 22:30		Maersk	Anchorage
D	MOPR	Mohd Prince (MOPR)	General Cargo	Tartous	Kandla (India)	28-Jul-11 00:00		Dhofar	Anchorage
OJ	SOPE	Songa Pearl (SOPE)	Bulk Fuel	Sohar	TBA	28-Jul-11 20:22		GAC	Alongside
	ALSL	Alliance ST Louis (ALSL)	General Cargo	TBA	TBA	02-Aug-11 12:00		Khimji	Expected
	AORG	APL Oregon (AORG)	Containers	Singapore	Port Said	31-Jul-11 19:00		GAC	Expected
	APRZ	APL Zircon (APRZ)	Containers	Nhava Shiva	Djibouti	31-Jul-11 08:00		GAC	Expected
	DBAI	Duba-1 (DBAI)	NIL	Muscat	Aden	30-Jul-11 23:00		GAC	Expected
	FALT	Fairchem Colt (FALT)	NIL	JNPT Mumbai (India)	Xiamen (China)	02-Aug-11 00:00		Towell Barwil Co LLC	Expected
	KAMH	Karim H (KAMH)	NIL	Berbera (Somalia)	Berbera (Somalia)	30-Jul-11 10:00		Dhofar	Expected
	M10E	Conti Shanghai (M10E)	Containers	TBA	TBA	03-Aug-11 18:00		Maersk	Expected
	M1SR	Glory (M1SR)	Containers	TBA	TBA	01-Aug-11 02:00		Maersk	Expected
	M623	Grete Maersk (M623)	Containers	TBA	TBA	04-Aug-11 00:00		Maersk	Expected
	M681	Nexoe Maersk (M681)	Containers	TBA	TBA	03-Aug-11 23:59		Maersk	Expected
	M809	Safmarine Ngami (M809)	Containers	TBA	TBA	03-Aug-11 18:00		Maersk	Expected
	M83W	Maersk Missouri (M83W)	Containers	JNPT Mumbai (India)	New York	31-Jul-11 04:00		Maersk	Expected
	M91C	Hansa Liberty (M91C)	Containers	TBA	TBA	31-Jul-11 16:00		Maersk	Expected
	M93N	Maersk Surabaya (M93N)	Containers	TBA	TBA	03-Aug-11 06:00		Maersk	Expected
	MADA	Maersk Dampier (MADA)	Containers	TBA	TBA	02-Aug-11 02:00		Maersk	Expected
	MROS	MSC Rosa M (MROO) (MROS)	Containers	Jeddah (KSA)	Jebel Ali (UAE)	02-Aug-11 04:30		Sahool	Expected
	MS11	MSC Namibia II (MS11)	Containers	Hodeidah (Yemen)	Aden	31-Jul-11 22:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MTOR	MSC Toronto (MTOR)	Containers	Singapore	New York	31-Jul-11 12:00		Sharaf	Expected
	SAER	Salver A (SAER)	Live Stock	Bosaso (Somalia)	Bosaso (Somalia)	01-Aug-11 00:00		Dhofar	Expected
	SCHE	SCI Chennai (SCHE)	Containers	Mundra	Suez	02-Aug-11 22:00		Backer Haji	Expected
	SMTLA	Samental- A (SMTLA)	Live Stock	Berbera (Somalia)	Berbera (Somalia)	01-Aug-11 00:00		Dhofar	Expected
	SOSHA	Song Shan (SOSHA)	General Cargo	Port Kelang	Suez	31-Jul-11 14:00		Badar Shipping Agencies LLC	Expected
	STMIA	Stream Mia (STMIA)	Chemical	Singapore	Suez	02-Aug-11 00:00		Inchcape	Expected

BIZ BRIEFS

Google launches ‘Hotel Finder’

WASHINGTON — Google, which purchased a leading flight software company earlier this year, has launched a new tool for finding hotels. Hotel Finder is an “experimental search tool” designed to help users locate and book hotels, Google software engineer Andrew McCarthy said in a blog post.

Hotel Finder, which is restricted to the United States for now, lets a user refine their choice by geographic area using Google Maps and select hotels using various criteria including price, the number of stars and user ratings. Users can create a “shortlist” of options before deciding to book a hotel directly or through online companies such as Priceline, Travelocity, Expedia or Hotels.com.

Hotel Finder is the latest foray by the Mountain View, California-based Google into the travel sector. In April, the US Justice Department gave the green light to Google's \$700 million purchase of flight data company ITA Software.

The Justice Department's anti-trust division, however, extracted a number of concessions from Google and imposed conditions on the Internet search giant to allow the acquisition to go ahead. Several online travel sites, including Expedia, Kayak and Travelocity, had sought to block the Google-ITA deal, claiming it would give Google too much control over the lucrative online travel market and lead to higher prices.



Eircom to talk to lenders about covenants



DUBLIN — Struggling Irish telecoms group eircom said it would start talks about waiving covenants with its lenders if, as likely, it breaches them at the end of August. Eircom, majority owned by Temasek unit Singapore Technologies Telemedia (STT), recognised the co-ordinating committee representing first lien lenders earlier this month, allowing talks on restructuring its debt pile to start.

It presented a five-year business plan to lenders and said the outlook for the fiscal year ending 2012 reflected the effect

of fixed line losses, reductions in mobile termination rates, a poor economic outlook and continued competitive and regulatory pressures.

The group said in a statement that projected earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) for next year were materially lower than the corresponding unaudited figures for this year. Eircom, whose net debt was 3.8 billion euros (\$5.4 billion) at the end of last year, or 5.6 times EBITDA, first warned of a significant risk of a covenant breach within months in March and said it would talk to shareholders about the possibility of injecting new equity. It said that its shareholders had the right to inject more equity into the company to avoid any breach of its senior debts.

Luxury giant PPR sees strong luxury sales

PARIS — French luxury products giant PPR reported a 16.1 per cent increase in first-half net profits to 450 million euros (\$642.33 million) riding a strong increase in sales in emerging markets.

PPR, which owns such names as Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and sportswear label Puma, said sales rose to 7.2 billion euros, for 7.3 per cent growth on a comparable basis from the first half of 2010.

Sales were slightly above the 7.1 billion euros expected by analysts surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires.

The company said in a phone conference that it was “confident” it would reach “sustained growth in the second half of the year” and that its performance would exceed last year's.

“Despite a slowing world economy and increasing uncertainties, emerging country business continues to grow at a sustained level,” said chief financial officer Jean-Francois Palus.

Palus said that sales of luxury and lifestyle brands grew by 18 per cent with strong demand from emerging markets that now counted for 37.2 per cent of total sales.



Irish Central Bank downgrades 2011 growth



DUBLIN — Ireland's Central Bank said it expected the Irish economy to grow by 0.8 per cent this year, down from an earlier forecast of 0.9 per cent.

Irish gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 1.0 in 2010 after shrinking by a record 7.6 per cent in 2009.

“The likely outturn for growth in the Irish economy this year is subject to more uncertainty than usual,” the bank said in its quarterly bulletin against a backdrop of rising debt tensions for the euro zone.

“There seems to be no reason, however, at this point, to significantly alter the bank's previous projections for the main economic aggregates.”

“As a result, GDP is still expected to grow by about 0.8 per cent this year although GNP (gross national product) may decline slightly, perhaps by about 0.3 per cent.”

GNP is the measure favoured by the Dublin government as it strips out substantial repatriated profits from foreign investment — thus providing a more accurate barometer of economic performance in Ireland. The Central Bank said there was likely to be stronger growth in 2012 when it anticipates GDP to expand by about 2.1 per cent and GNP by 1.0 per cent.

Clinton Cards hires coffee man for quick fix

LONDON — Struggling British cards and gift retailer Clinton Cards said it has recruited the managing director of coffee chain Starbucks UK and Ireland to be its new chief executive as it attempts to reverse a fall in sales and profits.

The firm, which trades from over 600 UK stores, said on Friday Darcy Wilson-Rymer will join as CEO in October after four years at the UK unit of Starbucks Corp. He will succeed Clinton Cards' founder and executive chairman Don Lewin as CEO, who will step down to become non-executive chairman tomorrow, ahead of becoming life president in March 2012. Wilson-Rymer will work closely with Lewin's managing director son Clinton, after whom he named the firm over 40 years ago. Shares in Clinton Cards have lost nearly two thirds of their value over the last year as the firm has battled intense competition from supermarkets and the Internet. In March the firm posted a 41 per cent slump in first half pretax profit. It posted a further fall in sales in May.



Merck says profits up, warns of layoffs



NEW YORK — Pharmaceuticals giant Merck said that its second-quarter profit nearly tripled to \$2.02 billion, meeting analysts' expectations, but it also warned of steep layoffs ahead. The New Jersey-based company is seeking to cut billions of dollars in costs and eliminate redundancies stemming from its \$41 billion acquisition of rival Schering-Plough in 2009. It also faces the imminent threat of patents expiring on key drugs, notably top-selling allergy medicine Singulair.

Merck's net income was \$2.02 billion in the second quarter, up from \$752 billion during the same period last year, the company said in a quarterly earnings report. Total revenues in April-June were \$12.15 billion, a seven per cent increase from a year ago, Merck said. Earnings per share excluding special items came in at 95 cents, which matched the consensus forecast of Wall Street analysts. “Double-digit growth from key products, and successful new product launches in markets worldwide led to Merck's strong second quarter results,” chief executive Kenneth Frazier said in a statement.

Minissha lashes out at *Bheja Fry 2* director

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Antioxidants show promise in treating infertility

❖ Page 27

Barbecue sauces are good for health

❖ Page 27



The Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin

❖ Page 26

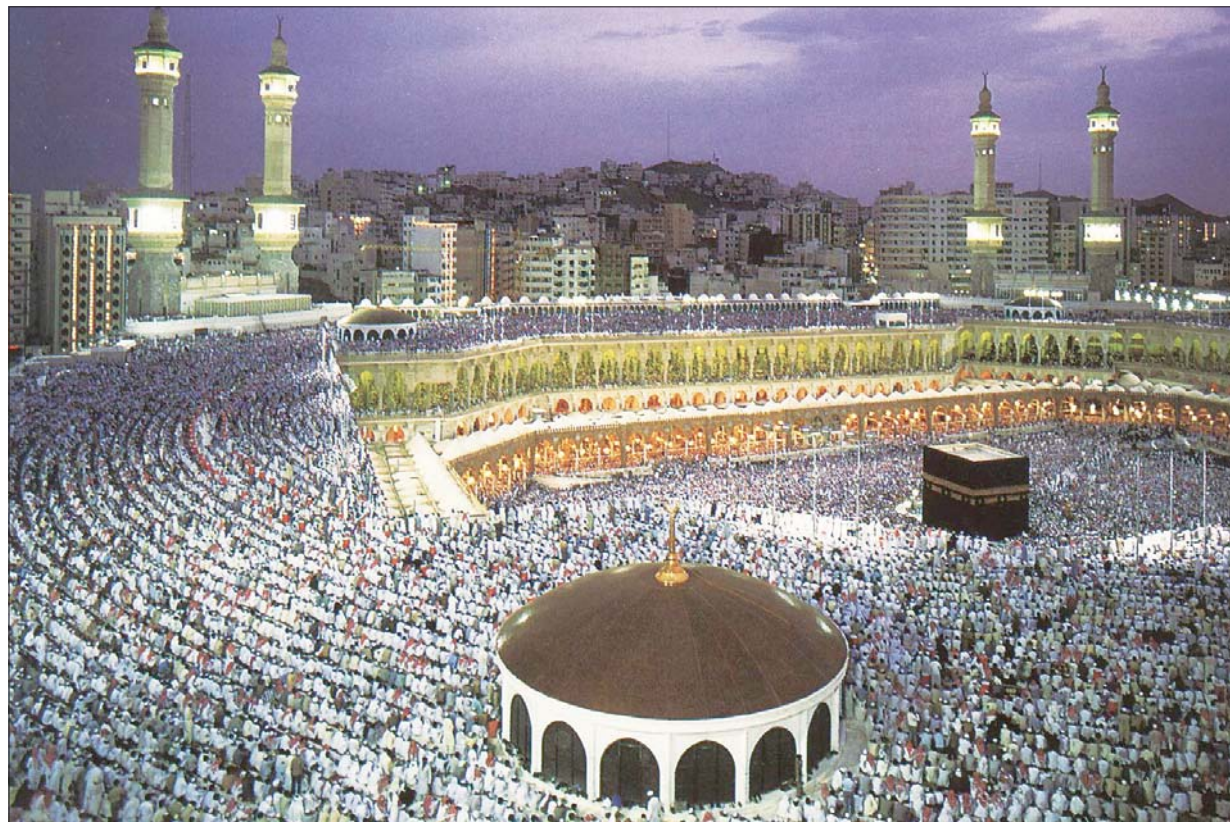
Rosie puts laughter at centre of new show

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Observer Features

Sunday, July 31, 2011



Fasting during Ramadhan cleanses the body, purifies the mind and we learn to have good feelings for our brethren, value what is hunger, how much the less privileged are pined during hunger and our attitude towards charity is strengthened



Significance of the holy month of Ramadhan



By Dr Bashir M Muhammad

THE holy month of Ramadhan is a special blessing from God Almighty, advocates universal brotherhood, sacrifice and righteous living. Sharing, forgiving and moderation in all aspects of life. Realisation that Allah's divine blessings are plentiful and abundant, showered on all human beings.

During Ramadhan, not only does the body undergo positive changes, but the mind and soul are also rejuvenated to a peaceful, forgiving and

holy attitude. Ramadhan is a school of discipline of the mind, body and soul. During Ramadhan one develops forgiveness. There is a regression of bad thoughts, attitudes and in general, peace reigns over the mind. One looks at the world with a clean attitude, devoid of any ill feelings, revenge, malice and hatred.

Fasting during Ramadhan cleanses the body, purifies the mind and we learn to have good feelings for our brethren, value of what is hunger, how much the less privileged are pined during hunger, all drawn upon us and our attitude towards sharing and charity is strengthened.

The Holy Quran was sent down during Ramadhan; this holy book of worship is God's final revelation to mankind. None can dispute the truth of this book. The Quran is the best guide on how to get to paradise. Full of teachings and preaching for this world and hereafter. It satisfies the soul and cleanses the heart. Quran tells us who God is and by what name we should address Him.

Benefits of Ramadhan fasting

Fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan, is one of the pillars of

Islam and every Muslim practises this most intimately, to attain divine blessings and also reap its benefits. It teaches self-control in eating, to be selective in what is eaten and exercise moderation. The *iftar* is a moment of glory during Ramadhan and develops a sense of spiritual oneness and unity.

Minimum food is needed during Ramadhan and the teaching is that one should eat to live and not live to eat.

It is taught to Muslims that the *iftar* diet should be balanced and nourishing, containing items from fruits, vegetables, bread, cereals, meat — all properly balanced. Fatty foods and fried foods should be best avoided. Small amount should be consumed and overeating should always be avoided.

Fasting inculcates a sense of physical disciplining, it teaches us to bear hunger pangs and we develop a sense of feeling for our less privileged brethren. We learn to sustain hunger which cleanses our system.

Spiritually, we attain nearness to God, we consider His magnanimity in providing us what we need. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has

said that "if we fill our stomach with food, knowing that at least one among 40 of our neighbours is starving, we will not be considered as His disciples."

Psychologically, during fasting we attain a sense of inner peace and tranquillity and also feel one with other brothers of ours. We sense a feeling of achievement and nearness to God Almighty and with all this, we are soaked in a sense of happiness and peace. Jealousy, ill feeling, criticism are all washed away and we automatically thank God for all the blessings and mercies which He showers on us during Ramadhan.

Islam's universal values

The institution of Ramadhan is a practical demonstration of Islam's universal and sublime values of self-sacrifice, patience, unity, brotherhood, equality and *Tauheed*.

The Muslim community during Ramadhan, project a very clean, pious, sacrificing and considerate version of life, by observing fast during the daylight hours — dawn to dusk and praying more frequently involving Allah's special blessing, forthcoming to humanity during Ramadhan.

Reading the Holy Quran is another important aspect during the holy month. Even Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to read Quran a lot during Ramadhan.

It is but natural that the more it is recited and discussed, the thought process will be more around the Holy Quran.

During Ramadhan self sacrifice is given more importance — one does not think only of self but of others too, their pain, sufferings all looked at with a generous and helping attitude. We are taught that universal brotherhood is the result of introspection, sacrifice and charity.

Iftar is performed in groups and in mosques, where all the people sit together and praise the Almighty Allah. The thought process is all the same for everyone and this develops a strong sense of *Tauheed* among the community.



Positive image of Islam and Muslims

Ramadhan is observed all over the world — all devote Muslims, during the holy month of Ramadhan have a universal understanding on the sanctity and importance of utilising this holy month for better physical, psychological, spiritual furtherance of their lives.

During this month, enmity is forgotten, grouses are dissolved and embark upon universal brotherhood with a renewed sense of forgiving and forgetting.

The activities during Ramadhan, cleanse the body, mind and soul and give life a new perspective and purpose.

The divine blessings from Allah affects the mind which looks at life in a wider, greater perspective. One does not live only for self, but gives greater consideration to the sufferings of others — suddenly the mind thinks of universal brotherhood, goodness and a pious living style. Improves the spiritual ability of mankind.

Wrong habits

Wrong habits that adversely af-

fect the institution of Ramadhan defeat the very essence of it in the society. This involves criticising or speaking ill of other people's deeds — as such this world is a vast place in the kingdom of Allah Subhanatalah, there will be always some mortals who are misguided into wrong thoughts and misdeeds.

Deeds are the result of our thoughts only when one has wrong thoughts; they get transformed into deeds. So bad or wrong thoughts are the basic shortcomings which are to be avoided. This is exactly what happens during Ramadhan — as if by a divine signal, one stops having wrong thoughts, thinks only good positive things — probably one of the divine happenings.

Ramadhan is a great occurrence and as such no human act can adversely affect the essence of this holy month.

However, we humans should always remember that no deed or thought of ours can be hidden from Allah, so humanity should always aim towards good thoughts, good deeds, a pious lifestyle and God-fearing nature, if we are to be near and dear to God.

Thoughts on Ramadhan

Ramadhan is special and a very sacred period of the year in which we have learnt, are learning and will keep our learning the rich values of a clean, sacrificing, simple, honest, sincere life style. We should live abiding in universal brotherhood and always have a helpful, forgiving nature.

During the month, our body, soul and mind are cleansed of our wrong thoughts and we look at life in a new positive way — we care about others, we donate generously and forget that we have only ourselves to live for.

Scholars have prophesied that one must try harder to live the same life, even after the holy month of Ramadhan. We should aim towards living life in a simple nature. Let the spirit of Ramadhan always be in our minds and souls and only then we can try to achieve eternal salvation and peace.

** (Dr Bashir M Muhammad is the Senior Consultant Physician, Cardiologist and Managing Director of Al Amal Medical & Health Care Center)*



The divine blessings from Allah affects the mind which looks at life in a wider, greater perspective. One does not live only for self, but gives greater consideration to the sufferings of others — suddenly the mind thinks of universal brotherhood, goodness and a pious living style. Improves the spiritual ability of mankind



The Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin



THE maximum length for both sexes of the Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin is around 10 feet weighing of about 140 kgs. The calves are born with

the weight of around 25 kgs. The colour of this kind of dolphin is uniformly dark with light grey on the belly area to ivory white. There is accumulation of fat on the back

which forms a big hump. Calves are born with the classic dolphin shape but as they mature, the fatty tissues start to accumulate forming a longitudinal hump. There are

large keels below and above the tailstock. The dorsal fin is short curving backwards. Pectoral fins are short and curved at the tip. The beak is long and cylindrical.

Field identification

Humpbacks are mostly associated with bottle nose dolphins. They are neither attracted nor shy of the boats. They keep some distance from aliens. When a boat approaches, they will dive and surface some distance away.

They take their breath in such a distinct way it is easy to identify them. First the cylindrical beak comes out of the water followed by the head and hump.

Then when it blows it cruises horizontally for a short time with the beak resting on the surface. Sometimes the whole head comes clear out of the water, before finally ducking the head down and rolling. Humpbacks remain on the water surface taking around four minutes for each breath and then finally dives



By Mohammed Amour al Barwani

under, exposing the tail clearly out of the water. They have a total of 120 teeth.

Stranding

The Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphins are inshore species and they prefer shallow water areas. Due to this, they do not strand.

Natural history

They come to shallow water to feed on crabs, fish bivalves, prawns etc, which are

their normal feed during dark hours. Swamps and mangrove areas are favourable hunting areas for Humpback dolphins.

Status

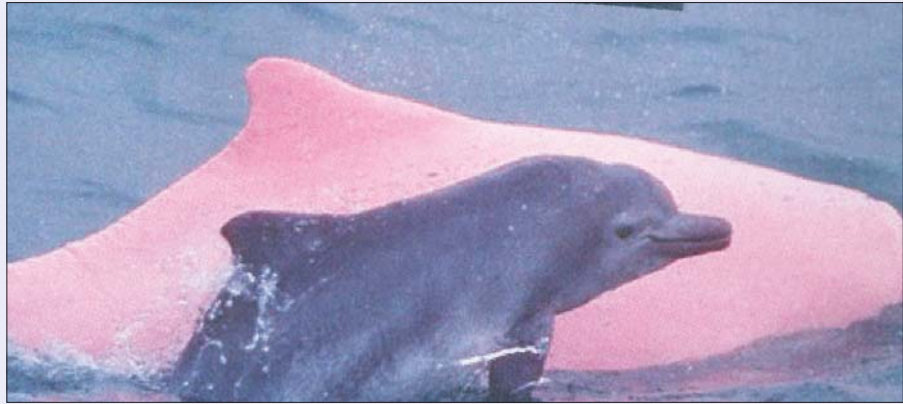
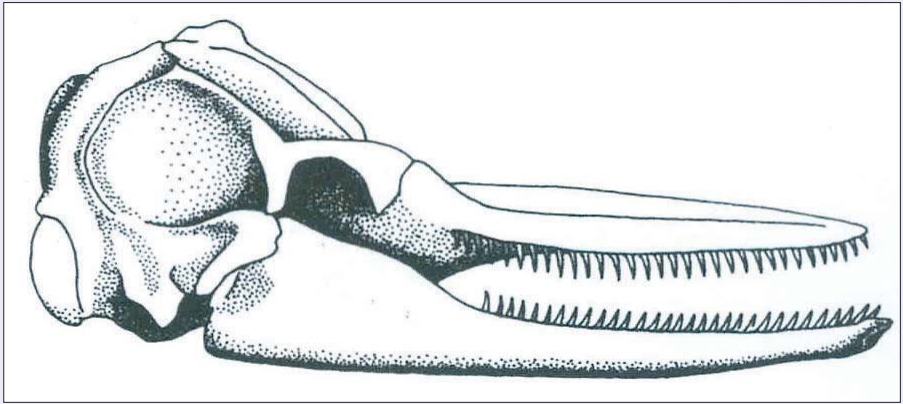
Not much is known about the population size of this species. But, they are quite common and for this reason, it seems that they are not endangered. Quite a small number is taken for human consumption in Arabian Gulf areas and around the Red Sea.

Geographical distribution

Humpback dolphins prefer warmer waters and are inshore animals dwelling in shallow water areas within the continental shelves and mostly within 10 to 12 miles along the coast.

They have been recorded from South Africa, East Africa, Somalia, Aden, Oman, Arabian Gulf, Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka.

Our next issue will feature the Rough Tooth dolphin.



OHA music course for young enthusiasts



By Abdulaziz al Jahdhami

MUSIC, which is an essential part of every society, is a shared experience that can bring people together. Parents use music to calm and soothe children, especially when they cry. Mothers sing for their babies to express their love. Through music people of all ages express and give vent to their emotions.

Children take to music like fish to water as it is an inborn quality which if nurtured properly can take them to great heights. The magic of music lies in the fact that it can bridge the generation gap, apart from uniting people from all over the world. Music enthusiasts are influenced by the tones and rhythm of different musical styles and techniques.

Music can be conveyed by various instruments and also through our vocal cords. Educating and exposing young people to music at a tender age can make them take up a particular instrument or opt for voice training later on as they mature. The expertise over any musical instru-

ment would depend upon the proper training that the exponents get from their masters.

Music enhances all areas of our development: intellectual, social

and emotional, motor, language and overall literacy. According to a study published in the journal *Psychology of Music*, children exposed to music programmes involving proper train-

ing in complex rhythmic, tonal and practical skills show superior cognitive performance in reading skills compared to their non-musically trained peers. Many preschoolers

make up songs and with no self-consciousness they sing to themselves as if it is part of their normal life.

To enlighten children with different musical skills and the basics the Oud Hobbyists Association (OHA) has organised a special summer course for schoolchildren. This annual course plans to target children aged 9 to 16 years from both genders. The course will be held in the evening for about three hours a day.

This year's course is the third edition of its kind and will last for one month. The main aim of the course is to provide professional support and guidance to the young lute hobbyists in Oman. Through the one-month course, children can learn the basic skills about playing Oud, which is a traditional music instrument in the Sultanate.

The course will help children to take up music as their hobby. The course comprises theoretical and practical daily sessions that are conducted five days a week. A qualified Omani Oud instructor from the Oud Hobbyists Association will take up the training.



MURIYA, the most prominent real estate developer in the country, has set up convenient information booths at the BankMuscat stall, the Crown Plaza Salalah and Browniz, where visitors can collect easy information on Muriya's prestigious projects in the country, including Salalah Beach.

With the khareef season attracting hordes of visitors from within and outside the country to Salalah, the focus is on projects like Muriya's Salalah Beach that offer a slice of the verdant land to investors and homemakers seeking a spot, literally, in nature's lap. There is a growing demand for projects that are woven around Salalah and its natural bounty, which is, undoubtedly, the most unique region in the entire GCC.

Spread over an area of 15.6 million square metres on the beach front, Muriya's Salalah Beach project is a mere 20 km from the Salalah airport, providing a convenient locale for investors, buyers and tourists.

Muriya at khareef in Salalah



With the presence of frankincense trail, camels and other unique touristic sights, Salalah is, indeed, a tourist's delight, more so during the khareef season, which coincides with the peak summer months in other parts of the country and

the region. The destination has, rightly, been described as a goldmine for visitors, offering a unique combination for landscapes. When complete, the integrated tourism complex will have high end luxury freehold apartments and villas,

alongside shopping and retail outlets, 5-star hotels as well as two marina boutique hotels, two 18-hole PGA golf courses, 200-berth inland marina, marina town, and restaurants and cafes. Hotels such as Club Med, Rotana and Mövenpick

Hotels and Resorts will add their might to the project, along with a club house that will be developed around the golf course.

This will transform the already popular destination into a haven for those wanting that

much more from their visits. It will soon be seen as the perfect destination for interested buyers from the GCC countries.

What adds to the charm of Salalah Beach project is its aspiration to become a one-stop destination for people from all walks of life. Its low building density strategy will mean that only 25 per cent of the land is used for buildup, leaving the remaining 75 per cent for nature retreats. It has been designed to infuse a sense of space, freedom and well-being.

Muriya, which was established in 2006 as a joint venture between Egypt's Orascom Hotels and Development and Omran is involved in four major projects including, Jebel Sifah — Salalah Beach, City Walk in Muscat and an exclusive boutique hotel on As So-dah Island.

On The Airwaves

By Lakshmi Kothaneth



An unforgettable festival

THE opening of the festival was different. Being the 40th year of Oman's Renaissance the opening was special with the exhibition of His Majesty's photographs. This is truly a unique exhibition because you could literally learn Oman's history by looking at the pictures taken by Mohamed Mustafa, His Majesty's personal photographer. I met lot of visitors who were so impressed with the idea of the exhibition as well as the photographs. When I did my television coverage on this exhibition I came across people who were trying to spot people they know in the pictures with His Majesty. On one occasion while I was interviewing, I just happened to ask one of the visitors at the exhibition if he had spotted anyone he knew and he said, "Yes as a matter of fact I have." We went with the camera along with him to the picture and there he pointed out to his grandfather speaking to His Majesty who was in this open vehicle. That was a lovely moment to capture. He was so delighted and said he was so proud that he can't wait to bring the rest of his family to see it.

Coming back to the subject of difference, well, I think it has to do with the number of days. I feel the Khareef season and the Salalah Tourism Festival needs 45 days. It is such a beautiful season with so much to do. It is also good for the number of tourists who would have more weekends. We have Ramadhan and I think Salalah is a lovely destination during this period, but culturally everyone would like to be with their extended family as well. However I must say tourists took full advantage of the 30 days and the weather was perfect with Khareef arriving on time.

Last year the wilayat's competition was lovely. It makes the festival ground very colourful. This year it was in the respective wilayats, which is nice in its own way but when the wilayats come to the ground tourists get to see the culture real close. It is truly a showcase of heritage and culture.

The exhibitions that are held like by the Archives, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Resources, Royal Oman Police gave such immense knowledge. The exhibitions on heritage have given me such a deep insight into the culture. As we wrap up our Salalah session I have been reflecting on the days we have spent here. A programme can only be successful because of a team and the people we meet. People come and share their thoughts, which I value tremendously. Some of them are older people and what they say are extremely valuable. I like it when I see younger generation following the footsteps of their parents, whether it is collecting antiques like Um Salim and her son Salem al Amry from Taqa, or the young dancers in the band called Al Mazayouna, some of whom were taught dancing by their mothers, or the sand artist Mussalam al Shamas from Dalkut who was taught sculpture by his father. All of that seems so promising. And a festival such as this is guaranteeing that continuation because it is an opportunity.

The audience like anything that is unique. Maybe the festival can be a real cultural hub by bringing artists, writers and authors from other countries as well. The world needs more platforms such as Oman to showcase the world heritage. Oman represents peace, stability, culture, art, environment and respect to all cultures. Maybe we could have a permanent hall for art exhibition throughout the season at the festival ground because there are so many artists and the visitors simply love seeing art and photography.

Throughout the festival there have been religious talks on Sundays and Tuesdays. It is the perfect ambience at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque. Now it is time to wish everyone a beautiful month to reflect and pray.

Inspection of Al Qabil projects



By Rashid al Harthy

SHAikh Suleiman al Jabri, the Deputy Wali of Al Qabil, recently made a field visit to different villages of the wilayat. Accompanied by a number of official governors, Shaikh Suleiman inspected the government development projects under way, the most important being the underground dams in Wadi Nam. He also visited the health centres and had a close look at the services provided to the citizens.

The Deputy Wali of Al Qabil said that great efforts are being made to strengthen the primary healthcare services. He urged that everyone work together to strengthen the co-operation between the health establishments.

Happy Birthday!



Twins Anwar and Rukhsar

Oman Daily Observer would like to take the lead in sharing the joy with its readers. Send us a colour photograph of your baby (below 10 years) along with name, date of birth, address, telephone number and parents' names. Send in your baby's picture and other details to: editor@omanobserver.om; featuresdesk@yahoo.co.in or Kids Corner, Oman Daily Observer, P O Box 974, PC 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

PEOPLE'S
PLATFORM

Streetlights burning in broad daylight

THIS is to bring to your kind attention that while much hue and cry to reduce power consumption is on at every sphere of our life, some areas we still see streetlights on even during the day and the electricity distribution companies keep a blind eye towards wastage of energy.

Many parts of the Muscat city are witnesses to this kind of recklessness. As a result, streetlights are burning even after 9 am or so.

I remember there was an article about the same in the *Observer* some time ago and it's really shocking to see the people concerned are still not ready to correct themselves or correct the electronic system that controls the on and off timing of these streetlights.

— Saif al Kindi

Editor: It's unfortunate that certain departments are lax on the issue of energy conservation despite concerted campaigns by the government to highlight this issue. Perhaps, we should put our faith in sensor-based systems that automatically switch off when there's sufficient daylight.

Hooliganism in Hamriya

THIS is to bring to the attention of

authorities concerned that the number of goons are on the rise in Hamriya, probably in some other parts of the city also have the same issue but I can't help it but tell you that of late they are on the rise and I'm a victim of the same.

My brand new car which I bought only recently was scratched everywhere and was dented in many places overnight.

What is the psychology of the people doing these kinds of vandalism? Will they ever tolerate something damaged by none but notorious hooligans in the society? When I informed the police, they asked me to lodge a written complaint despite my pleas to check the car for themselves.

Shouldn't they inspect the damaged object at the place where the crime took place? And could you suggest any means to book these culprits who cause substantial damages to the properties of others?

— Mariyam al Busaidy

Editor: Vandalism is the work of cowards who resort to such acts usually under the cover of darkness or when there's no one about. It's near impossible to pinpoint the culprits concerned, unless there's photographic proof obtained via surveillance cameras installed at the site.



More foot overbridges can reduce run over cases

ACCORDING to the Royal Oman Po-

lice, the number of victims falling prey to the run-over cases is on the rise in Oman. People cross the road as and when they want, not caring if it is pedestrian design-

ated area or if they are using the zebra crossing.

The most difficult area to cross the road, in my opinion, is the airport area

where the traffic is very high and this is the same area where most of the people — mostly labourers — find it ideal to reach the other side by crossing the road.

Some construction and maintenance companies park their vehicles and ask their employees to come to the other side of the road in order to avoid a small inconvenience.

Strict actions should be initiated against these construction companies while launching awareness campaign to reach these 'road-crossers'. Additionally, there should be more pedestrian crossings in the city

— Saleh al Mahrooqi

Editor: Yes, it's true that our road system does not cater for pedestrians. At the same time, where there indeed are pedestrian bridges, jaywalkers still tend to make a dash across the carriageway rather than use the bridges. Thus, while more pedestrian bridges are indeed a necessity, the authorities should also fine jaywalkers who recklessly cross the busy street instead of using the bridge.

Readers may send in their comments and opinions to: featuredesk@yahoo.co.in

Barbecue sauces are good for health



BARBECUE sauces can be good for your health, scientists have found. A study by a team of biologists found that popular sauces and marinades contain a range of spices, fruits and vegetables with natural antioxidants.

These are chemical compounds which fight diseases associated with old age such as cancer, heart problems, strokes, Alzheimer's, arthritis and cataracts. Antioxidants are known to fight harmful molecules called free radicals which damage the body's cells.

The study, at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, found that barbecue sauces are packed with healthy ingredients, which can boost the body's immune system.

"Herbs and spices are excellent sources of antioxidants, but estimating consumption rates can be difficult considering they are not generally consumed in large quantities, compared to fruits and vegetables.

"Instead, they are used in relatively small amounts as ingredients in recipes and formulations such as spice mixes and marinating sauces that enhance food flavour," said Dr Raymond Thomas, research team leader.

"Differing processing methods during manufacture, length of marinating time and exposure to various types of cooking can significantly alter the antioxidant status of these products and, consequently, the amount of antioxidants available to consumers," he added.

The team was able to show for the first time the impact of marinating and cooking meat on the antioxidant status of seven different popular brands and flavours of marinade containing herbs and spices as primary ingredients.

Each is commonly available at supermarkets under various brand names and includes jerk sauce, garlic and herb, honey garlic, roasted red pepper, lemon pepper garlic, sesame ginger teriyaki and green seasoning.

The research found high quantities of antioxidants in all seven sauces.

Even though cooking reduced the antioxidant qualities of the sauces by about half, tests after barbecuing showed they still contain significant amounts of health boosting compounds. — IANS

Smoking lowers IQ



SMOKING has long been known to damage lungs and cause heart disease but it could also lower IQ, a research has found. Young people who smoke regularly are likely to have markedly lower intelligence levels than those who do not smoke, and according to the study of 20,000 young adults, the heavier the smoker, the lower the IQ, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Those who smoke a pack or more of cigarettes a day averaged an IQ seven-and-a-half points lower than that of those who do not smoke.

A typical 18- to 21-year-old smoker was found to have an IQ of 94, while non-smokers of the same age averaged 101.

Those who smoked more than a pack a day had particularly low IQs of around 90. An average intelligence IQ score ranges from 84 to 116 points. Crucially, brothers scored differently depending on whether or not they smoked.

Despite similar environmental conditions, non-smoking siblings achieved higher IQs than their smoking brothers.

The results come from a study of 20,000 young men conducted by the Sheba Medical Center at the Tel Hashomer Hospital in Israel.

Mark Weiser, who led the research, said it is unclear whether smoking causes IQ levels to drop or whether less intelligent people are simply more inclined to smoke.

"It was really quite a straightforward study... We looked at cross-sectional data on IQ and smoking cigarettes, and looked at people's smoking status and their IQs," said Weiser.

"IQ scores are lower in male adolescents who smoke compared to non-smokers and in brothers who smoke compared to their non-smoking brothers. The IQs of adolescents who began smoking between ages 18 to 21 are lower than those of non-smokers.

"It's very clear that people with low IQs are the ones who choose to smoke. It's not just a matter of socioeconomic status — if they are poor or have less education," he added.

Weiser suggested the results could confirm a previously held conviction that those with lower IQs tend to make poorer decisions regarding their health — that they are more likely to take drugs, eat unhealthy food and exercise less.

Antioxidants show promise in treating infertility

ANTIOXIDANTS have shown promise in treating infertility both in men and women, including ED, say researchers.

Fertility problems are often an early indicator of other degenerative disease issues such as atherosclerosis, high blood pressure and congestive heart failure, and the same approaches that may help treat infertility could also be of value to head off those problems, they said, reports the journal *Pharmacological Research*.

The findings were made by Tory Hagen at the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University (US), and Francesco Visioli, who led the study at the Madrid Institute for Advanced Studies in Spain.

"If oxidative stress is an underlying factor causing infertility, which we think the evidence points to, we should be able to do something about it," said Hagen, professor of healthspan research at the Madrid institute.

Some commonly used antioxidants,

such as vitamins C and E, could help, Hagen said. But others, such as lipoic acid, are a little more cutting-edge and set up a biological chain reaction that has a more sustained impact on health.

Lab and in-vitro studies have been very promising, especially with some newer antioxidants such as lipoic acid that have received much less attention.

Researchers point to inadequate production of nitric oxide, an agent that relaxes and dilates blood vessels. This is often caused, in turn, by free radicals that destroy nitric oxide and reduce its function.

Antioxidants can help control free radicals. Some existing medical treatments for erectile dysfunction work, in part, by increasing production of nitric oxide.

Ageing, which is often associated with erectile dysfunction problems, is also a time when nitric oxide synthesis begins to falter. And infertility problems in general are increasing, scientists say, as more people delay having children until older ages.

"Infertility is multifactorial and we still don't know the precise nature of this phenomenon," Visioli said.

As many as 50 per cent of conceptions fail and about 20 per cent of clinical pregnancies end in miscarriage, the researchers noted in their report.

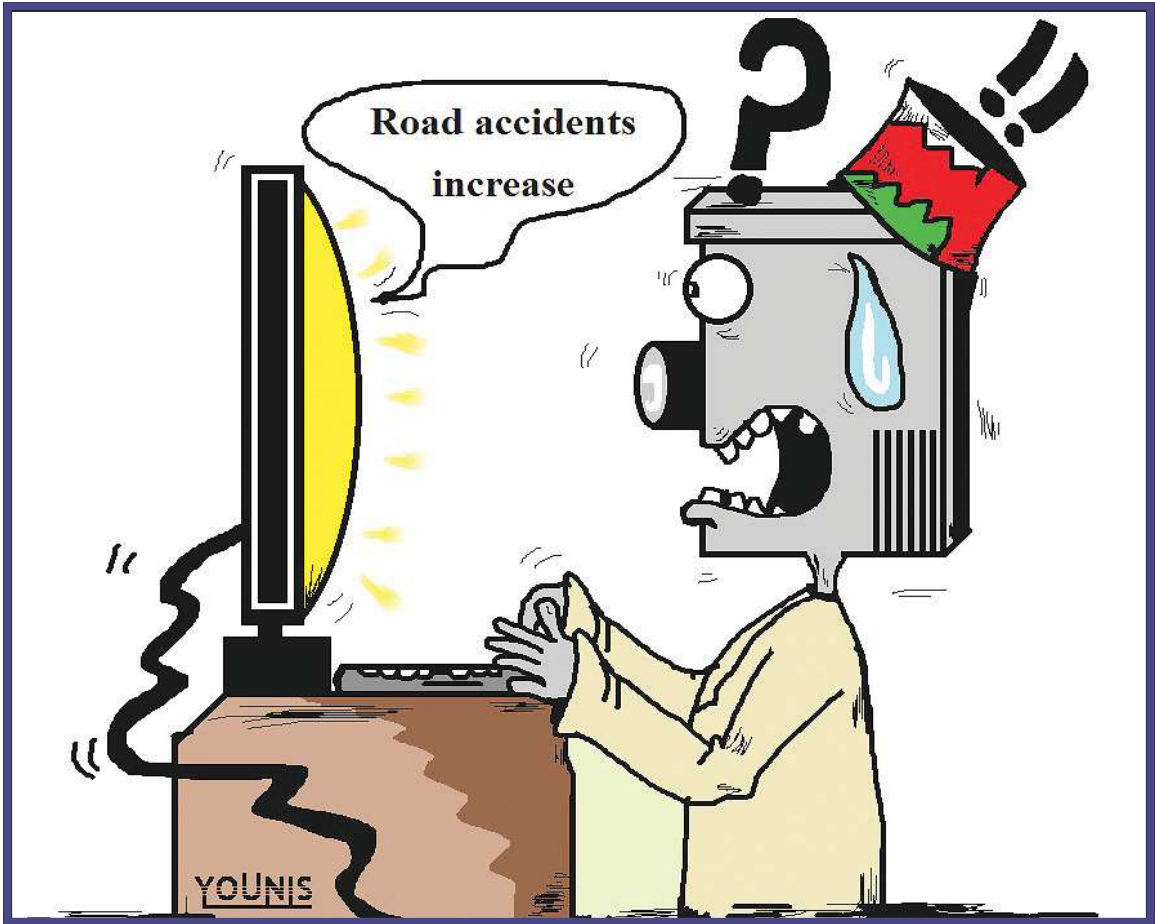


Walnuts: good for the heart, prostate

WALNUT consumption slows the growth of prostate cancer in mice and has beneficial effects on multiple genes related to the control of tumour growth and metabolism, researchers have found. Paul Davis, nutritionist and researcher with the UC Davis Cancer Centre in California, said the findings provide additional evidence that walnuts, although high in fat, are healthy.

"This study shows that when mice with prostate tumours consume an amount of walnuts that could 18 easily be eaten by a man, tumour growth is controlled," he said. "This leaves me very hopeful that it could be beneficial in patients."

Prostate cancer affects one in six American men. It is one in which environmental factors, especially diet, play an important role. Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated that eating walnuts — rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fats, antioxidants and other plant chemicals — decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease.



Between Us Only!

Majid Said al Suleimany

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Still Burning Homes!

MY first article on the same subject — titled 'Burning Homes' as of August 6, 2003 in the same column this is what I had said — Quote — But what is this new ugly and unpleasant development now in our homes? This 'domestic violence' thing? Do we need an excuse? The dishes and the foreign films and dramas that are beamed to our homes? Or is that the new in-things fashion now, the provocations and 'do not care stuff' — followed by lifting of the hand and beating up that poor creature that bore you babies you call your own and have made you proud too? Do you consider the effects on the children? Hey — what is wrong with us nowadays? Is it the increased selfishness, materialism and blind emulating and copying of values that are not our own? Against the very fabric of our society in all aspects and values.

The religious people need to do something more in this field. And our elders and parents too need to get more involved. Including relatives and friends, who prefer the easy way out of not getting involved or be interested, or feign and pretend they do not know, or have not been told!

This respect for the marriage institution need to be rekindled and nurtured back into being once again — coupled with our true values, traditions, customs and heritages! Not forgetting honesty, loyalty, sincerity, genuineness and care and feelings for each other in the marriage institution! And watching the wrong messages and bad consequences that we are passing on to our kids and the future generations.

Definitely marital bliss needs to be looked into — and domestic violence has to be put a stop to immediately first. People need to be open and talk to each other. If they cannot do it themselves, others caring must step in — before it is too late for everyone!! Allah be with us all — Amin! — Unquote.

This is what I had also said in my article dated August 18, 2010 titled — 'Why Even Long Married Couples Marriages Fail Also!' — Quote — Have you wondered on this new phenomenon nowadays? Increasing number of married couples — some married as long as thirty years and plus — are going in for separation and divorces — and it can all be summed up under one line — Lack of Care and Communication Syndromes!

Apart from the marriages of couples under thirties that fail at an average of 33 per cent in their first two years of marriage — a pattern that can be found in many countries of the world — and increasing — and including the rising economies like in India, China and Brazil and even the Arab countries of the Middle East — and particularly now in the GCC countries. In actual fact, the latter has an increasingly alarming rate of divorces among the younger generation — stretching from even 1 day to 3 months duration in the first two years of marriage as being the norm rather than the exception!

At an age that couples should be together to enjoy their long life together — and their grandchildren — many of the older couples are seeking separation and divorces like going in for hot crispy cakes! ... Bottom line — it is not a question of being who is right or wrong — or winning in an argument! But in many cases of more than one — and more importantly nowadays — it is a simple case of what can lead to bigger more explosive and damaging things in life — some really unnecessary, uncalled for, unwarranted and unwanted.

Especially for a couple married so long! Talking of separations and of divorces too! Especially in this now difficult and hard times in our lives now — when even the retired and pension salaries are no longer guaranteed or even safe! Money is the root of all evils — as they say! Or hungry stomachs! — Unquote.

For us Muslims especially — the coming Holy Month of Ramadhan is the month of compassion, kindness, caring, touch and feelings! Charity begins at home — let us all try extra hard — at least for the sake of our children (and grandchildren) — and for being good Believers too! As it is said — 'following the steps of the husband' and 'following the steps of our parents — especially the Mothers' is a sure way for opening the doors of the highest heavens for us — and avoidance of the punishment of the grave! Take Care! Happy Ramadhan Greetings!



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Rosie O'Donnell puts laughter at centre of new show

By Jill Serjeant

ROSIE O'Donnell said her upcoming daily talk show on Oprah Winfrey's OWN channel would blend celebrity chat, game shows, news topics and a big dose of her own brand of humour.

As for controversy? Well, maybe.

"We are going to have a controversy segment," the often outspoken O'Donnell deadpanned. "No, we're not!"

"We are not going to look for controversy, but should it be germane to what is happening in the world, I am sure we will bring up current events," she added.

The fledgling OWN cable network said the "The Rosie Show" will make its debut on October 10 at 7pm and run five days a week.

It marks a return to TV talk shows for the actress, comedian and activist who won multiple Emmys for "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" from 1996-2002 and who then had a short-lived



Oprah Winfrey (L) poses with Rosie O'Donnell after the OWN session for "The Rosie Show" at the 2011 Summer Television Critics Association Cable Press Tour in Beverly Hills. — Reuters

and headline-grabbing stint as co-host of "The View".

But if O'Donnell's appearance promoting the show

on Thursday to a gathering of television critics is any indication, it's the comic aspects of the new programme that

may be making headlines.

O'Donnell, 49, said she had turned down offers from mainstream TV networks in

favour of Winfrey's female-oriented lifestyle cable channel, which launched in January but has struggled to

gain large audiences.

"It's a huge stamp of approval that is beyond anyone's dream. It's almost like being knighted," she said of joining OWN.

But asked how she fit in with Winfrey's aspirational programming, she replied.

"I think the reason for my success is that I am not aspirational, but inspirational because people relate to me because I am not Madonna."

"I am more the audience... no-one is at home going 'if I could only be Rosie O'Donnell, an overweight who yells too much,'" she joked.

She said she hoped to mix up the traditional talk show format by having celebrity guests who are happy to have fun on TV, and she put British comedian and actor Russell Brand on top of her wish list.

"I find him fascinating" she said, adding that the "epic gorgeous and fantastic" British singer Adele was high on her ideal guest list, too. — Reuters Life!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

I'm too young to marry: Selena Gomez



SINGER-actress Selena Gomez, who is in a relationship with teen sensation Justin Bieber, says she has no plans to tie the knot as she is just 19.

When asked whether she would marry Bieber, she replied: "No, I'm only 19!"

The two recently went public about their relationship and are said to be happy.

Bridesmaids has opened doors: Emma Stone



AMERICAN actress Emma Stone believes that Bridesmaids has opened the door for more female-led comedy movies.

Stone believes the film, a story about a single woman who finds it hard to come to terms with her best friend's engagement, is a great opportunity to re-adjust how studios look at women-oriented projects.

"I just think it's probably any woman that's been a part of comedies in terms of writing or producing or acting in them would say that it's so nice when that happens just because for a little while I think everyone at studios, their minds always expand a little bit," contactmusic.com quoted the 22-year-old as saying.

Von Teese proud of her debut perfume



AMERICAN actress Dita Von Teese says she is proud of her debut perfume, which would have a wide appeal.

The burlesque dancer decided to create a signature scent after her boyfriend's mother started wearing the one she had worn all her life, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"My signature fragrance that I had been wearing since I was 14 was Quelques Fleurs, and I had to stop wearing it because my boyfriend's mother started wearing it. So that was a perfect time to develop my own fragrance," she said.

"It's a fragrance for everyone, and I'm really proud of the level of sophistication we reached — both with the packaging and the fragrance," she added.

Poorna Jagannathan new face of a jewellery brand



ACTRESS Poorna Jagannathan, one who played a journalist in the hit comedy *Delhi Belly*, has been named the brand ambassador for jewellery brand Bracialetto.

"I'm excited to be associated with a finely crafted brand like Bracialetto. I love its uniqueness and that it

can be tailored to suit your personality," said Poorna, who recently shot an ad campaign for the brand.

Bracialetto provides a wide range of international jewellery charms and Murano glass beads. The brand comprises a wide range of bracelets, neck pieces, rings and earrings all made of 92.5 sterling silver and handmade Murano beads.

Women are dominating pop charts: Rihanna

SINGER Rihanna is excited to see so many successful women dominating the pop charts, saying artists like Katy Perry are bringing a "breath of fresh air" to the music industry.

"There's a pack. It's me, (Lady) Gaga, Katy Perry, Beyonce... who else? Kesha for sure. Women are definitely dominating music right now, and that's because we are competitive beings. I feel like music hasn't been this exciting in a while," contactmusic.com quoted the 23-year-old as saying. However Rihanna is particularly enamoured with "I Kissed A Girl" hitmaker Perry and Lady Gaga.

"All my friends are guys, to be completely honest. But when I met her, it was such a breath of fresh air. I just couldn't believe this chick had no edit button... Katy and Lady Gaga came out of the gate exactly the way they think, the way they wanna dress, the way they wanna speak," she added.



Lohan settles legal battle with salesman

AN electronics salesman who accused actress Lindsay Lohan of failing to pay an outstanding bill has withdrawn his lawsuit after reaching a settlement.

Stephen Clark claimed he sold a set of speakers to Lohan and helped install audio and video equipment at her California home in June while she was on house arrest for a probation violation.

However, the actress failed to pay up once the work was complete. Clark filed a suit against her in a small claims court, reports dailystar.co.uk. Clark said Lohan settled the debt after two days.

"She paid and I cancelled the small claims file. Lindsay is actually really nice and I think my invoice got mixed up or something... It's all good now!" he told TMZ.com

Beatles barber turns shop into tribute to Fab Four



Weiss looks at Beatles pictures in his hairdressing salon in Buenos Aires. — Reuters

By Eduardo Garcia

BEATLES fan Gerardo Weiss ran a typical Buenos Aires barber shop until he had a dream that the Fab Four dropped in for a haircut.

Seven years later, Weiss has made Beatles-inspired cuts his specialty.

"The dream got etched on my memory," he said at the modest salon, the walls plastered with photos of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr.

"I decided to get rid of the pictures these places usually have and just put up photos of

The Beatles ... so people could see them and ask for their haircuts," he said.

One picture shows Lennon cutting someone's hair, another is of Harrison with curly locks down to his shoulders. It is the stuff of inspiration for Weiss.

"My favourite Beatles' haircut is the one Paul McCartney had in '74, when he was doing the Band on the Run tour ... it was short on the sides and longer at the back," said Weiss, whose eight-year-old son is called Lennon.

"When my wife got pregnant I prayed to God for a son, so I could pay homage to John," he said as *Hey Jude*, with Lennon strumming

on a guitar, played in the background.

It was 40 years ago that the hairdresser first heard a Beatles record, a moment he recalls with almost religious fervour. It was *Love Me Do*, the Beatles' first single, that started his life-long love affair with the British band.

At first, the salon's Beatles-inspired makeover was a little too radical for many locals in the working-class city neighbourhood of Flores.

Weiss said it was a struggle to convince customers a Beatles' haircut is as cool today as it was when the band from Liverpool revolutionised popular music in the 1960s.

But word spread and people from outside Buenos Aires and even abroad began trickling, joining more adventurous locals.



Weiss cuts a customer's hair at his hairdressing salon

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