



Now fires threaten Australia — Page 6

S Sudan votes 98.83pc to secede

SOUTHERN Sudan was well on track to become the world's newest state yesterday after final results of its historic independence referendum showed that 98.83 per cent of its people had voted for secession. The results — displayed at an announcement ceremony in Khartoum — revealed that, out of 3,837,406 valid ballots cast, only 44,888 votes, or 1.17 per cent, favoured the status quo of unity with the north. — See also page 6

Vol. 30, No. 86 • 200 baisas

Tuesday, February 8, 2011/Rabee al Awal 4, 1432 AH

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HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, toured the 'Ancient Treasure Ships Exhibition' in Muscat yesterday. ■ Details on page 2

# Insurance licensing amended

By Mohammed al Shizawi

MUSCAT — Capital Market Authority (CMA) has amended the licensing requirements of insurance companies and agents and gave the corporate bodies a six-month grace period to adjust their positions accordingly.

The decision, issued by CMA Executive Chairman Yahya bin Said al Jabri,

- ◆ Companies, agents given time to reposition
- ◆ All institutions should become legal entity
- ◆ Authorise personnel only after CMA approval

stipulates that any institution wishing to practise the works of insurance has to be a legal entity and that no company or agency may authorise a particular

person prior to obtaining the approval of the CMA.

The decision, issued earlier this month states that the applicants to insur-

ance activities have to submit their applications by filling out the prescribed form and attach the required documents and other information, including the name of insurance agent, its legal form and address, the names of the founders and their nationalities, a statement of the type activities intended to be practised (general insurance, life insurance) and a receipt of payable fees. ■ To page 3

## New transformer stations

MUSCAT — The Tender Board yesterday awarded tenders worth RO 24 million for the following projects; supply of computers for basic education schools (RO 7,343,830); construction of Northern Al Athabab power transformer station (2) and expansion of Al Shahbari and Southern Al Maabela transformer stations (RO 6,932,701); provision of solutions for Internet data and infrastructure for Omantel Internet protocol (RO 4,709,340); expansion of Southern Al Khuwair transformer

station 33/11 KV from 2/20 MVA to 3x20 MVA (RO 1,558,544); renewal of maintenance and support contract and adding maintenance works for Omantel data (RO 927,079); reconstruction of Al Sharah mosque in Sumail (RO 717,349); additional works to raise the capacity of Seeb transformer station from 63 MVA to 125 MVA (RO 702,760); supply and distribution of pesticide to the Agriculture Ministry (RO 599,872); supply, ■ To page 3

## Academic plan for Law College

MUSCAT — The Sultan Qaboos University board yesterday approved the new academic plan for the College of Law.

The plan was submitted to specialised councils at the college and the university, besides a team of international experts who recommended the approval.

The plan was also reviewed by advisory bodies specialised in this sector.

The new plan is being intro-

duced as the college is concentrating on the quality of programmes being offered in Arabic and English with the aim of meeting market requirements to enable graduates to work in public and private sectors and deal with local and international issues.

Yesterday's session was presided over by Dr Rawya bint Saud al Busaidiya, Higher Education Minister and SQU Board Chairperson.

— ONA

## Oman concerned for Egypt

DOHA — The Sultanate has expressed anxiety for the stability of Egypt in the backdrop of rapid incidents taking place in the country. This came in a speech delivered here yesterday by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Issa'ee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, before the 17th Arab Parliamentary Union.

Al Issa'ee said that Oman's concern for Egypt stems from the Sultanate's awareness about the status occupied by Egypt in defining and drawing out the Arab policy and in making

strategic balance in the region due to the country's political, historical and demographical weight, as well as Egypt's important geographical location and its reputation in supporting the Arab cause and safeguarding Arab rights.

Al Issa'ee pointed out that "Egypt is the house of Arabs and the home of their aspirations and its stability imparts security and stability in the Arab world. We hope that Egypt will overcome its crisis and include all in tackling the current developments, that it will

introduce the reform that the people call for."

Al Issa'ee also expressed the hope that the incidents in Tunisia will lead to the restructuring of the state and all that would guarantee the stability of the country.

Meanwhile, Saudi Press Agency said that Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, met in Riyadh yesterday with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al Faisal and that their discussion focused on the situation in Egypt. — ONA

## Job advisory programme

MUSCAT — The Ministry of Manpower will start from next Saturday the implementation of an expanded programme targeting the job seekers by urging them to visit the labour departments across the Sultanate's Governorates and regions for updating their data.

Dr Younis bin Khalfan al Akhzami, Director-General of Planning and Development at the Manpower Ministry, said that this procedure comes with a view to following up the cases of the job seekers who are registered in the national manpower register. The system guarantees the existence of the correct database for job seekers and the opportunities that suit their qualifications.

Dr Al Akhzami also explained that

the programme targets all the job seekers to advise them about procedures for nominating them for the available job opportunities in the Omani labour market whether working for a wage in the private sector establishments or self-employment projects being offered by Sanad Programme.

He stressed the significance of benefiting from job opportunities available at the ministry for employment in the private sector in the various professions and specialties, particularly the technological, technical professions and construction-related jobs, in addition to the individual initiatives and self-employment throughout 'Sanad' Programme that benefited more than 40,000 citizens till now.

■ To page 3



OMAN Daily Observer launched a monthly lifestyle magazine Mazoon in Muscat yesterday. It was released by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. ■ See pages 25, 27

## HRD opportunities

MUSCAT — The Ministry of Civil Service yesterday launched the First Human Resources Conference, which is organised in collaboration with Oman International Trade and Exhibitions (OITE) with participations from all ministries and a number of private colleges, and institutes and establishments.

The three-day exhibition was opened by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. It aims at highlighting the plans and strategies made to develop human resources in

the public sector. Sayyid Khalid said that the exhibition is a real opportunity for interaction among the different units in the government interested in administrative training, as well as establishments that provide these services to meet the needs of the government units and review the programmes offered by different training institutions and centres.

The exhibition is also a good opportunity for Omani citizens to review the high level of training in the public sector. — ONA, Picture on P4

### Stranger

IT was difficult for me to adapt to the situation, as was watching my family wondering.



■ Details on page 28

### Why ignore?

THE father of junior has now got a phone with high functionalities like Internet, Bluetooth and touch pad.



■ Details on page 26

## Scrumptious cuisine

MUSCAT — The 10-day Oman Food Festival, one of the delicious additions to this year's Muscat Fest, will showcase sumptuous French delicacies vowing to take the

visitors by their heart today at the Qurum Natural Park.

Chefs at the Al Bustan InterContinental Muscat are all set for a delicious treat as part of the fest. ■ See page 4

### Prayer Timings Muscat

Dhuhr	12.26 pm
Asr	03.39 pm
Maghrib	06.03 pm
Isha	07.14 pm
Fajr	05.28 am

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Muscat Festival

The Cultural Committee of Muscat Festival 2011 is pleased to invite the public to

**A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA**  
featuring the movie  
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by  
**Andrei Tarkovsky**  
and film criticism by  
Abdullah Habib.

City Cinema Shatti  
Wednesday,  
9 February 2011  
7:30 pm





## Fahd tours Ancient Treasure Ships exhibition

MUSCAT — His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, yesterday toured the "Ancient Treasure Ships Exhibition — from China to the Arabian Peninsula and the Omani ancient voyage". The exhibition is organised by National Geographic in co-operation with the Foreign Ministry.

HH Sayyid Fahd was received by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry and a number of exhibition officials and supervisors. HH Sayyid Fahd listened to a detailed explanation about the exhibition which embodies the deep-rooted Arab-Chinese relations and the Omani role in enriching cultural contact.

The exhibition includes archaeologi-

cal objects that date back to the 9th and the 16th Century AD and the 3rd Century AD. The exhibition has dedicated a division for information about the *Jewel of Muscat* sailboat that imitates the 19th century ships. The *Jewel of Muscat* was built in Muscat and sailed early last year to Singapore passing through several historical Asian ports. The exhibition also features historical voyages made by the famous Chinese Sailor Chan Kan to the Arab region and Oman.

The exhibition is a good opportunity document voyages made by ancient Omani sailors and Oman's cultural contact with peoples belonging to other civilisations. It also underscores maritime commercial activities between the East and the West.

HH Sayyid Fahd hailed the efforts of the Omani youths who operated the epic voyage last year on board the *Jewel of Muscat* using simple traditional navigation tools like sails and the stars. He also thanked the exhibition organisers.

At the conclusion of the visit, HH Sayyid Fahd signed the Visitors Book, saying that "Oman's glorious present is attached with its deep-rooted past".

The Sultanate, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, lives one of its most prominent stages in its history that is rich in achievements and modernisation, while at the same time preserving its heritage and authenticity. This exhibition is a good opportunity for highlighting historical relations between Oman and China. — ONA

— Pictures by ONA and Mohamed al Rashdi

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## Al Maamari receives ambassadors of Italy, Senegal and B'desh

MUSCAT — Gen Ali bin Majid al Maamari, Royal Office Minister received in his office here yesterday Paolo Dionisi, Ambassador of Republic of Italy to the Sultanate (pictured).

During the meeting, bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and means of promoting them were discussed to achieve joint interests of the Sultanate and Italy, in addition to touching on a number of issues of common concern.

The Royal Office Minister also received Nurul Alam Chowdhury, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Sultanate.



During the meeting, cordial conversations were exchanged, in addition to reviewing bilateral relations binding the Sultanate with the friendly People's Republic of Bangladesh and means of enhancing them in all fields to achieve joint interests of both sides.

Al Maamari also received Al Shaikh al Tijani, Ambassador of Senegal to the Sultanate. During the meeting, bilateral relations binding the Sultanate and the friendly Republic of Senegal were reviewed and a number of issues of common concern were discussed.

— ONA

## Qatari minister leaves

MUSCAT — Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al Kuwari, Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage of Qatar left here yesterday after an official visit to the Sultanate.

During the visit, the Qatari minister held talks with Omani senior officials concerning a

number of issues in relation with the bilateral co-operation between the two brotherly countries in various circles, particularly the cultural co-operation and the ways of boosting and activating it. The guest was seen off by officials from Heritage and Culture Ministry. — ONA



## Talk Oman lecture in Tokyo focuses on geo-tourism

TOKYO — A lecture on "Experiencing Geo-Tourism in Oman" by Masahiro Aoki, Director Emeritus, Geological Museum of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, was held here as part of "Talk Oman", organised jointly by the Ministry of Information and the embassy of Oman in Tokyo.

Aoki stated: "It all starts with curiosity — so irresistible the force of wanting to know more of anything that interests you, you can carry on the pursuit which is the very driving force of living your life".

He defined geo-tourism as a means of satisfying such

curiosity through the joy of interacting with the Planet Earth.

Oman offers a wide variety of unanswered geological questions. The more you try to learn about the surface as well as sub-terrain layers, about the rocks and stones hidden and discovered in the layers, the deeper and wider you will go into the world of geology, he says.

In his Power Point presentation, this was explained in photographs, maps, diagrams and charts of the unique characteristics of Oman from the geological perspective.

Uniquely in Oman, by making a field trip along the Al Batinah coast, one can see and

experience the marine crust/mantle transition in horizontal shears, the spectacular "air-tube" rock formation caused by erupting magma into the cold ocean water and beautifully striped cleavage section of rocks and stones.

Aoki announced that a special Oman Geological Exhibition will be held at his museum next April.

In February 2010, Aoki led a group of five Japanese including his colleagues at the AIST, to visit Oman for the treasure-trove of geo-tourism in a country Aoki dubs as "a perfect textbook for geology and geological samples".

— ONA

## 7th Gulf Guides camp concludes

NAKHAL — Activities of the 7th Gulf Guides Camp were concluded at the College of Technology in Al Musa'nah today in a ceremony held under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Abdullah al Kindi, Wali of Rustaq. The activities of the camp continued for one week.

At the beginning of the ceremony, the Deputy Director General of the Camp, Ibtisam bint Abdullah bin Sakhr al A'mri, Director of Guides Department at the Directorate-General of Scouts and Guides gave a speech in which she said that 250 guides representing the GCC states took part in the 7th Gulf Guides Camp.

She added that the Education Ministry, represented by the Directorate-General of Scouts and Guides was keen to form different committees and remove all difficulties to make the camp successful.

Various programmes were presented, in addition to screening a documentary highlighting the activities of the camp. Then, wooden badges were conferred on guide commanders.

At the end of the ceremony, the chief guest honoured governmental and national establishments and departments that contributed in the success of the camp's activities.

— ONA

## Defence ties with Iran reviewed

MUSCAT — Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs received at Mu'askar Bait al Falaj here yesterday Brigadier Mustafa Salami, Assistant Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces for Operations and Head of the Iranian delegation taking part in meetings of the Omani-Iranian Joint Military Friendship Committee who is currently visiting the Sultanate.

During the meeting, rela-

tions were reviewed and a number of issues of common concern were discussed.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning and Head of the Omani side at the Omani-Iranian Joint Military Friendship Committee and from the Iranian side by the Iranian Ambassador to the Sultanate.

Meanwhile, Lt Gen Malik bin Sulaiman al Maamari, Inspector-General of Police

and Customs also received at the General Command of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) in Al Qurum yesterday Brigadier Mustafa Salami and his delegation.

The meeting discussed fields of the joint co-operation between the two countries and means of enhancing them, especially matters relevant to coastguard and customs.

The meeting was attended by a number of SAF and ROP senior officers. — ONA

## RO 24m tenders awarded

From page 1

supply, installation testing and operation of transmitters for Omantel between Thumrait and Al Maabela (RO 386,099); additional works in the construction of water supply network for Ras al Hadd Airport (RO 115,771); additional works in the construction of Wadi Sa'a transformer station, 132/33 kv (RO 78,828); and additional works in developing commercial ar-

eas from Al Tarkhees roundabout to Al Sharia roundabout in Al Buraimi (RO 65,493).

The Board also opened bids for the following tenders. Tender No335/2010 for supply of central equipment for the development of HRD system at the Civil Service Ministry; Tender No 345/2010 for the development of Saham market in the Al Batinah Region; Tender No 361/2010 for insurance on Oman Dry Dock company property; Tender No

362/2010 for supply, installation and operation of maintenance towers for Oman Dry Dock company; Tender No 375/2010 for the construction of a building for Oman Electricity Transmission company in Southern Al Muwailah in Seeb; Tender No 376/2010 for supply of pipes for Oman Oil Refineries and Petrochemicals Company; and Tender No 379/2010 for the construction of Al Qalea Health Centre in Ibbri. — ONA

## Insurance licensing re-regulated

From page 1

The Authority shall issue its approval to the license after completing the documents and data referred to in the preceding article. The applicant should complete all legal and technical procedures in a period not exceeding three months from the date of approval.

The resolution provided in Article 6 that the applicant after obtaining initial approval must fill out the form prepared for this and attach the following documents:

1 - a document that states that the founders and members of senior management are free of provisions of bankruptcy, a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or dishonesty or crimes stipulated in the laws of business, trade, and capital market finance, and insurance during the five years preceding the submission of the application unless he has been rehabilitated.

2 - A Copy of the certificate of registration in the Commercial Register and a form of the authorised signatories and a copy of the certificate of enrollment to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

3 - A detailed statement of the staff, and to provide training certificate in any insurance company for a period not less than one hundred hours, provided that the training includes the activities of insurance required.

4 - A copy of the agree-

ment between him and the company.

5 - A copy of an insurance policy to cover the insurance agent's professional errors towards the company and to determine its values according to the agreement concluded between them, to remain valid for the duration of the license.

6 - a receipt of payment of the prescribed fees.

The Agreement between the insurance agent and company

The resolution explained that the agreement between the insurance agent and the company should include the rights and obligations of each party, particularly the following:

1 - type of activity which may be exercised on behalf of the insurance agent for the company.

2 - Tasks that must be performed by the insurance agent as follows:

- introducing the applicant to the services offered by the company.

B - Receiving the insurance applications or requests for renewal of insurance policies, or adding amendment or cancelling them.

C - Receiving insurance premiums and contributions.

D - Answering the questions of the applicant or the insured person or the beneficiary.

— Translated by Mai al Abria

## Oman's traditional arts in focus at Muscat Festival



— Pictures by Fadel al Hamdani

## Job seekers advisory programme from Sat

From page 1

Dr Al Akhzami said that there are opportunities in the programme of the national employment training projects as this programme will connect the job seeker with one of the establishments that had previously expressed its desire to employ him/her at the end of the training programme on the profession or speciality.

He noted that this measure will continue for about one month. — ONA

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## GCC meet to enhance nurse's role in public health under way

By Maryam Khalfan

MUSCAT — The 9th GCC nursing symposium aimed at exploring the current regional and international trends in public health nursing and to draft recommendations for future development plans to the GCC Executive Board of Health Ministers (EBMoH) was opened at the Crown Plaza Hotel yesterday.

Rotationally conducted every two years in one of the GCC states, this year's symposium is being held under the theme: Enhancing Nurse's Role in Public Health, with specific focus on addressing four key aspects in advancement of the nursing sector in the region.

Such areas of focus include the nursing role in public health in the GCC states, requirements of a positive working environment in public health nursing, challenges facing public health nursing and suggested solutions and

the trends and future plans in public health nursing.

Dr Ali bin Jaffer, Adviser for Health Affairs and supervisor of the Directorate-General of Health Services presided at the launch of the event.

The two-day event is designed at presenting current public health nursing models and practices in the GCC countries and to analyse international trends and approaches to public health nursing practices.

It is also intended at identifying and discussing the challenges facing public health nursing practice in the GCC countries and to propose the requirements of a positive working environment in public health nursing practice, said Majid bin Rashid al Maqbali, Director of Nursing and Midwifery Affairs, MoH, in a briefing to the *Observer*.

"I am highly optimistic that the symposium will result in fruitful recommendations and have an impact on public

health. It will also contribute to advancement of the healthcare services to reach out to the community within their homes and to enable the entire members of the family to benefit from such healthcare services in a holistic approach".

The meet will also lead to a road map to promote public health nursing in the GCC countries in aspects related to policies and procedures, standards of identification and to enhance the nursing curricula in the region. It will also enable nurses to explore their career path in this task and to further advance through career development ladder, he remarked.

On conclusion of the symposium, a technical committee comprising of representatives of the GCC states, international agencies and prominent consultants will be held to review and evaluate the recommendations prior to submission to the executive board. The final draft of the recommenda-

tion will then be submitted to the executive board in Saudi Arabia for approval, said Al Maqbali, who is also chairman of the organising committee.

Dr Fariba al Darazi, Regional Adviser for Nursing and Allied Health, World Health

Organisation who is tasked to discuss about the regional perspective on enhancing the role of nursing in primary healthcare said: It is a very timely theme of discussion in the GCC especially that the nurses are the 1st point of contact with the community and constitute of the largest component of the healthcare work force.

The move in advancement of the nursing approach to community level is a significant step in promoting health and to provide curative services to populations within their homes in order to address the non-communicable diseases, which is increasingly evident in the region".

Moreover, due to the in-

creasing life expectancy and the improved standards of living especially in the GCC countries, the rate of elderly will also rise, mandating the need for community based healthcare approach, said the official.

In 2008, a regional committee resolution comprising of 22 ministers of health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO) on promoting nursing and midwifery in the region framed a strategy to develop community (family) health nursing in the countries of the region, she stated.

The strategy is aimed at establishing educational programmes that will prepare nurses in this field. It is also designed at developing the structure within the healthcare system particularly in primary healthcare services to enable nursing graduates in this field to handle the task in an expansive form in primary and community healthcare services, she said.

About 200 officials from international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), prominent consultants and the nursing segments providing nursing education, services and healthcare activities are actively participating in the event.

Also on agenda of programmes included the Nusaiba bint Ka'ab Awards giving ceremony to honour the most distinguished and excellent performers from the fields of nursing education and nursing services sectors.

The award will be presented to two persons from the GCC states among which the Sultanate's award was given to Sharifa bint Saif al Jabria, Adviser, Office of Health Affairs Under-Secretary and President of Oman Nursing and Midwifery Council, for her role in the services sector. Likewise, Raya bint Said Khalfan al Habsiya was honoured for her role in the education of the nursing sector.

## Work on Al Madina's Barka distribution centre begins

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Al Madina Logistics Services, the Oman-based 3PL has awarded the main contract for the construction of its state-of-the-art distribution centre at Barka to Hispanica al Shanfari.

The project is located at Rumais, next to the Muscat Container Depot — the country's first inland port.

Jamal al Ojaili, Chairman of Al Madina Logistics, said the project is part of the company's strategy to develop and manage professional warehouses and distribution centres. Al Madina is very keen to continue to elevate logistics standards to superior levels and be at par with international standards, he stated.

"The proposed facility will be built according to world-class standards where special attention is being put to the flooring specifications, type of primers, paints (food grade), application of fully electric (dry cell) material handling equipment,

pharmaceutical heating ventilation and air-conditioning standards, among other global standards," said AMLS CEO Mahmood Sakhi al Balushi. He also added that the DC chambers would cater to all types of goods and cooling would reach up to -25 degrees.

"It is a state-of-the-art facility that would add value to the logistics industry in Oman," said Sanjeeve S T, Senior Manager of AMLS for supply chain.

"During the design stage we worked with a world-leading consulting engineering firm using 3D simulation tools to ensure the facility delivers our objectives by ensuring it meets operational requirements with utmost importance of operating a sustainable low-energy facility," Sanjeeve added.

The agreements were signed by Jamal al Ojaili in the presence of Abdullah Albalushi, Board Member, Mahmood Albalushi, CEO, Sanjeeve, Senior Manager, and representatives of the contractors.



THE Ministry of Civil Service yesterday launched the First Human Resources Conference, which is organised in collaboration with Oman International Trade and Exhibitions (OITE) with participations from all ministries and a number of private colleges, institutes and establishments. The three-day exhibition was opened by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers.



MUSCAT — The mobile electronic unit allocated for installing the electronic system at the IDs to ensure the presence of the voter during the election process of Majlis Ash'ura 7th term yesterday visited the office of Muscat Governor to install the system at the IDs of the staff. — ONA

## GUtech holds presentation on natural gypsum rocks in Oman

By Ali Ahmed al Riyami

MUSCAT — An insightful public presentation, given by Professor Dr Bas den Brok, Head of Dept, Applied Geosciences, German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), titled 'Natural gypsum in rocks in Oman: beautiful and dangerous', was delivered at the university's Airport Campus auditorium, yesterday.

Professor Dr Burkhard Rauhut, GUtech's Rector, introduced the distinguished Professor Bas den Brok, who originally hails from the Netherlands, is a specialist in structural geology and tectonics and who has lectured at Utrecht University, the University of Mainz and ETH Zurich before joining GUtech at the beginning of 2010.

Professor Bas highlighted some of the problems associated with natural gypsum, which, as he had pointed out, is prevalent amongst the mountain rock formations in the Dhofar region, but not so much here in the capital area.

Gypsum is commonly used as an additive in cement preparation and as a plaster cast used to help in the heal-



ing process of broken bones. However, it is its reaction to water that makes it an unusual and potentially dangerous property.

As he explained, and with samples shown to audience members, glittering crystals of natural gypsum occur in some of the rock formations here in Muscat. It must be noted, however, that these gypsum crystals pose what are considered to be geotechnical threats to the environment.

He continued by noting that an example of this is when the gypsum crystals are easily dissolved during rains, developing large holes, fissures and crevices. These, he added, become visible in the walls of roads that are cut through

mountains, which then result in parts of the wall becoming unstable and allowing rocks to easily collapse.

Further, when the rainfall stops water evaporates and new gypsum crystals are formed inside the rock and the whole process repeats itself, said Professor Bas. The crystals work their way through the rock causing clear vein patterns and layer formations, he noted.

In comments given to members of the press corps prior to the lecture, Professor Bas said, these dangers are well-known to road builders, but it is dangerous, especially for children, to venture out into these areas.

## BankDhofar gesture to Al Noor Association

MUSCAT — BankDhofar has donated life changing devices and equipment to Al Noor Association for the Blind in an effort to assist and enhance the day to day lives of its members.

The Al Noor association praised BankDhofar for its patronage and expressed deep appreciation for the Bank's continuous support to the association that has enabled it to provide educational equipment such Braille machines, typewriters and writing pads, in addition to watches, enabling the visually challenged to better equip and sustain themselves the society.

"We are pleased to support those who are dedicated to serving the community. Through the bank's donation, the inability to see will not prevent the blind from progress and achieving their goals," said Abdul Hakeem Omar al Ojaili, General Manager, Corporate Services, BankDhofar.

"This donation is part of BankDhofar's continuous commitment to help individuals with special needs in the community, with the aim of improving the living conditions."

Al Noor Association makes an awareness of the needs of the visually impaired, and provides support services in areas of social and vocational development, enabling them to live normal lives in the community.



## French gastronome's delight at Qurum Park today

By Kabeer Yousuf

MUSCAT — The 10-day Oman Food Festival, one of the delicious additions to this year's Muscat Fest, will showcase sumptuous French delicacies wowing to take the visitors by their heart at the Qurum Natural Park today.

Chefs at the Al Bustan InterContinental Muscat are all set for a delicious treat as part of the fest.

Jean Luc, Executive Chef at the Al Bustan InterContinental Muscat, said: "The organisers of the Food Fest deserve a real 'hats off' for emerging with such an innovative concept like the Food Festival. We, at Al Bustan InterContinental, are all excited to let our patrons taste our famous French menu in a different ambience and in a special setting".

Lavish French buffet comprising 12 cold appetisers/salads, variety of French soups, 8 hot items, and to top it all, a range of deserts like French chocolate mousse will be the highlight of today's



French cuisine.

He said an array of renowned French delicacies such as Tarte tatin, Canard and Trou Normand will be some of the attractions of today's special gastronome's delight.

Organised by the Muscat Municipality in association with Oman Tourism College (OTC) and Oman Chefs' As-

sociation, the area of the Food Fest is divided into two, Authentic Omani Dishes and InterContinental Cuisines.

The Omani Dishes Corner feature traditional Omani cuisine daily from 7 pm to 10 pm, Omani takeaway food from 6 pm to 10 pm, Majli Cafe from 4 pm to 10 pm and show kitchen from 7 pm to 9 pm

every day. Side by side, various hotels participating in this festival of tastes will present international cuisine from a host of countries. What makes the food fest truly Omani is that more than 30 per cent of the ingredients used in the festival are produced in Oman.

The Food Festival will continue with an array of sumptuous Mexican Cuisine by InterContinental Muscat tomorrow, Italian Menu by Grand Hyatt Muscat on Friday, and with ultimate Indian Flavours by Al Nahdha Resort and Spa, on February 12.

Edouard Feghali, Director, Food and Beverages, InterContinental Muscat, said it is going to be a convergence of various Mexican delicacies that will satisfy every single food connoisseurs in the city.

"It is going to be an unusual convergence of a number of Mexican menu specially made by our executive chef. Truly, it's an opportunity to feel the pulse of our customers and well-wishers alike while offering delectable foods".

## Cyprus tourism income up 3.8 pc in 2010

NICOSIA — Tourism revenues in Cyprus rose 3.8 per cent in 2010, official data showed yesterday boosting confidence of an economic recovery in the EU member state.

Revenue for January to December 2010 reached 1.54 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) compared with 1.49 billion euros for 2009.

Income from tourism accounts for nearly 12 per cent of gross domestic product of the holiday island.

It is the first rise in income from tourism since 2007 when tourism yielded 1.85 billion euros, despite December's

severe weather across Europe curtailing arrivals.

In December, tourists spent 40.9 million euros in Cyprus — 4.2 per cent less than the 42.7 million euros they brought in to the Cypriot economy in December 2009.

The recession-hit Irish were the biggest spenders at an average 153.2 euros per day, while the Danes were the most frugal, spending just 30.4 euros.

The number of holidaymakers to Cyprus hit a high of 2.69 million in 2001, spending a record 2.17 billion euros.


The government predicts improved

tourism income will help the economy to grow by around 1.5 per cent in 2011 after an unprecedented year-long recession in 2009.

GDP growth figures for 2010 are expected to be close to 0.8 per cent after the economy shrank by 1.7 per cent in 2009.

Cyprus is trying to reduce a fiscal deficit that last year was almost double the European Union's permitted ceiling of three per cent.

The government has raised taxes and cut spending in an effort to bring the deficit below four percent this year as mandated by Brussels. — AFP



### MINISTRY OF HOUSING

## Tender Announcement

The Ministry of Housing, Directorate General of Housing, Al Dakhiliyah Region, announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date for Receiving the specifications	Last date to submit offers	Notes
D.S 23/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Yaman	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	PROVIDING ELECTRICITY
D.S 24/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al A'aqil	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 25/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Shafa'a	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 26/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Shafa'a	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 27/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Shafa'a	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 28/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al A'aqil	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 29/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Haliow	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 30/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al A'aqil	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 31/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Nizar	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 32/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Kharmah	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 33/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Qariteen	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	
D.S 34/2011	Construction of a housing unit at Izki - Al Dasir	22.2.2011	01.03.2011	

**First:** The Establishment and companies specialized in such works and interested to participate in the above mentioned tender should report to the Housing Directorate, Social Housing Department, Sumail, to receive the tender specifications during the official working hours from 8 am to 12 noon and according to the above announcement.

**Second:** Each tender should be accompanied with provisional insurance in the form of approved cheque by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate at the rate of 1% of the tender value valid for 90 days from the date of submission of the tenders, addressed to Director, Sub-branch Tenders Committee, Directorate General of Housing, Al Dakhiliyah Region. Any tender which does not fulfill the provision insurance, shall be rejected.

**Third:** Tenders should be submitted in closed and sealed envelopes with red wax, addressed to Director, Sub-branch Tenders Committee, Directorate General of Housing, Al Dakhiliyah Region. The name and number of the tender should be written on the external side of the envelope. The name of the tenderer or what refers to him should not be written.

**Fourth:** The Tenders should be deposited in the tender box in the building of the Directorate, Sumail before 10 am from the date fixed for the submission of the tenders.

**Fifth:** The Committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tenders.

[www.housing.gov.om](http://www.housing.gov.om)



## Sailing Arabia leaves Ras al Khaimah on 4th leg

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — A cool breeze greeted the sailors in Al Hamra Marina as they prepared for an early departure from Ras al Khaimah.

The 270 kilometre route will take the crews past the breathtaking and picturesque mountains which form the northernmost point of Oman that lines the Straits of Hormuz, the gateway to the Gulf.

With a fresh wind following the fleet across the start-line, the race officer set a downwind start that saw the teams hoist their spinnakers for a fast start in 10 knots of wind.

Team New Caledonia, Ras al Khaimah and Commercial-bank Group crossed at exactly the same time with Renais-



sance and the Royal Navy of Oman soon after.

The fleet immediately spread out as they tried to get slightly ahead of each other, knowing that there may only be minutes between them when they finish at the luxury resort of Zighy Bay, near Dibba.

All the crews were full of praise for their hosts in Ras al Khaimah and were looking forward to getting to Omani soil and the prospect of a luxury stopover, Ahmed al Maamari, crew on *Renaissance* in particular, "Al Hamra Marina has all the facilities we needed and the staff were very professional."

"They were very supportive of Sailing Arabia-The Tour and I think they will have a lot more yacht races from there in the future. Next stop is Six

Senses Zighy Bay which I am told is very beautiful and is in a nice bay for sailing — we are all looking forward to seeing it and enjoying their hospitality."

The fleet is expected to take around 10-12 hours to reach Zighy Bay but will first have to navigate the Straits of Hormuz. Along the way they will have to deal with shipping going in and out, much of it supertankers and very large commercial boats, but also strong currents and shifting winds.

Many of the Omani sailors have experience going through the Straits after competing in the annual Dubai-Muscat race so they will be hoping for an advantage to get ahead of the dominating French sailors on *New Caledonia*.

## Shahrukh Khan concert put off

MUSCAT — Muscat Municipality and Alive Entertainment have announced the postponement of the Temptation Reloaded 2011 Tour Concert featuring the award-winning Bollywood actor-producer Shahrukh Khan.

Slated to be held on February 17, the deferment has been attributed to "delayed filming commitments". "The concert is now postponed until March and the final date will be confirmed soon," Muscat Municipality said in a statement.

### NOTICE



This is to inform that Mr. Baburaj T S, Indian national with Passport No. G 9193799, who has been working as HVAC Engineer is no longer with us. If anyone has any claims against him, please get in touch with the below stated contact within next three days of this advertisement. Any claims later to the said date will not be entertained.

**Mr. Khalid Saleh,**  
Baabood LLC - Salalah Office, Ph: 2329 5265; Fax: 2329 2140  
[khalid@baabood.com](mailto:khalid@baabood.com)

## Ibra College Career Fair on Feb 13



By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Ibra College of Technology (ICT) will conduct its annual Career Fair on February 13 and 14 at the college premises.

This is a major opportunity for fresh Omani faces to find their entry into the workforce and begin to build a meaningful and productive work life.

The college is hoping to continue its tradition of hugely successful job fairs by welcoming representatives from 25 organisations spanning a wide range of economic sectors such as petroleum development, engineering, IT, banking and finance and communications.

This is part of ICT's continued effort to provide employment introductions and opportunities to current students and former graduates alike.

"We hope our 2011 career fair will be as successful as ever for students and graduates by helping them to find careers that optimise their newly acquired skill set," said Asst Dean for Students Affairs Fatima Nasser al Harthya (pictured).

"And we believe potential employers will find our graduates to be mature, proficient and a good match for the needs of Omani industries."

## Nabs make good progress on Ocean Rowing boat

MUSCAT — Nabs al Busaidy and the crew of *Britannia III* ocean rowing boat have made good progress over the weekend.

However, with 32 nautical miles covered in 12 hours *Britannia III* are aware they need to step up their game in order to break the mid-Atlantic speed record.

Although well ahead of the current record holder La Mondiale, *Britannia III* covered approximately 50nm less than their competition in the 12 hours overnight last night. Ideally, *Britannia III* needs to be covering between 80 and 100nm per 24 hours.

There are four ocean rowing boats competing for the record.

*Britannia III* is one of three Sweep rowing boats currently in the Atlantic and there is one Sculling boat.

Sculling generally refers to a method of using oars to propel watercraft in which the oar or oars touch the water on both the port and starboard sides of the craft, or over the stern. By extension, the oars themselves are also often referred to as sculls when used in this manner, and the boat itself may be referred to as a scull.

Sweep or sweep-oar rowing is a type of rowing when a rower has one oar, usually held with both hands. As each rower has only one oar, the rowers have to be paired so that there is an oar on each side of the boat.



This is in contrast to sculling when a rower has two oars, one in each hand. In the UK the term is less used as the

term rowing generally refers to sweep oar.

While sculling is a fully symmetrical movement (with exception of the handle overlap), sweep oar rowing is slightly asymmetrical and many rowers strongly prefer one side to the other.

The average speed of a boat increases with the crew size and sculling boats are significantly faster than the equivalent sweep boats.

Nabs suffered from sea sickness at the start of his ocean row but is now recovered and settling into his routine.

He wishes everyone well, especially Maria and his family, and is enjoying reading all the messages on the website.

## NHI launches new programmes in air fares and ticketing



By Bader al Kiyumi

MUSCAT — The Gulf School at National Hospitality Institute (NHI), has launched here yesterday a new partnership with Virgin Atlantic to offer the latest training programmes in Air Fares and Ticketing.

These new programmes offering the students a range of study options and a more cost effective entry into the world's largest employer in the travel agency industry.

The school at NHI has been at the forefront of development in this area for over 15 years and many of their alumni can be found in the local travel industry here in Oman and further in the Gulf region.

The programme is available at two levels.

VA-1 covers all the essentials of destination coding and fare construction. Meanwhile, the advanced course, VA-2 is designed to build to provide training in more complex fare construction involving a range of travel options.

NHI is designed to train Omani youth with promising career prospects in the booming hotel and travel industry and retail sectors across the region. Through theory, practical and internships, the institute trains and qualifies Omanis to work and be part of the fast developing tourism sector.

"Since its inception in 1996, NHI provides professional training in hospitality, catering, hotel management, leisure and travel industries. — Picture by Fadel al Hamdani

## Air India opts for single AI code

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Passengers on the Air India network will no longer have to travel on separate tickets for domestic and international flights.

Air India Limited (formerly NACIL), the merged entity of Air India coded flights (098) and IC coded flights (058), is now moving to a single code AI (098) by migrating to Passenger Service System (PSS) provided by SITA effective from February 12, 2011.

This would ensure a number of additional facilities which would make the passenger's journey enjoyable, hassle-free and seamless travel, the airline said in a statement.

Effective February 12, IC coded flights from Muscat would change as follows:

IC 923/924 Chennai-Muscat-Chennai will change to AI 907/908; IC 885/886 Delhi-Muscat-Delhi will change to AI 973/974; IC 977/978 Bangalore-Hyderabad-Muscat-Hyderabad-Bangalore will change to AI 977/978; and IC 685/686 Ahmedabad-Mumbai-Muscat-Mumbai-Ahmedabad will change to AI 985/986.

All passengers holding 058 documents with IC coded flight numbers will be accepted for boarding on the corresponding AI coded flights.

It is not mandatory to have the 058 document to be reissued in to 098 documents, the statement added.

If the passenger desires to make a change in the reservation, he or she will have to contact the nearest Air India Offices or Call Centres for making the necessary changes to reservation and e-tickets.

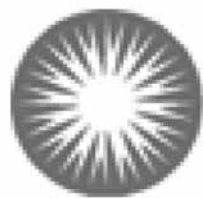
The new system is also expected to aid Air-India's turnaround in joining the Star Alliance, which has 26 carriers as members, will make AI part of a network that operates around 19,500 flights every day from as many as 1,071 airports in 171 countries.

## PUBLIC AUCTION OF USED VEHICLES

National Bank of Oman (NBO) will auction its fleet of used vehicles (as per the list below) on an "as-is where-is basis" based on the following terms and conditions:

- Interested Bidders can VIEW the used vehicles behind Centrepoint Mall, next to Muscat Securities Market (MSM), from today onwards, between 8am until 6pm only.
- All Vehicles will have a minimum stipulated bid value which will be displayed on the respective vehicles.
- The successful Bidder will have to pay a non-refundable amount of R.O. 200 as down payment. The balance amount to be settled within a week.
- The successful Bidder to take possession of the vehicle within a week, after completing all the necessary transfer formalities. Thereafter, the Bank will not resume any liability towards the sold vehicle.
- All successful Bidders to produce a copy of their valid Identification (ID)/Labour Card.
- No refund or claim will be entertained after the Auction.
- The Auction will be carried out on Thursday 10th February, 2011, from 4pm until 6pm, at the parking area, behind Centrepoint Mall, next to MSM.
- For more information, you may please contact:  
**Mr. Khalil Al-Balushi, on Tel: 24778731, GSM: 99339443**  
email: [KhalilB@nbo.co.om](mailto:KhalilB@nbo.co.om).

No	Name of Vehicle	Vehicle No.	Model
1	Land Cruiser - Toyota	5098 DK	1998
2	Dyna Truck - Toyota	8394 HK	1998
3	Land Cruiser - Toyota	9514 HK	1998
4	Camry - Toyota	1780 BB	2000
5	Avalon - Toyota	81348 B	2001
6	Ford	459 HW	2001
7	Nissan Pathfinder	9647 WK	2001
8	Prado - Toyota	2825 DK	2001
9	Nissan Pathfinder	8110 HK	2001
10	Mitsubishi Pajero	8108 HK	2001
11	Lexus ES 300	4303 BH	2002
12	Lexus ES 300	5933 BB	2002
13	Prado - Toyota	5125 DS	2002
14	Isuzu	4951 DS	2002
15	Prado - Toyota	5127 DS	2002
16	Nissan Pathfinder	8116 MK	2002
17	BMW 740	2338 R	2007
18	Jaguar	9095 HY	2007



## Dhofar Power Company S.A.O.G

201, Muscat House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 23<sup>rd</sup> July Street,  
P.O.Box: 2609, P.C.: 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman  
Phone: 23232523; Fax: 23201183  
E-mail: [purchase@dpcoman.com](mailto:purchase@dpcoman.com)

### INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference- DPC/Tender/2011/04

Dhofar Power Company S.A.O.G (DPC) invites reputable Contractors for carrying out "Lot- 01B /2011 - Utility Network Extension (UNE) Works", in Dhofar Region.

The tenderers shall be registered electrical contractors with DCRP-Oman (minimum C-Grade) and should have performed similar UNE Jobs in Sultanate of Oman.

The tender documents detailing the scope of work can be obtained from DPC's office by paying an amount of RO. 100/- at the address provided above.

The schedule for the tendering process is as below:

- Last date for issue of tender documents : 21st February 2011
- Last date for submission of Proposals : 28th February 2011

Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (2% of the quoted bid price) shall only be considered for evaluation.

Signed  
Director (Corporate Services)



## Iran oil pipeline rupture causes Gulf coast spill

TEHRAN — An ageing oil pipeline has ruptured in southern Iran contaminating vast patches of the coast and farmland near the town of Deylam on the Gulf, the official Irna news agency reported yesterday.

"Over 20 km of Deylam coast and 500 hectares of farmland have been contaminated by the oil spill," said Behrouz Atabakzadeh, the environmental protection chief in Bushehr province.

Atabakzadeh said the breakage in the pipeline between Aghajari and Deylam had happened last week and described the damage caused by the oil spill as "irreversible."

A storm has hampered clean-up operations, a senior environmental official told Mehr news agency. "All equipment is ready to clean up the spill but the work is being slowed down by the storm," Omid Sadighi said. — AFP

## Israel okays settler plans for Jerusalem homes

JERUSALEM — The city council yesterday approved plans for construction of 16 new apartments by a Jewish settlement group in the Shaikh Jarrah district of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, a councillor said.

The move drew an angry response from the Palestinian Authority, for whom settlement construction is one of the bitterest elements of the conflict, and which scuppered the latest round of US-brokered direct peace talks.

Yosef Pepe Alalu, a city councillor with the dovish Meretz party, said the municipality's building and planning committee approved two plans for the building of up to 16 housing units on two separate sites in Shaikh Jarrah.

"There were two plans filed, on both (sites) there are currently small houses" which are owned by Palestinians, he said. One is inhabited, while the other is empty.

"This approval is the first stage," he said. The move still had to be rubber-stamped by an interior ministry committee. "It will be at least a year before we see anything."

A spokesman for the municipality said that the projects in question were "private and not municipal," and that permits were never issued on the basis of the applicant's "religion, colour or creed."

But the Palestinian Authority issued a statement saying the city council's approval of the projects was more evidence of a "continued policy of ethnic cleansing, of uprooting humanity and of the imposition of facts on the ground." — AFP

## Grandchildren visit Tareq Aziz jailed in Iraq

AMMAN — Tareq Aziz, Saddam Hussein's former deputy premier now on death row, received a family visit by his wife and seven of their grandchildren last week, his son Ziad said yesterday.

"My four children, the two children of my sister Zeinab and a daughter of my other sister Maissa visited my father last week, together with my wife and my mother," said Ziad Aziz who lives in Amman with his family.

"My father did not recognise them, having not seen them since 2003. He saw one of my daughters (aged seven) for the first time as she was born during his time in prison," he said.

He said his father, 74, suffered from decreased sight and mobility. "His pleasure had been books and magazines which we used to send him, but he asked us to stop because he can't read any more," said the son. — AFP

## Foreigners now majority of Bahrain's population

MANAMA — The number of foreigners living in Bahrain in 2010 overtook the number of local nationals for the first time, the statistics office announced yesterday.

The office's website said a census carried out in April 2010 indicated that out of Bahrain's 1.234 million inhabitants, about 54 per cent or 666,172 were foreigners, while 568,399, or 46 per cent, were nationals.

At 562,040, Asian nationals made up 84.3 per cent of the foreign residents and 45.5 per cent of the total population of the country. A 2001 census found that Bahrainis, at 405,667 out of 650,604 residents, made up 62.3 per cent of the population. And in 2007, the population was estimated at 1,046,814 people, with 529,446 Bahrainis and 517,368 foreigners. — AFP

## Former Thin Lizzy guitarist Gary Moore, 58, dies

LONDON — Gary Moore, former star of the Irish rock band Thin Lizzy, has died in Spain. The Belfast-born guitarist was 58. "It is with deep sorrow and regret that we have to announce that Gary Moore passed away while on holiday in Spain last night," a message on his official website said on Sunday.

"Our thoughts are with his children, family and friends at this sad time."

According to the *Irish Times* website, Moore was found dead in his hotel room in Estepona in the early hours of Sunday morning. A postmortem was due to be carried out in the nearby city of Malaga, the newspaper added.

A spokeswoman for Britain's Foreign Office in London said: "We are aware (of Moore's death), and we stand ready to provide consular assistance. We are very sorry for his family's loss".

Moore was just 16 years old when he moved from Belfast to Dublin in 1969 to join Skid Row, which featured Phil Lynott as lead singer. Moore was later brought into Thin Lizzy.

He replaced the departing Eric Bell, who told the BBC: "I still can't believe it. He was so robust, he wasn't a rock casualty, he was a healthy guy. He was a superb player and a dedicated musician." — Reuters

## German Lotto winner let off late claim — bags \$290,000

WIESBADEN — A Lotto player who won a quarter of a million dollars has come up lucky a second time — after missing by days the deadline to claim his winnings the lottery organisers agreed to pay up anyway.

The state lottery of Hesse, which has been advertising for weeks for the owner of the winning November 5 ticket to identify himself, said the player showed up at a shop in Frankfurt with his counterfoil yesterday morning.

Unfortunately, the deadline ran out at the end of last week. A spokeswoman said the agency, would pay up out of good will — although it was not legally obliged to.

The winner, who has not been named, claimed the 211,262 euros (\$290,000) prize for picking six out of seven numbers on the betting slip correctly. — dpa

# Bashir accepts secession vote

KHARTOUM — Sudan's president yesterday said he accepted a southern vote for independence in a referendum that is set to set up Africa's newest state and open up a fresh period of uncertainty in the increasingly volatile region.

Preliminary results from the plebiscite show 98.83 per cent of voters from Sudan's oil-producing south chose to secede from the north. Sudan is now expected to split in two on July 9.

"Today we received these results and we accept and welcome these results because

they represent the will of the southern people," Bashir said in an address on state TV.

Bashir earlier told supporters he knew the vote was for secession.

The referendum is the climax of a 2005 north-south peace deal that set out to end Africa's longest civil war, reunite the divided country and instill democracy in a land that straddles the continent's Arab-sub Saharan divide.

Bashir's comments allayed fears that the split could reignite conflict over the control of the south's oil reserves.

Both sides did avoid major

outbreaks of violence over the past five years. But they failed to overcome decades of deep mutual distrust to persuade southerners to embrace unity.

Hundreds of people started gathering in the blistering heat of the southern capital Juba yesterday to celebrate the official results.

"Today I don't fear war anymore, it is the past ... Our leaders have made friends with the north, but for me, I can never forgive them for what I have seen. I don't hate them now, but I never want to see them again," said Riak Maker, 29, as men drummed and women

ululated around him.

Many southerners see the vote as a chance to end to years of northern repression, which they say stretches back through almost 50 years of civil wars to 19th century raids by slave traders.

Bashir, who campaigned for unity, has surprised many commentators with a series of conciliatory remarks about the south in recent weeks.

US has signalled it is ready to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism after a successful referendum, and help in easing crippling trade sanctions. — Reuters



A HOUSE stands among bushfire devastation in the foothills suburb of Roleystone, a suburb of Perth, yesterday. — AFP

# Major blazes wreck homes in Perth

PERTH, Australia — Wildfires destroyed at least 59 homes in Perth, Australia's fourth largest city, officials said yesterday, as soldiers fanned out for massive cleanup operations across the cyclone-hit northeast.

A natural disaster was declared in areas of Perth on the country's west coast, where two major blazes raged out of control for a second day, triggered by heat and high winds brought by last week's ferocious Cyclone Yasi.

Fast and unpredictable flames swept through rugged terrain at Roleystone, on Perth's southern fringes, and along its northern outskirts at Red Hill, levelling 59 homes and scorching hundreds of hectares of forest.

"Fifty nine structures have been damaged or destroyed," the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) said. "An additional 28 structures have sustained partial damage of varying degrees."

A bridge over the Canning River collapsed in the flames and would be impassable for at least three weeks, FESA added.

Emergency chief Craig Hynes said there had been no serious injuries or fatalities, with officials prepared for the "remarkable" winds, but he cautioned that authorities were yet to bring the fires under

control. Both were burning in areas of heavy vegetation on the city's outskirts, in rugged terrain that was difficult to access except by air.

"We're still calling both fires uncontrolled and we won't be able to let people back into the areas due to safety reasons," he said.

"We are very concerned about the safety of the fire grounds and we are doing our best to make sure that there are no injuries. Life is our priority."

The emergency came exactly two years after the deadly "Black Saturday" firestorm which claimed 173 lives in southeastern Victoria state, an anniversary marked yesterday with memorial services in the worst-hit towns.

"It's a reminder to all of us just how long and painful the journey back from natural disaster can be," said Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

"It's going to strike ... as perhaps a very cruel irony that on the day they mark the two-year anniversary of the Victorian bushfires so many Victorian communities are actually battling floodwaters," she added.

A top-category storm when it tore across Australia's northeast coast on Thursday, Yasi trashed hundreds of homes and decimated crops worth at least Aus\$500 mil-

lion.

It came weeks after record flooding which killed more than 30 people and swamped tens of thousands of homes in Queensland and Victoria, forcing the major city of Brisbane to a standstill for several days.

Soldiers led recovery efforts in devastated towns along the cyclone's path yesterday, bringing bulldozers, cranes and tanks to help move mountains of debris.

Reconstruction chief Major-General Mick Slater said that lives had been "absolutely destroyed" by the storm, warning that recovery would be protracted and difficult.

Slater said the "flattening" of the region's agriculture industry had left many "with their world torn apart" and wondering how they would make ends meet.

"It is a large area and there are a lot of people there who are really suffering," Slater told public radio.

"We can rebuild the roads and the bridges and the schools and the like, but what is going to take a long time is for people to rebuild their lives."

Australia's extreme weather has been linked to an extremely strong La Nina climate pattern, usually characterised by increased flooding and cyclones for the vast southern continent. — AFP

## New Iran missiles

TEHRAN — Iran is mass producing a new ballistic missile which can travel at more than three times the speed of sound and hit targets on the high seas, top commanders said yesterday.

Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari, who heads the elite military force, the Revolutionary Guards, said the missile had a range of 300 km.

"Iran is mass producing a smart ballistic missile for sea targets with a speed three times more than the speed of sound," state news agency Irna quoted Jafari as saying about the new missile.

He said the missile was "undetectable and can't be neutralised by enemies," without specifying the name. "It has very high precision in destroying targets," Jafari added.

"As the enemy's threats will likely come from the sea, air and by missiles, the Guards have been equipped with capabilities to neutralise the enemy's advanced technology," he said, according to another Iranian news agency, ISNA.

The new missile can be fired "from surface ballistically and can hit enemy vessels from a high altitude," Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of the Guards' air force wing told Fars news agency.

"The missile's warhead will carry 650 kg of explosives," he said, adding that the missile was powered by solid fuel and designed by the Guards.

The announcement of the new missile comes as Iran holds celebrations to mark the 32nd anniversary of its Islamic revolution which toppled the shah.

Iran uses the run-up to the February 11 anniversary to tout its scientific and technological achievements.

In a separate function, Iran unveiled four new home-built satellites and engines of a rocket.

Meanwhile the head of naval Guards' naval forces, Ali Fadavi, issued a warning that Iran will hit back if it came under attack.

"The Islamic republic has the ability of blocking the Strait of Hormuz if threatened," Fadavi told Mehr news agency. — AFP



FRENCH Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie during a press conference in Brussels. The minister yesterday regretted the "shock" caused by her holidaying in Tunisia during the popular uprising there but refused to resign under pressure from political opponents. She had faced calls to resign after she admitted travelling in a private plane owned by a businessman who was allegedly close to relatives of Tunisia's former leader, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.



LITHUANIAN Minister of Foreign affairs and Chairperson-in-Office for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Audronius Azubalis speaks with his Ukrainian counterpart Kostyantyn Gryshchenko (unseen) during their talks in Kiev yesterday. Azubalis is in Ukraine for a three-day official visit. — AFP



FINNISH Minister of Migration and European Affairs Astrid Thors (L) addresses the media next to Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi in Bucharest yesterday. In their talks, the two officials reviewed the state of bilateral relations and a range of topics of common interest on the European agenda.



FRENCH Socialist Party leader Martine Aubry talks to a girl during a visit to the Kernel market on the sidelines of the World Social Forum, an annual leftist gathering, yesterday in Dakar. The 11th edition of the forum brings together anti-globalisation activists opposed to capitalism. — AFP



IRAQI personnel from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit inspect the site of a bomb attack in Baghdad's Sadr City yesterday. A roadside bomb went off near an Iraqi army patrol, wounding two soldiers and two civilians, in Baghdad's northeastern Sadr City district, local police said. — Reuters

# Thai, Cambodia troops clash for fourth day on border

PHUM SARON, Thailand — Thai and Cambodian troops clashed for a fourth straight day yesterday over a disputed border area surrounding a 900-year-old mountaintop temple, deepening political uncertainty in Bangkok and prompting Cambodia to urge UN intervention.

Several hours of shelling and machine gun fire subsided around 11 am (0400 GMT), making an uneasy peace in the 4.6-sq-km contested area around the 11th-century Preah Vihear temple claimed by both Southeast Asian neighbours.

Both sides blame the other for sparking clashes that have killed at least two Thais and three Cambodians since Friday and unleashed nationalist passions in Bangkok, energising "yellow shirt" protesters demanding Thailand's government step down.

Reasons behind the fighting remain murky. Some analysts reckon hawkish

Thai generals and nationalist allies may be trying to topple Thailand's government or even make a pretext to stage another coup and cancel elections expected this year.

Others say it may be a simple breakdown in communication channels at a time of strained relations over Cambodia's flying of a national flag in the disputed area and laying of a stone tablet inscribed with "This is Cambodia".

In Phum Saron, an evacuated village in Thailand's Si Sa Ket province where Cambodian artillery struck several homes and a school on Sunday, Thai soldiers guarded buildings and said it was unclear if more fighting loomed.

The Thai government said 30 Thai soldiers and 4 villagers had been wounded so far. Cambodia says 10 of its troops were wounded.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen called on the UN Security Council to convene an urgent meeting, accusing Thailand of "repeated acts of aggression" that have killed Cambodians and caused a wing of the temple to collapse.

In a speech in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, Hun Sen directly addressed his Thai counterpart.

"We will go to the UN Security Council whether you like it or not," he said during a university graduation ceremony, calling on the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping troops to the area. "The armed clash is threatening regional security."

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva wrote to the Security Council accusing Cambodia of starting the fighting by opening fire at a Thai military post at Phat Ma Khua village on Friday, and again in the same area on Sunday. — Reuters



## 2 arrested in shooting at varsity party

WASHINGTON — Two men were arrested and charged with murder after they allegedly fired into a university fraternity party in Ohio, killing one student and wounding 11 others, police said.

The men had been thrown out of the early morning party near the campus of Youngstown State University after a fight, but returned a short time later.

"They just started firing in the open door, into a crowd of 40 or 50 people," Youngstown police chief Jimmy Hughes said. "They were both armed."

University senior Jamail Johnson, 25, died when he was shot once in the back of the head and several times in the lower body, Rick Jamrozik, an investigator with the coroner's office, said.

The shooting at 3:30 am on Sunday occurred at an off-campus house where members of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity lived.

Hughes would not identify the alleged gunmen, but said they are not university students. He said one of the alleged shooters is 22 years old and the other is 20, and both live in Youngstown.

Both men were charged with aggravated murder, 11 counts of felony assault and 11 counts of shooting into a residence.

Eight of the wounded had been treated and released from Saint Elizabeth Health Center in Youngstown, hospital spokeswoman Tina Creighton said.

Three were still in the facility's care, though she could not confirm their identities or their current conditions.

The police chief said an FBI violent crime task force based in Cleveland was called in to lead the hunt for the suspects, one of whom turned himself in. The other suspect was arrested without incident at a relative's house in Youngstown.

The cause of the fight was not immediately known, Hughes said, adding that the suspects were escorted out by several fraternity brothers. He said the semi-automatic pistols used in the shooting have not been recovered. — AFP

# Rio horrified as Carnival preps go up in flames

RIO DE JANEIRO — Rio's famed Carnival due to be held next month was dealt a devastating blow yesterday when a fire destroyed workshops containing floats and thousands of intricate costumes made for the event.

"We are heartbroken," said Jorge Castanheira, president of the League of Samba Schools which puts on the yearly event. "Everything was practically ready for the Carnival."

"A dream has been thrown in the trash. Months of work, and it's all lost," lamented Jose da Silva Junior, one costume worker, to reporters.

Several hours after the blaze gutted part of Samba City, the area dedicated to Rio's Carnival preparations, around 100 firefighters managed to bring the situation under control though black smoke continued to billow over the city.

Officials said that despite the ravages of the fire, Carnival would go ahead as usual, with Rio's spectacular parades of dancers in feathers and multi-million-dollar allegorical floats to take place March 6 and 7.

Although other Carnival parades take place across this country of 193 million people, none comes close to the grandeur and complexity of Rio's event, which unfolds in a special stadium attended by thousands of ticket-holders and local and foreign VIPs.

The inferno shocked all of Brazil, which ranks Rio's Carnival as its premier display of national pride — at least as important as top football games.

The fire also brought potential disappointment for the estimated 500,000 to 700,000 foreign tourists who are to escape the northern hemisphere winter by taking part in Rio's summer days of Carnival partying.

Castanheira said he was not certain workers would be able to rebuild everything that was lost before the popular event.

The cause of the blaze was not known.



AN aerial view from a helicopter shows smoke billowing from a fire raging through samba schools, where floats, costumes and props of the Rio Carnival are made and kept, in Rio de Janeiro yesterday.

Police said they believed it unlikely to have been a deliberate act, even though several of the clubs — called samba schools — that put on the Carnival parades have links to criminal

outfits operating in Rio's slums. Workshops belonging to three of the samba schools — Portela, Uniao da Ilha and Grande Rio — were destroyed, putting them at a disadvantage against the other nine top schools they will be competing against during the parades.

According to Brazilian media, the fire erupted early in the morning, well before workshop employees started their day. No casualties were reported.

The fire spread quickly, fuelled by the highly flammable plastics used in the construction of the Carnival costumes and floats.

Rio's mayor, Eduardo Paes, vowed that "Samba City will start to be rebuilt from this week" and there was "no way none of the samba schools won't take part in the parades."

Helio de Oliveira, the president of the Grande Rio samba school, said: "The only thing that didn't go up in flames is our intention to be in the parades."

His school lost 80 per cent of its Carnival preparations — a loss of months of work and an estimated three million dollars.

Ney Filardes, head of the Uniao da Ilha school said her group lost 2,000 costumes in the blaze.

Samba City was opened in 2005 to bring together all the workshops of Rio's top samba school preparing for the yearly Carnival. Before that date, work was carried out in the city's slums where the schools have their roots.

Since winning the right to host the 2016 Olympic Games, Brazil has been touting its organisation of Carnival in Rio as an example of its prowess in putting on world-class events. — AFP

## Republican foreign policy 'wolf' shows her teeth

WASHINGTON — For years, US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen has been busy lecturing world leaders over human rights abuses.

Now that she is the new Republican chair of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, she has a chance to try to back up her muscular rhetoric with action.

Last month, Ros-Lehtinen was one of the first US lawmakers to urge Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to hold free elections. Earlier in January, she told visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao to his face that he should free jailed dissident Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel peace prize winner.

Last year, the Florida Republican hand-delivered a letter to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev telling him Russia's human rights record was "deplorable."

Sometimes she gets as good as she gives; Castro calls her "the ferocious she-wolf" and Chavez has dubbed her an "outlaw."

Her critics pillory Ros-Lehtinen as a right-wing extremist. Her outspokenness surely irks the Obama administration as it conducts global diplomacy, trying to reset relations with Russia, expand trade with China, relax US policy on Cuba and get Egypt's government to do the right thing.

But her admirers find Ros-Lehtinen a breath of fresh air. "In a city where compromise and nuance is often the order of the day, it's refreshing to have someone who will speak their mind, and who will do it based on a set of values

that are very American and very honourable," said Helle Dale, senior fellow for public diplomacy at the Heritage Foundation think-tank.

Born in Havana in 1952, Ros-Lehtinen's parents fled with her and her brother to Miami in 1960, a year after Castro's revolution that subsequently brought one-party communist rule to her birthplace.

It is perhaps not surprising then that Cuba figures heavily in her world view, and that she is so forthright about human rights. "Her experience with authoritarianism has not been a good one," said Stephen Johnson, director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Over the years Ros-Lehtinen has become a kind of Cuban exile nemesis to Castro. She has consistently opposed moves by Obama and her fellow lawmakers to ease the long-running US trade embargo against Cuba, saying such relaxations give oxygen to a dying communist regime.

Her fierce opposition has helped stop lawmakers from lifting the ban on Americans travelling to Cuba.

She also takes keen interest in the rest of Latin America. She influenced the debate in Washington over the 2009 ouster of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya by insisting it was not a coup, but a legal exercise of power. This month she urged the Obama administration not to pressure Honduras into letting Zelaya return home without him facing corruption charges. — Reuters



A FIRE broke out yesterday in a Smithsonian museum in the US capital, but was swiftly extinguished with no injuries or damage to the collections reported. — AFP

## Obama denies post-election move to political centre

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama denied that he moved to the political centre after his Democrats were routed in congressional elections last November, insisting, "I'm the same guy."

Most political analysts say Obama has moved to a more centrist position in the wake of the elections — Republicans took control of the House of Representatives and made gains in the Senate — as he prepares to seek re-election in 2012.

And they point to his decision to agree to a compromise with Republicans that extended tax cuts for all Americans, even the wealthy.

He has also declared himself much more willing to listen to his political opponents, including a meeting last week with Republican Senator John McCain, who he defeated in 2008 for the presidency.

In an interview with Fox News' conservative commentator, Bill O'Reilly, Obama said he has not made a political shift.

"I'm the same guy," Obama said. "My practical focus, my common-sense focus right now is how do we out-innovate, out-educate, out-build, out-compete the rest of the world?"

When pressed on whether he was committed to a liberal goal of income redistribution, Obama said he "absolutely" denied such a charge.

"I didn't raise taxes once, I lowered taxes over the last two years," he said.

Obama also said he believed his healthcare

overhaul, which was passed last year by Congress, will ultimately be ruled constitutional by the US Supreme Court despite, for example, a Florida federal judge's ruling against it recently. At issue is the healthcare law's requirement that all Americans buy health insurance.

"Well, I think the judge in Florida was wrong. Keep in mind that we've had 12 judges ... that just threw this case out, the notion that the healthcare law was unconstitutional," Obama said.

Asked what the worst part of being president is, Obama had a ready reply as he prepared to enjoy a Super Bowl party at the White House with a guest list that included celebrity Jennifer Lopez.

"Worst part of the job is, first of all, I've got a jacket on on Super Bowl on Sunday," Obama said, referring to the National League Football championship game.

He said the biggest problem is being in the White House protective "bubble" that is hard to escape.

"Over time, you know, what happens is you feel like — that you're not able to just have a spontaneous conversation with folks," he said.

Obama said "there's no doubt that the weight of the office has an impact" on him but he enjoys the job.

"The longer I'm in this job, the more I enjoy it, the more optimistic I am about the American people, the more optimistic I am about this country," he said. — Reuters

## Over 17 killed in drug violence

CIUDAD JUAREZ — At least 17 people were killed in drug-related violence in northern Mexico this weekend, nine of them in restive Ciudad Juarez, the state attorney general's office said yesterday.

In Mexico's crime capital Ciudad Juarez, which is just across the border from El Paso in the southern US state of Texas, gunmen opened fire and killed three young students at a used car dealership.

A teenager, a woman and a 40-year-old man died in a second attack by unidentified gunmen elsewhere in Juarez, a statement from the Chihuahua state attorney general's office said.

A third triple homicide at a garage left a 13-year-old boy among the dead. Another three people were killed in separate shooting incidents in Ciudad Juarez, which has a population of 1.3 million and saw 2,900 murders last year.

Five men were also killed overnight in other parts of Chihuahua state, the official statement said. — AFP

## Mexico's ruling party wins Baja California Sur vote

MEXICO CITY — President Felipe Calderon's conservative National Action Party (PAN) won the governorship of the sparsely populated Baja California Sur, a state dominated by the left for most of the last decade, election results showed yesterday.

PAN candidate Marcos Covarrubias won 40 per cent of the vote with the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, coming in second. The PRI, which ruled Mexico for 71 years before being

ousted by an election in 2000, is eyeing a presidential comeback in 2012.

Luis Diaz from the leftist Party of Democratic Revolution, or PRD, trailed behind in third place with 97 per cent of the vote counted, losing a stronghold of his party since 1999.

Baja California's peninsula, known for whale watching and popular tourist spots, is divided into two states.

The southern half, Baja California Sur, is Mexico's least populous state with just

637,000 inhabitants. Its sea-side hotels and mountainous landscapes have escaped much of the violence in the north, where drug gangs fight for smuggling routes into California from the crime-ridden city of Tijuana.

Calderon launched an army-backed attack on drug cartels shortly after taking office in late-2006 and more than 34,000 people have been killed since then, as rival crime groups fight the government and each other. — Reuters

## Toledo gains in Peru race

LIMA — Former president Alejandro Toledo has extended his lead in Peru's presidential race and what was a tight contest among three is becoming a two-horse race as the campaign of a politician nicknamed "the mute" falters, polls showed yesterday.

Luis Castaneda, the former mayor of Lima whom the local media has criticized for staying quiet for much of the race, has lost support and would fail to reach a runoff vote, polls by survey firm Datum and Lima's Catholic University showed.

Both polls showed Toledo, who is well-liked by investors, would grab about 30 per cent of the votes in the April 10 election and go on to defeat lawmaker

Keiko Fujimori in a June runoff by about 20 percentage points.

Castaneda, who has gone on a "listening tour" to introduce himself to voters in isolated provinces far from the capital Lima, dismissed the latest surveys.

"Polls are just a snapshot in time ... right now I'm more worried about finding out about Peru's problems via my listening tour," Castaneda said yesterday, the website of newspaper *El Comercio* reported.

Toledo, who is still well shy of clinching a first-round victory, gained further even as conservatives attacked him for making statements in which he appeared to favour the legalisation

of drugs, the polls indicated.

Fujimori has been stuck at about 20 per cent in polls for months. Most voters are reluctant to support her because her father, former president Alberto Fujimori, is in jail for corruption and human rights crimes. He led a crackdown on leftist insurgents during his 1990-2000 rule.

Though the three main candidates disagree on social policy, they all support economic policies that emphasise free trade, low inflation and fiscal restraint, and have been in place in Peru for nearly two decades.

Toledo gained 7 percentage points in the latest poll by Catholic University and 3 percentage points in the Datum poll.



### ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS

The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) invites following tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade in DCRP	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission
RAEC-02/11	Electrification works (11KV & LV network) to give electricity to Aqabah Village at Wilayat Diba in Musandam Governorate.	50/-	C	19/02/2011	27/02/2011

#### The Conditions:

- Interested Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board and DCRP may obtain the Tender documents from PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT, RURAL AREAS ELECTRICITY COMPANY at AL-KHUWAI, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. The tenders may be collected on any working day between 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM.
- Tenders should be submitted in a sealed envelope with red wax addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, RURAL AREAS ELECTRICITY COMPANY (S.A.O.C) marked with tender number and the subject.
- Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelopes. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the Tenderer. The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from date of submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, RURAL AREAS ELECTRICITY COMPANY (S.A.O.C).
- The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box at the RURAL AREAS ELECTRICITY COMPANY (S.A.O.C) Main Office at AL-KHUWAI, before 1:00 P.M. on the assigned date for submission of the tender. Preference shall be given to the bidder who gives priority to national products in his offer.
- RAECO is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender without mentioning the reason.

Delivering Electricity to Rural Oman



## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Afghan district governor shot dead: police**

UNKNOWN gunmen shot dead a district governor in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, police said, in the latest in a string of militant attacks targeting government officials. Sayed Mohammad, the district chief in Khost province's Baak district was gunned down while driving to work, provincial police chief Abdul Hakim Is'haqzai said.

"Sayed Mohammad was going to his office when he came under attack. Some armed men opened fire at him and killed on the spot," the police commander said. There was no claim of responsibility for the murder.

**Five robbery suspects lynched in Bangladesh**

AT least five suspected robbers were lynched by angry villagers yesterday in central Bangladesh, police said. Police recovered the bodies of five unidentified youths who were beaten to death by a mob in Narsingdi district, said Azizur Rahman, a police officer at the police post in Madhabdi, 53 kilometres south-east of Dhaka.

According to Rahman, the villagers said they caught five members of a 10-person group fleeing after taking valuables from a village home at gunpoint. Media reports said at least 126 people were lynched in Bangladesh in 2010.

**Punjab bureaucrats offer cut on their expenditure**

IN major development, the bureaucracy in Pakistan's Punjab province has come up with a solution to save Rs 80 billion per year after curtailing the expenditure on them and introducing reforms in the Revenue Department. The plan suggests taking the bunch of luxury vehicles back from the Punjab bureaucracy leaving only one entitled official vehicle per officer and cutting the residences of the bureaucracy to size with maximum one-kanal home for the officers which otherwise runs into acres. The extra land of government residences should be sold to generate revenue, the plan suggests.

The plan says that more than half of the measures mentioned in the 20-page plan can be implemented within one month while it will take six months to completely enforce the suggested plan which can work wonders for Punjab.

**Buying picks up as nature lovers flock nurseries**

THE hustle and bustle revived at the plant nurseries in Pakistan's federal capital, as people are taking time out to buy saplings, welcoming the flowering season of spring. Spring season, commonly known as the season of rebirth or revival, spreads natural beauty and removes the gloomy memories of barren trees and deserted gardens in autumn.

Gardening is a health activity and this is the best time to buy saplings and plant them in homes to bring freshness to one's life. Tariq Hassan, a worker at a nursery, said this is the best time to buy saplings and people are flocking the nurseries to buy seeds, plants and flower pots. He said the nurseries are filled with local and imported varieties of flowers and imported saplings find more buyers as these are available in more colours.

**Experts to investigate blind dolphin deaths**

A TEAM of French cetacean experts headed by Francois Xavier Pelletier arrived in Sindh to investigate the reasons behind the recent mortalities of the rare Indus blind dolphin in Sukkur region and also to find out the possible threats to these endangered and unique dolphins. In his initial report, the French experts said after analysing circumstantial evidence that the causes of death of the dolphins were either net entanglement or chemical poisoning. A pertinent report will be issued after the samples taken from the dolphins have been analysed.

Although no fresh death of any Indus blind dolphin has been reported, experts apprehend that a threat was circling over the Indus Dolphin Reserve, a protected site that stretches to 190 kilometres between Guddu and Sukkur Barrages. The area was declared a protected reserve in 1974.

**Pakistani artisan claims to make biggest lock**

A CHAWINDA-based Pakistan artisan Mirza Rizwan has claimed to have manufactured the world's biggest and smallest hand locks. Rizwan said that he has manufactured the biggest wooden handmade lock, weighing 5.5 kilograms and two-foot wide and two-foot high. The weight of the smallest wooden lock is only 70 grams.

He said that he had been fond of using wooden things since his childhood, thus he preferred to manufacture these wooden locks by using old diyar wood. The artisan urged the officials concerned of the Guinness Book of World Records to include his name for setting these manufacturing records. — Agencies



INVESTORS protest in front of the Bangladesh Bank as they take part in a strike called by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in Dhaka yesterday. — Reuters

**Philippines says peace talks on**

MANILA — The Philippines said yesterday talks aimed at ending a decades-old insurgency would go ahead as planned this week despite worries over a break-away faction.

Chief peace negotiator Marvic Leonen said his panel was set to depart for the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, which will be hosting the two-day talks beginning tomorrow.

"We leave for Kuala Lumpur very soon to attend the 20th exploratory talks with the representatives of the MILF," Leonen told reporters.

He said government negotiators would use the meeting to seek clarification from the MILF over an announcement it made over the weekend that one of its key commanders, Ameril Umbrakato, had split from the 12,000-strong group.

"If true, the existence of a separate armed group that splinters from the MILF will endanger our cease-

fire mechanism, and make our civilian populations insecure and vulnerable," Leonen warned.

"Also, the separate existence of another armed group... may significantly put into question the ability of the current leadership of the MILF to deliver on any commitment that is negotiated with the government."

Leonen said the government had known of the brewing MILF split since late last year and had questioned negotiators about Umbrakato when both sides met for preliminary talks last month.

The MILF had agreed to give a full report about the renegade leader during this week's meeting, he said.

Leonen said it was premature to say whether the emergence of Umbrakato's faction could derail the talks, but acknowledged it was a "serious concern" that the MILF needed to explain.

The MILF has been fighting for

an independent homeland on the southern island of Mindanao since the 1970s.

Umbrakato is one of two MILF senior commanders who launched deadly attacks across Mindanao in 2008.

The attacks were in retaliation for a Supreme Court decision outlawing a proposed land deal that would have given the control over what they claim as ancestral lands on Mindanao.

The attacks left nearly 400 dead and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Both sides agreed to a new ceasefire in 2009, allowing most of the evacuees to return home.

The talks this week are the first since President Benigno Aquino assumed power last year, when he promised to bring an end to the insurgency during his six-year term. — AFP

**Police, oppn supporters clash in Bangladesh**

DHAKA — Police used water cannons and batons to disperse hundreds of supporters of Bangladesh's main opposition party who went on strike yesterday to demand early parliamentary elections to force the ruling party from power.

Scores of protesters were wounded in clashes with police, witnesses said, and media reported that at least 70 activists were detained.

Analysts did not expect the general strike, the third by the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took office in early 2009, to bring forward the date of the 2013 general election.

But it is a large-scale challenge by the BNP, emboldened by its success at municipal polls, and adds to

the woes of Hasina's government, already struggling with discontent over high prices, lacking public services as well as the crash in the stock market, a main source of income for many in this impoverished country.

At least five people were injured, two seriously, in clashes between protesters and police outside the BNP's central office in Dhaka, a reporter at the scene said.

"Police used batons and water cannons to drive the demonstrators back into the party office. Police also detained about 20 activists," the reporter said by telephone.

Some 50 other protesters were injured and dozens detained in clashes with police outside Dhaka, media reports said.

In December, food inflation hit 11 per cent, its highest level in three years, and experts warned rising global food prices may drive the index higher.

Angry investors took to the streets of the capital on Sunday after the stock exchange suffered another dramatic fall, the latest of a series of collapses that forced halts in trading several times last month.

Yesterday, the benchmark Dhaka Stock Exchange index shed 4 per cent within two hours following its 5.7 per cent slide on the previous day.

Strikes have been often used by political parties in Bangladesh to force change, and senior BNP officials have vowed a "fierce campaign" to force early elections. — Reuters

**Policeman killed in attack**

PESHAWAR — Armed men fired rockets and bullets on a police patrol van in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing one officer and injuring seven others, one of them critically, police said.

The incident took place in Balyamina village, 10 kilometres west of northwestern Hangu.

"One policeman was killed and seven others wounded, one of them critically when armed men fired five rockets and shot at their van patrolling the village," police spokesman Fazal Naem said.

A senior local police official, Abdul Rasheed, confirmed the incident. — AFP

**Musharraf accused in Bhutto murder case**

ISLAMABAD — A Pakistani court was informed yesterday by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) that former president Pervez Musharraf is among the list of accused in Benazir Bhutto murder case.

The FIA has been probing the assassination of former two-time premier Bhutto in December 2007 in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

Musharraf was named after statements by former chief of Rawalpindi police, Saud Aziz, and one of his deputies, Khurram Shehzad, who are in FIA custody for negligence in failing to protect Bhutto.

The security agency also informed the court that the former president would be declared a fugitive if he failed

to co-operate with the investigators.

"Musharraf was in contact with the two officers and if he does not appear for investigation, he will be declared as absconder," FIA lawyer Chaudhry Zulfiqar said.

English-language Dawn newspaper said Aziz told police the order to change Bhutto's security plan was given by Musharraf, who also ordered the scene of the assassination be washed immediately.

Musharraf resigned in 2008 after ruling Pakistan for more than eight years when his opponents swept the general election.

He has since been living in London. — dpa

**Fire injures 27 in eastern Pakistan**

LAHORE — A fire blazed in several buildings and injured at least 27 people yesterday in a commercial area of Pakistan's eastern cultural hub Lahore, officials said.

"The fire started early Monday at the 10-story Bahria Centre commercial building in old Lahore city, and the flames spread to three other buildings, one mosque and two houses," rescue services chief Rizwan Naseer said.

Local administration head Ahad Cheema said that at least 27 people were hurt.

"At least 27 people were wounded in the fire incident. We have asked Islamabad to send us a helicopter to extinguish the fire," Cheema said.

Naseer said that the narrow lanes of old Lahore, known as the "walled city", hampered rescue efforts as fire engines could not enter and the hoses were not long enough to reach the multi-storey building in the congested neighbourhood.

Officials said that they were estimating the losses caused by the massive fire, which took place in an area famous for wholesale businesses. — AFP



A FIREFIGHTER climbs up a ladder to extinguish a fire at the Shah Alam Market in Lahore yesterday.

**Flood death toll rises to 17**

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's latest monsoon rains have claimed at least 17 lives and left around 1.2 million people flooded out of their homes, officials said yesterday.

The Disaster Management Centre in Colombo said 311,000 people had sought refuge in state-run relief shelters by yesterday morning, while approximately 900,000 were living with friends and relatives.

Monsoon rains only last month in the same areas of the north, east and centre of Sri Lanka killed at least 43 people. — AFP

**Population boom at bat sanctuary**

MANILA — Millions of fruit bats are flocking to a cave sanctuary on a small Philippine island and reproducing wildly as humans become an increasing threat to other nearby habitats, a conservationist said yesterday.

Biologists have been surprised by the bats as they seem to be breeding all year round and not just in their regular April to July season, said Norma Monfort, who heads a

conservation foundation that manages the sanctuary.

"The cave is overflowing. The bats are on the ground, they are out in the open, which is very unusual. The bats are delivering (babies) all year round," Monfort said.

An estimated two million bats are crowding inside the 300-metre-long "Monfort Bat Cave" on the southern island of Samal, said Monfort, whose family owns the property

where the cave is located. The overcrowding has become so bad that male bats are often seen attacking baby bats, said Monfort.

Monfort said the bats were apparently seeking refuge in her cave because people were hunting the animals for food or harvesting bat guano in other habitats.

"They will get bats by the sackload because they say they are a good source of protein,"

she said.

Other caves on Samal that used to house many bats are now largely empty, according to Monfort.

Monfort said the bat numbers have been building since 2006, when she developed the sanctuary.

Guinness World Records said last year the sanctuary may qualify as the having largest colony of Geoffroy's Roussette Fruit Bats. — AFP

**Displaced birds disrupt planes**

MANILA — Planes operating at the Philippines' main airport are facing a growing danger from waterbirds descending there after losing nearby swamps to development, authorities said yesterday.

Airlines complained last month to the Manila International Airport Authority about the worsening problem of birds flying into planes, Alex Cariaga, head of the airport's ground operations safety division.

He said the Airline Operators Council, a group representing all carriers that serve Manila airport, said there had been 23 incidents in which birds were sucked up into jet engines last year.

The so-called "bird strikes", which could cause a plane to crash, was up from just nine in 2009, Car-

riaga said. However there had been no major incident yet due to the bird strikes.

Cariaga said the problem appeared to worsen after developers reclaimed some small lagoons near the airport runway last year to build warehouses.

"We thought it was a good thing because we expected the birds to move elsewhere," he said.

However the birds, mainly egrets, instead moved to the grassy areas beside the runway to hunt frogs, grasshoppers, lizards and other prey.

Cariaga said pilots frequently contacted the control tower for help whenever they saw birds wandering onto the runway.

He said the airport's 15-mem-

ber ground safety team has to then scramble to the runway with noise-making equipment to scare off the birds.

The Philippines is a key pit-stop on the East Asian-Australasian flyway, in which enormous numbers of birds fly between the northern and southern hemispheres to escape cold weather.

Apart from the migratory birds, Cariaga said the team also had to deal with domesticated pigeons that were raised by surrounding communities.

"These pigeons would descend in large flocks. We have asked the local governments to discourage residents from raising birds, but truth to tell, there is no ordinance right now that bans the practice," he said. — AFP



A JAPAN Airlines plane passes behind buildings before it lands at the Manila International Airport in Manila yesterday. Planes operating at the Philippines' main airport are facing a growing danger from waterbirds, authorities said. — AFP

**Five Nato oil tankers attacked**

QUETTA — Gunmen in southwestern Pakistan attacked five oil tankers carrying supplies to Nato troops in Afghanistan, officials said yesterday.

The incident took place near the town of Mithri, some 230 kilometres southeast of Quetta, the capital of the oil and gas-rich Baluchistan province which borders Iran and Afghanistan.

"Unknown gunmen fired at five Nato oil tankers. Two of them caught fire while oil leaked from three others," district administration chief Muhammad Azam said.

"There were no injuries to drivers," he said.

Local intelligence officials confirmed the attack.

Nato trucks and oil tankers are regularly the targets of arson attacks blamed on armed men attempting to disrupt two key supply lines that cross western Pakistan bound for foreign troops fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Most supplies and equipment required by coalition troops in Afghanistan are shipped through Pakistan, although US troops increasingly use alternative routes through central Asia. — AFP





PROTESTERS gather around army vehicles at Tahrir Square in Cairo yesterday to prevent the army from moving towards the square and placing barbed wires. — Reuters

## Cabinet meets, 'Nile Revolution' digs in

CAIRO — President Hosni Mubarak's new cabinet yesterday held its first full meeting since an uprising started nearly two weeks ago, with no concrete progress in talks with radicals and an opposition who demand his immediate exit.

Mubarak, 82, who has refused calls to end his 30-year-old presidency before September polls, saying his resignation would cause chaos in the nation, has tried to focus on restoring order.

Protesters, barricaded in a tent camp in Tahrir Square in the heart of Cairo, have vowed to stay until Mubarak quits and hope to take their campaign to the streets with more mass demonstrations today and on Friday.

The banned Muslim Brotherhood

movement was among the groups that met Egyptian government officials at the weekend, a sign of how much has already changed in an uprising that has rocked the Arab world and alarmed Western powers.

Opposition figures reported little progress in the talks. While protesters want Mubarak to step down immediately, many worry that when he does leave, he will be replaced not with the democracy they seek but with an authoritarian ruler.

With a government pledged to reform, an opposition with limited political experience, a constitutional process that mitigates against haste, and a key strategic role, Egypt's next steps must be considered carefully, US officials say.

Protesters now take to the streets almost with impunity in their hundreds of thousands.

Determined protesters in Tahrir (Liberation) Square were settling into a routine yesterday after a revolt which the United Nations says may have cost 300 lives so far. Activists have called the uprising the "Nile Revolution".

Keen to get traffic moving around Tahrir Square, the army tried early yesterday to squeeze the area the protesters have occupied. Overnight campers rushed out of their tents to surround soldiers attempting to corral them into a smaller area.

Wary of the army's effort to gain ground to try and restore the traffic flow in central Cairo, dozens of protesters slept

inside the tracks of the army vehicles. The army's role in the next weeks is considered critical to the future of Egypt.

"The army is getting restless and so are the protesters. The army wants to squeeze us into a small circle in the middle of the square to get the traffic moving again," protester Mohamed Shalaby, 27, said by telephone.

Egypt's government tried to get the country back to normal when the working week began on Sunday. Schools remained shut.

In another move to restore normality, authorities shortened the curfew, largely ignored by the hard-core protesters, to start at 8 pm and end at 6 am.

Many Egyptians are keen

to get back to work and are worried about the effects of the crisis on stability, the economy and the important tourism sector. Egypt's pound weakened to a six-year low on the second day of trade after a week-long closure. State-controlled banks seemed to be selling dollars to support the pound.

"Things are stable. I can't say they're good, but they're not collapsing," said a trader at a Cairo-based bank.

The bourse remained closed until Sunday because of the political turmoil and Egypt's central bank reduced the size of its Treasury bill offering, possibly out of concern that nervous investors would not buy the full amount.

The government said after the weekend meeting, chaired

by Vice President Omar Suleiman, they agreed to draft a road map for talks, indicating Mubarak would stay in power to oversee change. It would also move to release jailed activists, guarantee press freedom and lift Egypt's emergency laws. A committee was set up to study constitutional change.

The opposition said the government failed to meet its demand for a complete overhaul of Egypt's political system.

Nobel Peace laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, who has emerged as a figurehead for the opposition coalition, criticised fledgling negotiations and said he was not invited. "It is all managed by the military and that is part of the problem," he told NBC. — Reuters

## Couple weds among Cairo protest family

CAIRO — Every couple wants its family there when they tie the knot. For Ahmed Zaafan and Ola Abdel Hamid it was the family of protesters who have led demonstrations.

They held their wedding ceremony in Cairo's Tahrir Square. "It was either we quit Tahrir to go and have our wedding in an isolated hall or hold a ceremony right here among our people protesting in the square. We chose the latter," said Hamid, 22, a graduate in computer science.

"These protesters are family now. We have lived, laughed and protested together in this square for the past weeks. Ola and I wanted to share our happiness with everyone," said husband Zaafan, 29, a psychologist. Thousands of protesters were around them. Onlookers cheered, ululated and whistled when it was announced over speakers that they had been married by a shaikh on Sunday. Flowers and sherbet were passed around the crowd after the shaikh concluded the marriage rituals.

The couple said their choice of Tahrir as a wedding venue was a statement of their determination to remain in the square until the people's demands were realised.

"Authorities want the world to think Tahrir is suspended in space and time while the rest of Cairo and Egypt is moving. Well, we are not at a standstill. We want the world to see we can continue to protest and go about our lives," Ahmed said.

Tahrir Square has been the hub of protests and sit-ins since January 25 when Egyptians hit the streets in unprecedented numbers to demand the change of the president.

"It was difficult for us to quit the square after we formed such tight bond of love and patriotism with millions of Egyptians," said Ola, who said she had no political affiliations but dreamt of a more free Egypt.

Hailing the wedding over the square's speakers, an activist said: "These two have chosen to wed in front of millions of Egyptians fighting for freedom. May God bless your marriage." — Reuters

## Weapons claim: Diplomatic bags being screened

CAIRO — Authorities at Cairo airport began screening incoming and outgoing diplomatic pouches yesterday, the Mena agency said, a day after the foreign ministry accused diplomats of trying to bring weapons into Egypt.

"The pouches will be screened by X-ray... to stop any illegal items from entering" Egypt.

The "exceptional measures" were introduced on the orders of the foreign ministry, despite international agreements exempting diplomatic bags from being searched.

On Sunday, the foreign ministry accused diplomats of smuggling weapons and communications equipment into the restive country.

"It has been noticed of late that some foreign embassies in Cairo have tried to bring some weapons and communications equipment in diplomatic bags, relying on the principle of immunity," the ministry said in a statement.

It added that the "authorities concerned reserve the right to confiscate any weapon or technological equipment that would require a permit in Egypt," the statement added. — AFP

## Hundreds demand affordable homes

CAIRO — Hundreds of Egyptians demanding cheaper apartments rallied outside a government office yesterday, emboldened to press their case by mass demonstrations calling for a new president.

Many stood for hours outside the downtown offices with their application forms. Some shouted that they would join the protest camp in nearby Tahrir Square if officials did not give way: "If you don't let us in, we will head to Tahrir."

Sohir and Amr, a married couple in their late 30s who were looking for an apartment they could afford, said they would not leave the governorate office area until they got what they saw as their right.

"How come they tell us to come on a certain day and then tell us to go away, saying there is nothing here for you? Aren't they aware of what is going on in Tahrir and that people will no longer surrender and will continue to pursue their demands?" said Amr who declined to give his family name.

The governorate eventually opened its doors and let the home-seekers in, but officials refused to answer a reporter's questions.

The government has long promised to provide cheaper homes for Egyptians on low incomes as well better living conditions and more jobs across the board, but citizens had been largely resigned to the fact that it may never happen.

Egypt's population of around 79 million is growing by 2 per cent a year and housing has not kept pace.

Two-thirds of the population is under 30, and that age group accounts for 90 per cent of

the jobless. About 40 per cent live on less than \$2 a day.

Before the eruption of the anti-government demonstrations on January 25, a protest of even a few hundred people was a rarity and seen as a challenge to the state.

However as the current movement enters its 14th day, even Egyptians who have not joined the demonstrations are beginning to try to assert their rights.

"The January 25 protest restored the human rights of all Egyptians, restored their dignity and ended the humiliations practised against them by the state's different establishments," said political analyst Nabil Abdel Fattah, a researcher at Al Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

"The main achievement of this protest is that it put an end to the fear Egyptians felt against the state's political regime since the military came to power (after it overthrew the king) in 1952," he added.

Meanwhile, Germany has not received any request from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to visit for an extended health checkup a government spokesman said yesterday — despite media speculation Mubarak might return to the country on medical grounds.

"There are no official or unofficial requests for such a visit," said government spokesman Steffen Seibert.

"Therefore, there is no reason to deal hypothetically with this question." Mubarak has previously sought medical treatment in Germany, and in March 2010 spent three weeks at clinic in Heidelberg when he had his gall bladder removed. — Reuters



MALAYSIAN Prime Minister Najib Razak's wife Rosmah Mansor plays with a child of a passenger returning from Egypt at the VVIP terminal in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. According to an English daily, Najib has warned against any attempt to usurp power in Malaysia, using demonstrations like those in Egypt. — AFP

## Banking activities positive after reopening: official

CAIRO — Mahmoud Abdellatif, the head of Bank of Alexandria, said yesterday that banking transactions were more positive than expected after the bank reopened this week, regional news network Al Arabiya reported.

The amount of cash deposited at the bank was greater than withdrawals on Sunday, its first day of operation after a week-long closure, he said.

Money transfers out of the country were less than expected and were mostly related to trade activity, Abdellatif added.

The Bank of Alexandria is one of Egypt's largest banks, with a market share of about seven per cent.

It became the first fully state-owned bank to be privatised when it was sold to Italy's Intesa Sanpaolo in 2006.

Meanwhile, Egypt's stock exchange is to reopen on Sunday, state television reported. By that time, it would have been closed for two weeks.

There has been no trading since January 30, after the benchmark EGX30 index lost 17 per cent of its value in its last week of trading. — dpa

## Europe immigration fear

BRUSSELS — Nato chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen warned yesterday that the situation in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world could fuel illegal immigration to Europe.

The wave of protests that has gripped Arab nations could affect the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the economies of countries in the region, Rasmussen said at this monthly news briefing.

"Instability in the region as such may also in the longer term perspective have a negative impact on the economies, which might lead to illegal immigration in Europe," he said.

"So of course indirectly there may be a negative impact on Europe caused by the evolving situation in North Africa and the Middle East, but I do not consider the situation as a direct threat to Nato," he said.

The 28-nation North American and European alliance is following the situation in Egypt and other countries in the region "with great interest", the secretary general said. — AFP



DEMONSTRATORS camp in Tahrir Square yesterday on the 14th day of protests.

## Many return to demonstrate solidarity

CAIRO — For many Egyptians abroad, watching raging protests on television was not enough. They made excuses at work, convinced their families, and booked flights home to join the "revolution."

For some the decision was easy. They were seeing a lifelong dream unfold in their homeland, and they knew they had to get there to take part.

For others, it was more difficult. They struggled to work out whether their presence would be useful, and how they could leave behind jobs and family.

"I was caught by surprise by what happened," said Fadel Zayan, a 32-year-old consultant. "We've all been hoping that it would happen for years."

There was little doubt in his mind that he should return to Egypt, over the objections of his family in Cairo, who

were "adamant" he should stay in London. "I came back because I wanted to take part in the revolution but also because I wanted to check on my family."

Tarek Shahin, a fund manager also living in London, was travelling when the first major demonstration took place on January 25. He arrived back in London on January 28, and started watching television.

"I watched Egypt change as the streets burned. I booked the first ticket to Cairo the following day," he said. "I had to be in Cairo."

Shahin, like Zayan, had watched news reports describing widespread looting in Cairo, opportunistic violence conducted after Egypt's police force disappeared from the streets of the country's main cities.

"Coming here I had no idea whether

I was here to protect my family from the danger of chaos or to participate in the protest before it fizzled," Shahin said. He was quickly drafted into a neighbourhood watch standing guard over his area by night. By day, he worked remotely, communicating with his colleagues in London by landline.

His bosses were supportive, but worried about his safety and his family, even asking if he needed help bringing relatives to London.

Tarek Mounir, a surgeon in Geneva, had a more difficult time deciding whether to leave his wife and children to come back to Egypt. "I was changing my mind every five minutes. It was quite difficult," he said.

On February 1, Mubarak made a speech pledging he would not stand for re-election in September, and promising to seek constitutional reforms

"When the president came out, I leaned towards not going, thinking that his word meant something," Mounir said. "I kind of thought it might be a good idea to let him stay in power."

But a day later, he watched in horror as government supporters charged Tahrir Square. Several people were killed in the clashes that ensued.

"I think that's what made a lot of us decide that even though we might not change the balance in favour of the revolution, there was no way we would continue to sip our coffee overseas when our countrymen were being treated like that."

His nine-year-old son was "demanding" that he leave, and his colleagues offered to take his shifts "so I could take part in the revolution." Diaspora Egyptians now face another tough decision, deciding when to return. — AFP



## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Major's widow's pension raised to Rs 18,000

THE pension of an army officer's widow has been revised from Rs 80 to Rs 18,000 a month, the government yesterday informed the Supreme Court, which, however, observed there was a feeling that bureaucrats were insensitive towards families of the armed forces personnel.

There is a feeling that bureaucrats don't care for them, the apex court bench of Justice Markandey Katju and Justice B S Chauhan said.

The court said that whatever may be the final decision, the service personnel should feel that their case was given an adequate hearing and consideration. A grievance needs to be given a hearing even if it is decided against the aggrieved service personnel, the court said.

Petitioner Pushpa Vanti is the widow of Major Dharam Chand, who joined the British India Army in 1937 and was promoted as a Junior Commissioned Officer in 1946. He was granted permanent commission in 1948.

## Jaya exempted from attending assembly

THE Tamil Nadu assembly yesterday passed a resolution exempting Leader of Opposition and AIADMK general secretary J Jayalalitha from attending the house on health grounds.

Moving a resolution to this effect, O Panneerselvam, deputy leader of the opposition, said Jayalalitha is indisposed and should be exempted from attending the assembly this session as the doctors attending her have advised complete rest.

The resolution was passed unanimously. Since 2006, when the DMK party came to power, Jayalalitha has been attending the assembly sessions occasionally. She kept her membership by signing the attendance register once in six months.

## Bihar proposes increase in plan outlay

THE Bihar government has decided to raise the state's plan size by about 20 per cent, much above what the Planning Commission had proposed.

It has sent to the Planning Commission a plan outlay proposal of Rs 24,000 crore even though it had last year used only Rs 11,000 crore of the allocated Rs 20,000 crore.

The state government has sent a proposal of plan outlay of Rs 24,000 crore for the next fiscal year to the Planning Commission, an official said.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will meet Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia on February 15 in this connection.

## Four kids buried alive as school wall collapses

FOUR schoolchildren were buried alive and one was critically injured when the boundary wall of a primary school caved in near this Himachal Pradesh town yesterday during school hours. The government has announced an interim compensation for the victims' families.

Four children died on the spot when a wall of the Government Primary School at Chhatarpur Dhada, some 15 km from here, collapsed, Deputy Commissioner K R Bharti said.

He said the accident occurred when the students, belonging to economically weaker sections, were playing during the recess. The children belonged to the age group of seven to 11.

## 1,500 illegal colonies to be regularised

THE Delhi government yesterday decided to regularise around 1,500 unauthorised colonies in the city after their residents pay development charges for providing amenities like potable water, roads and electricity.

Property owners in these colonies will have to pay development charges of Rs 200 per square metre. They will be given 90 days to pay the charges after the regularisation notification.

It has been decided that an interest at the rate of 10 per cent per annum would be charged in case of delayed payments, an official said.

The resident welfare associations of these colonies may also collect the charges and deposit them in the urban development department.

## Two held for stealing police Gypsy van

TWO unemployed young men were arrested for stealing a Gypsy van of the Criminal Investigation Department of Punjab Police, an official said yesterday. The two youth had used a master key to steal the Gypsy that was parked outside the Punjab Police Training School here in Sector 22.

Two CID officials started following the tyre marks of the Gypsy and reached Sector 20. They found the accused were trying to tow the Gypsy away with an auto-rickshaw. They immediately nabbed the two and handed them over to Chandigarh Police.



RESCUED crew members of a Thai fishing vessel that was hijacked off the Somali coast six months ago at a police station in Mumbai yesterday. The 28 Thai and Myanmar crew were among 52 people taken off the vessel and brought to Mumbai for questioning. A Mumbai magistrate yesterday remanded an Ethiopian and 14 Somali pirates to judicial custody for seven days. — AFP

## Inflation indicators Country on track to grow 8.6 pc for rural, urban

NEW DELHI — India will come up with separate barometers of inflation for rural and urban areas, from February 18, to help monitor price movement in different parts of the country, a senior official said yesterday. There will be separate series of a consumer price index (CPI) for rural, urban and combined, (rural plus urban), Chief Statistician of India T C A Anant told reporters.

The first series of the new indices will be released on February 18 this year. These indices will be available for five major groups namely food, beverages and tobacco, fuel and light, housing, clothing, bedding and footwear and miscellaneous.

Present CPI numbers do not encompass all the segments of the population the country and as such they do not reflect the true picture of the price behaviour. It is therefore necessary to compile a CPI which takes into

account the consumption patterns of all segments of the population, said a statement from the statistics and programme implementation ministry.

The new series will be based on 2010 price level.

For the new CPI on urban areas, 310 towns have been selected, which include capitals of all states and union territories.

To monitor the price movement in rural areas, the government's chief statistics office has selected 1,181 villages.

The broad criterion of selection of villages is to have representation of all the districts within state/union territories and two villages from each district have been selected randomly from different tehsils.

The Central Statistical Organisation will also compile a national CPI by merging rural and urban indices with appropriate weightages. — IANS

## ULFA splits, rejects talks

GUWAHATI — The outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) has vertically split with the elusive commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah yesterday rejecting the proposed February 10 peace talks between New Delhi and the rebel leadership now out on bail.

The decision taken by the general council to hold peace talks with the government cannot be considered legal as the general council itself was unconstitutional, an emailed statement by Arunodoi Dohotia, ULFA publicity secretary, said.

The ULFA leadership on Saturday told journalists here that the outfit's general council held last week decided to open unconditional peace talks with the central government and that all the resolutions adopted at that meeting were conveyed to Paresh Baruah.

## Shutdown in Kerala town to mourn death of woman thrown off train

SHORNUR — A complete shutdown was observed in this Kerala town yesterday to mourn the death of a young woman who was pushed out of a moving train by a thief only to be raped on the railway tracks by him as she lay severely injured.

Soumya, 23, the sole breadwinner of her family, was given a tearful farewell at the public crematorium near here as people vented their anger against railway officials for not providing security on trains. A huge crowd of people from all walks of life turned up at the crematorium to witness the last rites of Soumya.

Soumya died on Sunday night

after battling for life since Tuesday last when she was thrown out from a moving train by a proclaimed thief, who first smashed her head with a stone and then raped her.

She was on her way home from work as a marriage proposal for her was being discussed.

Soumya was working in an office at Kochi and was returning by the Emakulam-Shornur passenger train when the thief accosted her in the women's compartment which did not have any police guard.

Later, she was found in an unconscious state near the track at Vettikkattiri near Cheruthuruthy at

9.30 pm, after the guard informed the Railway Police that he had seen someone fall off the moving train.

Even though she was given immediate medical attention, Soumya was on ventilator with a fractured skull and bleeding in the brain. She died Sunday evening.

Across the state, angry youth wing activists of various parties turned their ire against the railway establishment and blocked trains to protest lack of security on trains. In the Kerala assembly, Home Minister Kodiyeri Balakrishnan said there were not adequate Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel on trains.

## Bhardwaj relents on doctorate to Kannada scholar

BANGALORE — Karnataka Governor H R Bhardwaj yesterday withdrew his opposition to Bangalore University's decision to give an honorary doctorate to a noted Kannada scholar known for his right-wing views.

Bhardwaj's nod to the varsity's proposal to honour M Chidananda Murthy, well-known in Karnataka for his research into the history of Kannada language and Karnataka, came a day after leading writers in the state slammed him for opposing it.

Bhardwaj on Sunday justified his decision saying that media reports had said that Murthy had justified the series of attacks on churches in Karnataka in 2008.

He had also expressed 'commu-

nal views' and as the chancellor of the universities and as head of the state, the governor was duty bound to verify the antecedents of people to be honoured to avoid controversies, Bhardwaj said.

His stand drew flak from not only leading writers but also from the 77th Kannada Sahitya Sammelana that ended on Sunday. The Sammelana adopted a resolution condemning Bhardwaj's stand.

Leading the attack on Bhardwaj was Jnanpith award winner U R Ananthamurthy who told the Sammelana: I do not agree with several views of Murthy but the governor's action is unjust and unacceptable. Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa, who is involved in a running battle with Bhardwaj over his alleged

attempts to bring down the first Bharatiya Janata Party government in south India, demanded an apology from the governor for insulting a well-known scholar.

Apparently in a move to defuse the brewing row over his stand, Bhardwaj not only agreed to the varsity's proposal but invited Murthy to Raj Bhavan last night for a talk.

I got a call from his office that a car will be sent to pick me up for a meeting with the governor. I am happy the governor has accepted the university's proposal, Murthy told reporters.

Murthy had welcomed the recent report of a judicial panel absolving the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the government and Hindu groups of the 2008 church attacks.

## PRP's merger with Cong may benefit TDP, Jagan

HYDERABAD — The merger of Telugu superstar K Chiranjeevi's Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) with the ruling Congress in Andhra Pradesh has changed political equations in the state that has been witnessing instability for more than a year.

This development will bring some clarity to the hazy political scenario in the state but is also likely to benefit rivals of the Congress party in the long run, feel political observers.

Though the merger brought some cheer to the Congress, Chiranjeevi is not expected to fill the leadership vacuum formed by the death of its popular leader and then

chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy in a helicopter crash in September 2009.

The merger of the PRP, which has 18 legislators in the 294-member assembly, will provide some breather to the Congress, worried over the threat posed to its survival by former MP Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, the son of the late Rajasekhara Reddy.

With 155 legislators, the Congress enjoys a slender majority in the assembly and has been under threat ever since Jagan, as the MP is popularly known, quit the party in November last year accusing the leadership of dividing his family. The young leader, who enjoys the backing of

two dozen legislators of Congress party, had been taunting the ruling party that the government is at its mercy.

The merger has provided some temporary relief to the Congress, which was afraid of a no-trust motion in the budget session of the assembly beginning February 17. The ruling party is also confident of support from the seven-member Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) if the trial of strength becomes inevitable.

The main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) feels it has one rival less now and hopes there will be no division of anti-Congress votes in the next elections. — IANS

sluggish recovery in advanced markets, but it shrunk to \$2.6 billion in December.

Trade Secretary Rahul Khullar has said that if global crude and commodity prices rise, the trade deficit in the January-March quarter could widen again.

"I am happy with the 8.6 per cent growth. But there are other concerns apart from GDP. My main concerns are inflation and the trade gap," Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters.

In the fiscal year that ended last March, India's GDP rose 8 per cent, up from 6.7 per cent in the fiscal year that ended in March 2009.

India's chief statistician, T C A Anant, said rising global crude oil prices had put pressure on India's fiscal deficit, although he expects the government to meet its target of keeping the fiscal deficit to 5.5 per cent of GDP this fiscal year. Rising crude prices threaten to add to the government's fuel-subsidy burden.

India's expected GDP growth this fiscal year will be helped by a rebound in agriculture, which is expected to grow 5.4 per cent on good monsoon rains after

expanding by just 0.2 per cent a year earlier following a severe drought.

The full-year outlook implies a slowdown in fiscal fourth-quarter growth to about 8 per cent year-on-year, a four-quarter low, according to Dariusz Kowalczyk, an analyst at Credit Agricole-CIB in Hong Kong.

The expected January-March quarter moderation "would provide hope for slowdown in demand-pulled price pressures", Kowalczyk said in a note.

The strong growth in agriculture is expected despite recent shortages in vegetables, such as onions and potatoes, which have led to high food inflation spilling into the broader economy.

India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India, has raised interest rates seven times since March, although monetary policy is expected to have only a limited impact on reining in supply-side driven food inflation.

Rising interest rates, meanwhile, have taken a toll on manufacturing, which is expected to grow by 8.8 per cent this fiscal year, down from nearly 11 per cent growth a year earlier. — Reuters

## Forced evictions for CWG violated human rights

NEW DELHI — Forced eviction of people from their homes because of the 2010 Commonwealth Games seriously violated their rights and even led to the deaths of some people, a report said yesterday.

The irony is that most of the sites of forced eviction covered by the report are lying vacant or unused.

Former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah, who released the report by NGO Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), said that there has been failure of the political and legal system to investigate, try and pros-

ecute officials who violated human rights.

The HLRN fact-finding mission covered 19 sites in Delhi from where the government forcibly evicted families because of the Commonwealth Games, for reasons ranging from construction of infrastructure to security and city beautification.

One of the major findings of the report, titled 'Planned Dispossession: Forced Evictions and the 2010 Commonwealth Games', was that there was no notice sent of demolition of houses in 16 of the 19 sites.

## Army refloats tenders for heavy guns

NEW DELHI — The Indian Army has once again begun the process of acquiring heavy guns, floating tenders for both the towed and tracked systems that have a range of up to 40 km.

The tender for the towed gun was issued on January 28 while that for the tracked version was issued in mid-January.

India Strategic defence magazine quoted sources as saying that that several vendors from France, the US, Britain, Israel, the Czech Republic and other countries were invited but no details of the tender specifications were available as they are generally secret in accordance with General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQRs).

India had earlier cancelled its Request for Proposal (RfP) for 1,580 towed guns (155mm, 52 calibre), as well as for tracked guns over allegations of corruption involving one company

or another. That set back the army's artillery modernisation programme by three to five years over and above the 10-year-long delay in the process.

India Strategic also reported that meanwhile, the good news is that the summer and winter field trials of the ultralight gun, BAE Systems M777 A1 have been completed successfully within 2010 at the Pokhran range and negotiations are now to be conducted for acquiring 145 of them from the US government under its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme.

The 155mm/45 calibre gun, which can be slung-carried by heavy-lift helicopters like the Boeing Chinook, or ferried by heavy trucks, is to be deployed in the mountains.

The process to acquire this type of gun was initiated in 2006 and the defence ministry has already allocated the funds for this.

## Plastic bags below 40 microns banned

NEW DELHI — Taking the fight against polluting plastic a step further, the environment ministry yesterday notified that plastic carry bags should be of a minimum thickness of 40 microns and will not be given free of cost to consumers.

The new Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2011 announced yesterday will replace the earlier Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999.

The ministry has set a uniform minimum thickness of not less than 40 microns for plastic bags against the previous 20 microns.

The new rules ban use of plastic material in sachets

for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala. Foodstuff will not be allowed to be packed in recycled plastics or compostable plastics.

One of the major provisions under the new set of rules is the explicit recognition of the role of waste pickers. The municipal authority will now have to constructively engage agencies or groups working in waste management, including waste pickers.

It is impractical and undesirable to impose a blanket ban on the use of plastic all over the country. The real challenge is to improve municipal solid waste management systems,

said Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh.

Ramesh said in addition to the privatisation and mechanisation of the municipal solid waste management systems we must be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the lakhs of people involved in the informal sector.

No carry bags shall be made available free of cost to consumers. The municipal authority may determine the minimum price for plastic carry bags.

They may also direct the manufacturers to establish plastic waste collection centres, either collectively or individually, said the rules.



## 2G scam: Telecom company official's plea disallowed

NEW DELHI — The Delhi High Court yesterday disallowed a plea for speedy disposal of a petition filed by an official of a telecom company, facing probe in the 2G spectrum scam.

India Director of Etisalat DB Telecom Shahid Usman Balwa moved the court for directions to restrain the central government from making any allegation linking him with underworld don Dawood Ibrahim.

Balwa said that due to the allegations he has been facing huge embarrassment in social and business circles.

Justice S Muralidhar rejected Balwa's application requesting the court to take up his case as early as possible. The case is fixed for March 7.

The Etisalat DB Telecom company, earlier known as Swan Telecom, is facing probes in the 2G spectrum allocation scam.

In view of the newspapers reporting false and incorrect allegations made against me, I am facing embarrassment

in social and business circle... As a result of wrongful and defamatory allegations, grave prejudice and loss is being caused to me, Balwa said in the application.

He said due to the allegations some banks cancelled loans sanctioned to his company and withdrew the credit facility sanctioned to companies promoted by him.

It has been alleged that after getting telecom licence and spectrum at Rs 1,530 crore, Swan Telecom sold its 45 per cent stake in Etisalat at a whopping Rs 4,500 crore.

The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) rejected the proposal of Etisalat for further investment of Rs 380 crore in India following objections by the home ministry.

The ministry informed the FIPB that Etisalat DB could not be granted security clearance on four grounds.

Following this, Balwa moved the court which has sought a response from the ministry. — IANS



SCHOOLGIRLS cheer as they fly a kite during an event to mark the Basant or spring festival in Amritsar yesterday. Basant is celebrated mainly in Haryana and Punjab marking the start of the spring season. — Reuters

## Paternity suit: Tiwari to undergo DNA test

NEW DELHI — The Delhi High Court yesterday gave Congress leader N D Tiwari a day to complete the formalities for undergoing a DNA test on a suit filed by a young man claiming to be his biological son.

A division bench of Justice Vikramjit Sen and Justice Siddharth Mridul asked for a Tiwari aide to appear before the joint registrar today and complete all the formalities for the test. Till then, the order on Tiwari's plea opposing the DNA test in the paternity suit was reserved.

Rohit Shekhar, 31, claims to be Tiwari's biological son, born out of an alleged relationship between his mother Ujjwala Sharma and the Congress leader.

Senior advocate Jayant Bhushan appeared for Tiwari, who has asked for an interim stay of the December 23, 2010 court order asking him to undergo the DNA test.

Bhushan said there was no urgency as the petitioner (Rohit) has not sought any pecuniary relief.

The bench asked: Can Tiwari file an affidavit that he would remain alive for the next 10 years? Tiwari cannot be compelled by the court to give his blood sample and there are various Supreme Court judgements on the issue, Bhushan said.

Tiwari, who had held the posts of chief minister of undivided Uttar Pradesh and later Uttarakhanda, has opposed the paternity suit.

Tiwari, who last year resigned as Andhra Pradesh governor in the wake of allegations of misconduct, countered the claims and said he never had any physical relationship with Ujjwala, who is also a Congress activist.

Shekhar, he said, was not entitled to seek a DNA test as a matter of right.

On December 23, 2010, the Delhi High

Court had ordered Tiwari to undergo the DNA test to ascertain Shekhar's claim.

A single-judge bench of Justice S Ravindra Bhat said it cannot disregard the right of a child to know about his or her biological father. The single judge order asking the leader to undergo the test was erroneous as a legal and valid marriage was subsisting between Ujjwala and Bimal Prasad Sharma, the legitimate father of Rohit, said Bhushan.

The words paternity and legitimacy, were interchangeable and no distinction can be made between them, Bhushan said.

Counsel Sudhir Nandrajog, appearing for Shekhar, opposed Tiwari's plea, saying that paternity and legitimacy were two distinct issues and the single judge had rightly asked the Congress leader to undergo the test.

## Son denies misuse of land of Chandra Shekhar trust

NEW DELHI — The Bharat Yatra Trust (BYT) founded by former prime minister Chandra Shekhar is at the centre of a controversy with its chief Mohan Dharia alleging that his signature has been forged in the record of a recent meeting, which approved the leasing of the trust properties, while Chandra Shekhar's son and MP Neeraj Shekhar and trust secretary Sudhindra Bhadoria denying the charges.

Neeraj Shekhar said categorically that there was no attempt to encash on the appreciating real estate value of the hundreds of acres of trust land in many states. There was no plan to lease out its properties, Neeraj Shekhar said on phone from Ballia, his and his late father's Lok Sabha constituency.

Reacting to a report that BYT trustees were at loggerhead over the alleged move by some of them to lease out trust land to private interests, he said: There is no question of giving out these lands to private interests in any way. Bhadoria, a long-time associate of Chandra Shekhar and secretary of BYT, said: The trust is not into real estate deals. We will approve only those action which can justify the cause and memory of Chandra Sekharji.

The controversy began with a media report that Dharia had written to Bhadoria that his signatures had been forged in the minutes of a meeting held in Pune on December 18 providing for the lease of the trust land to private parties.

The trust owns hundreds of acres of land at prime locations in 13 centres, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

The Pune meeting minutes said that the trustees of the meeting have discussed the matter relating to maintenance of the trust property in order to achieve the objectives of the trust. The trustees present appreciate the steps taken by the earlier trustees and gave their consent for the same.

The Pune meeting was attended by four trustees — Dharia, Bhadoria, Janata Dal-United president Sharad Yadav and socialist activist Bhai Vaidya.

Bhadoria, displaying the minutes of the meet, said: All are welcome to see for themselves the minutes, which carries the original signature of Dharia in blue ink. According to him, the charges are levelled by H N Sharma, who was a functionary in Chandra Shekhar's office, with ulterior motives. Since he was not associated with the Yatra, he does not deserve our reply. Neeraj Shekhar, however, clarified that there was no bar on using the land for public welfare. Anything that is public oriented can come up on these trust lands but it has got to be in the name of (my father).

He said the land could only be used to establish educational or technical institutions or hospitals including medical colleges.

The MP said the trust was set up by his father after he undertook the Bharat Yatra from Kanyakumari to Rajghat in New Delhi covering 4,260 km in 1983.

After the 170-day march, Chandra Shekhar — who eventually became prime minister in 1990-91 — set up the centre to train political workers rooted in socialist ideology.

## Goa asks CBI to probe drug claims

PANAJI — The Goa government has asked Indian federal investigators to probe alleged cases of police dealing drugs to foreign visitors in the popular resort state.

Sanjay Srivastava, the state chief secretary, has written to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) asking them to look into the matter following two well-publicised cases.

Last year, the Swedish girlfriend of an Israeli national secretly filmed him apparently detailing how some drugs squad officers gave him confiscated narcotics to sell.

The footage was then posted on the Internet video-sharing website YouTube, leading to the arrest and suspension of seven police officers.

In a second case, hidden camera footage shot by Israeli nationals also apparently showed another drugs squad officer selling drugs to two foreign visitors.

State Home Minister Ravi Naik told the local legislature that the CBI has now been asked to probe the cases. Both incidents appeared to back up long-held claims that police in the former Portuguese colony turned a blind eye to drug-pushing. — AFP



MINISTER for Commerce and Industry Anand Sharma meets with US Commerce Secretary Gary Locke in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

## US urges India to remove trade barriers

NEW DELHI — US Commerce Secretary Gary Locke yesterday urged India to remove trade barriers and address concerns of foreign companies regarding the country's business environment.

"Even though India has made tremendous strides to open up its economy, there is much work left to be done," Locke said at a meeting organised by Indian business chambers in New Delhi.

"While many tariffs have come down, others remain. Even when there are not outright tariffs, there are other non-tariff barriers that limit trade and investment," he said.

Locke mentioned ranging from 19-per cent levies on civil aviation aircraft to 26 per cent on X-ray film and 50 per cent on apples. India's tariff and non-tariff barriers explained why it was still ranked only 134th out of 183 countries on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report, he added.

He also urged improvements in laws on intellectual property rights. Locke is leading a high-end technology trade mission to promote the export of technologies in sectors such as civil nuclear energy, aviation and defence to Asia's third-largest economy.

Trade between India and US has grown steadily — between 2002 and 2009, US exports to India quadrupled, from \$4.1 billion to more than \$16.4 billion.

India is a key market for Washington's national export initiative, which aims to double US exports in five years.

Locke, who earlier met with Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said he had asked New Delhi to remove trade barriers and allow US firms further market access.

"We held frank talks on policy regimes, tariff simplification, market access and non-tariff barriers. I am sure both the countries would continue to impress upon

these issues," Sharma said.

Locke said if hindrances on investing in India were resolved, many more US firms would set up base in India, generating more jobs.

Meanwhile, a high level delegation from the US energy department is on a 10-day visit to India to discuss ways of co-operation and partnership in the nuclear energy sector, the US embassy said.

Representatives from the US department of energy are visiting India to learn more about the country's nuclear energy community and identify nuclear development opportunities and partnerships that will benefit both countries, according to a statement released by the embassy.

During the visit, representatives from Idaho National Laboratory (INL), the US government's lead nuclear engineering and science laboratory, will interact with leaders and researchers in the government, industry and academia. — dpa

## HC to decide on Kasab sentence on Feb 21

MUMBAI — Two Indian judges will announce later this month whether the sole surviving gunman from the Mumbai attacks will have his death sentence confirmed, one of his lawyers said yesterday.

"Judgment has been posted for February 21," Farhana Shah said after an administrative hearing in the appeal of Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab at the Bombay High Court.

Judges Ranjana Desai and R V More blamed the mass of paperwork in the high-profile case for the delay.

Under Indian law, death sentences have to be confirmed by the local state high court. The judges can uphold the sentence, reduce it, order a retrial or overturn the conviction, said Shah.

If the death sentence is upheld, there is a further right of appeal to the Supreme Court in New Delhi and as a last resort to India's president.

Kasab's lawyers have asked for a retrial, arguing that his trial lawyer was not given sufficient time to wade through the 11,000-page chargesheet before the case began. They also said evidence and witnesses were manipulated.

Kasab, 23, was convicted in May last year of waging war against India, murder, attempted murder and terrorism offences after he and an accomplice opened fire on and threw grenades at commuters at Mumbai's main railway station.

A total of 52 people were killed in what was the bloodiest episode in the wave of attacks that also included three luxury hotels.

A decision is also expected at the hearing in two weeks' time on a prosecution appeal against the acquittal of Kasab's two Indian co-defendants, who were accused of making maps of potential targets for the attackers.

The trial judge rejected the prosecution evidence against them as flimsy. — dpa

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Gunmen abduct six WWF volunteers

GUNMEN abducted six volunteers of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) from a tiger reserve in Assam, news reports said yesterday.

The volunteers, three women and three men, were abducted late on Sunday from Manas National Park, 200 kilometres west of the state capital, Guwahati, the NDTV network reported. All the volunteers were Indian, the report said.

"A group of about 20 gunmen kidnapped the six WWF officials while they were carrying out tiger- and elephant-counting and -monitoring exercises inside the park," Kampa Borgoyary, an administrative official, said.

### Kolkata Metro stations to be named after journalists

TWO stations of the proposed new Kolkata Metro Railway line will be named after journalists Barun Sengupta and Gour Kishore Ghosh, Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee announced.

"The stations at Science City and Chingrighata of the new Metro Railway line between Kavi Subhas in South 24 Parganas and Dum Dum airport in North 24 Parganas will be named after journalists Barun Sengupta and Gour Kishore Ghosh," said Banerjee at Salt Lake in the north-eastern fringes of the city.

Founder-editor of Bengali newspaper *Bartaman*, Sengupta was a popular political critic.

Ghosh was a celebrated Bengali writer and journalist, who became a senior editor of vernacular daily *Anandabazar Patrika*.

### Shiv Sena snubs Munde over remarks on MNS

A DAY after senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Gopinath Munde claimed that Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena could be part of a future Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, the Sena snubbed him yesterday saying its alliance decisions are taken only by party chief Bal Thackeray.

A Sena spokesperson declined comment on Munde's suggestion, made at the BJP state unit's working committee session in Aurangabad on Sunday, saying there is nothing to react over it.

About any political alliances, the spokesperson said Munde should remember that all such decisions (on alliances) are taken not by him (Munde), but by Sena chief Thackeray and executive president Uddhav Thackeray.

### Tiger rescued from well, to be let off in the wild

A TIGER, which had fallen into a dry well near the Chameli forest area, was finally extricated yesterday evening after a three-hour rescue operation, a wildlife official said.

The tiger, a full grown adult around four years old, fell into the 40-feet-deep dry well, which was not protected by a wall, said Nitin Desai, Central India director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India.

From preliminary information available, it was probably chasing some prey like deer or a wild boar and must have accidentally fallen into the well around dawn today. It spent around ten hours in the well without food or water, Desai said.

The animal's plight was detected almost five hours later when some tribals and forest officials heard its roar and alerted police and wildlife officials, who then mounted a rescue operation.

### Two held for threatening calls to Varun Gandhi

TWO men have been arrested for making threatening calls to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Varun Gandhi, police said.

While Chandrapal, in his late 30s, was arrested from Pilibhit, Varun's parliamentary constituency, another man named Dharendra Kumar was nabbed from the neighbouring Shahjahanpur.

Both of them were arrested on information provided by our surveillance units, Superintendent of Police Prem Gautam told reporters in Pilibhit, some 250 km from Lucknow.

According to police, an official of Varun's office in Pilibhit had registered a complaint with the police that the MP was issued life threats on his mobile phone on January 31.

### Private firms to manage Delhi's street lights

THE Delhi government yesterday decided to rope in private power distribution companies for maintaining the city's street lights.

It is also necessary in view of the safety of the common man. The private companies will take over this work as they have ample workforce and technical infrastructure to provide a better and well-managed service, Chief Minister Shiela Dikshit told reporters.

## Punjab's passport office to keep check on 'holiday marriages'

JALANDHAR — Thousands of women in Punjab have fallen prey to holiday marriages, duped into marriage by non-resident Indians visiting India and then dumped. The passport office in Jalandhar has formed a women's grievance cell to deal with such complaints and take action against the accused husbands.

Around 15,000 girls from Punjab's Doaba region, consisting of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala districts, were duped by their NRI husbands during the last few years. Jalandhar has maximum number of such cases, Parneet Singh, passport officer of the Regional Passport Office (RPO), said.

Therefore, to provide support and

justice to these destitute women, we have constituted a 'women's grievance cell'. This cell would cater to the complaints from women and depending on the merits of the case, take action under various sections of the Passport Act, 1967, Singh said.

According to RPO officials, Section 10 (3) of the Passport Act states that the passport issuing authority can impound the passport of such offenders in public interest after issuing them a show-cause notice.

The complainant woman has to produce the marriage certificate, copy of the First Information Report (FIR) and documents detailing the husband's name, date of birth and address.

We would first issue a show-cause notice to the guilty and then his passport would be confiscated to stop him from going abroad. Then, he cannot leave the country until the matter is resolved, either legally or through mutual consent. However, if he manages to flee, then we would inform the Indian embassy abroad and he would be immediately deported to India, Singh said.

We have also asked district marriage officers to furnish us the details of NRI grooms so that we can tell them to add the names of their wives on the passports. It would take only 24 hours time from our side, he added.

Singh said they will also discuss the

matter with the Punjab government.

This is a very serious matter. We have decided to take up the matter with the Punjab government. We will give them some suggestions that can be followed while registering marriages to avoid such incidents, he said.

The Jalandhar RPO caters to four districts of Punjab — Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahar and Kapurthala.

Local NGOs fighting against 'holiday marriages' and working for the rights of women have welcomed the initiative.

There are countless cases where NRI grooms have deserted their Punjabi wives after taking huge cash and dowry from them. — IANS



## Perils of integration?

By Sam Reeves

ON June 22, 1948, the ship *Empire Windrush* docked just outside London loaded with hundreds of men from the West Indies, marking a sea change in British culture — the start of mass immigration. More than half a century on and after successive waves of arrivals from across the world, Britain is struggling more than ever with the vexed question of how to integrate the newcomers.

Prime Minister David Cameron has now reignited the debate by claiming in a speech on Saturday that the long-standing policy of multiculturalism is a failure and in part to blame for fostering extremism. Multiculturalism — generally understood as meaning no single culture or set of values should be promoted above any other — was encouraging different cultures to live separate lives, said Cameron. Young people felt drawn to violent ideology because they found no strong collective identity in Britain, he added in the speech at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday. “If we are to defeat this threat, I believe it’s time to turn the page on the failed policies of the past,” he said.

His remarks came at a time when the issue of home-grown militancy is fresh in the minds of many, almost two months after a botched suicide attack in Stockholm by a man allegedly radicalised in Britain. They were also sure to remind listeners in Britain of the attacks on the London transport network in 2005 by four home-grown suicide bombers, which killed 52 people. While the speech was swiftly condemned by groups and opposition politicians, the furor masked the fact that this is just the latest problem Britain has faced with integrating outsiders. Jewish immigrants faced hostility initially but by late 19th century that they enjoyed freedom in every walk of life. Now there are countless examples of Jewish people at the highest level in every profession in Britain, such as leader of the main opposition Labour party Ed Miliband, the son of Jewish refugees.

There have also been numerous examples of problems integrating minorities in the past 60 years since the start of post-World War II mass immigration, such as race riots in Brixton, south London, in the 1980s. Despite repeated attempts by governments to ease integration, polls suggest hostility towards immigration remains high. Britons are much more hostile towards immigrants than other developed nations, according to the major Transatlantic Trends survey published earlier this month of people across western Europe, the US and Canada.

As for Cameron’s remarks, commentators were split on Sunday as to his reason for making them, with some seeing it as a tough new stance while others said it was simply to appease the right wing of his Conservative party. “There was this belief [under the Labour government] that supporting and reaching out to the non-violent extremists would prevent violent extremists from committing acts of terrorism,” wrote Haras Rafiq, of anti-extremism think-tank Centri, in the Observer newspaper. “It appears that Cameron now believes that approach was muddled.” Others however saw the comments as a sop to the right wing of his Conservative party, which rules in a coalition with the more centrist Liberal Democrats, and little to do with plans for future policy.

“I think it is interesting he’s doing a speech at this time given he’s seen as a liberal Tory, a bit close to the Lib Dems,” Professor Steven Fielding, Director of the Centre For British politics at Nottingham University, said. “He’s positioning himself.” Downing Street said that Cameron’s comments were merely intended to indicate the “direction of travel” and he was not going into detail on policy, which was still being worked on.

## One law for one nation

By Noah Barkin

AS Berlin presses its euro zone partners to introduce tough German-style deficit rules, first cracks are emerging in the country’s own commitment to the ‘debt brake’ law it holds up as a model for others. Chancellor Angela Merkel is pushing other European countries to enshrine binding rules based on the German legislation in their constitutions as part of a new anti-crisis package meant to overcome the currency bloc’s debt crisis. The German law forces the federal and state governments to virtually eliminate their structural budget deficits over the next 10 years. Euro zone members such as France and Spain have expressed interest in pursuing similar steps. The appeal is simple: national deficit limits that reinforced the EU’s Stability and Growth Pact would show markets that leaders are serious about getting their finances in order and reduce the risk of future crises. But economists who have studied the effectiveness of fiscal rules in shaping policy are sceptical about whether Germany’s debt-brake law can be successfully exported to other members of the currency bloc with no tradition of fiscal discipline.

Some worry that such a drive could even increase the risk of member states pursuing the kind of imaginative accounting that helped get the bloc into its current mess. “I am far from sure that these rules would work,” said Alberto Alesina, an economist at Harvard University. “A government can put rules in place but if they want to find a way around them and pursue a different policy, they will.” Exhibit A is Germany itself. Late last year, the Bundesbank and the government’s “wise men” panel of economic advisers, criticised Merkel’s coalition for violating the spirit of its own debt-brake law after Berlin refused to adjust its consolidation plans to take into account better-than-expected 2010 tax revenues.

Had it done so, its scope for new borrowing in the coming years would have been sharply reduced because 2010 is used as the base year for its goal of cutting the structural deficit to 0.35 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2016. Signs of backsliding are also evident in Germany’s most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, where a regional court is threatening to block plans by the minority government of Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens to sharply increase borrowing — in part to cover losses at regional Landesbank WestLB. Under the state government’s plan, net new borrowing would surge to 7.8 billion euros this year, compared to 4.1 billion in 2009. That would cast doubt on NRW’s ability to meet its commitments under the debt-brake law, which gives Germany’s regions until 2020 to slash their deficits to near zero.

Not all economists share the scepticism about extending Germany’s debt-brake law across Europe. Charles Wyplosz, an expert on international economics at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, has argued for years that EU-wide budget rules cannot work because they conflict with the sovereignty of the bloc’s member states. He sees Germany’s 2009 law as a potential “game changer” precisely because it was self-inflicted rather than imposed by Brussels. But even Wyplosz admits that the political hurdles to extending it are formidable. As a member of a special commission set up last year by President Nicolas Sarkozy to study the introduction of a debt rule in France, he says it quickly became clear that opposition from lawmakers on the right and left would doom the plans. In the end, the commission led by former International Monetary Fund (IMF) head Michel Camdessus came out with vague recommendations that Wyplosz refused to endorse.

# Challenges aplenty for a leader-in-waiting

By Andrew Heavens

SOUTH Sudan will become Africa’s newest country in July and many feel its best hopes of a peaceful birth lie in the consensus-building skills of its unassuming leader, Salva Kiir. The former army intelligence officer is already a hero to most southerners for guiding them to January’s independence referendum which saw a 99 per cent vote to secede from the north after years of civil war. Kiir now has to take the oil-producing but underdeveloped territory further to full independent statehood.

His first challenge will be to get through the next five months of negotiations with his old civil war enemies in the north over volatile issues including division of oil revenues in the build-up to the day of departure, July 9. Kiir’s imposing appearance, towering over most other politicians and sporting his trademark cowboy hat, masks an understated political

operator who favours cautious consensus-building over confrontation.

When Kiir first stepped up as the leader of the semi-autonomous south in 2005, many compared him unfavourably with his firebrand predecessor, the civil war hero John Garang.

His quiet approach and lack of polarising rhetoric could now be his main strengths in governing a landlocked territory handicapped by tribal divisions, severe poverty, unstable neighbours and huge supplies of privately held weapons.

“With Garang it was a revolution,” said International Crisis Group analyst Fouad Hikmat. “But now is the time to listen to others rather than imposing decisions.

“This is about building up a new nation from scratch ... He (Kiir) has the skills that he needs to do what is required, which is to build a south-south consensus. At the same time he commands the respect of the army.”

Garang led the then-dissident Sudan People’s Liberation Movement

(SPLM) for more than two decades fighting for what he saw as a “New Sudan”, with equal rights for all of Sudan’s peripheries. He died in a helicopter accident in 2005, months after signing the peace deal with the north that set up the referendum. His “New Sudan” dreams died with him — most southerners held on to an instinctive desire for independence even during his reign.

When Kiir, the former head of the SPLM’s military wing, took up the leadership of the movement and the region, he characteristically began working to cement that consensus. Kiir, a veteran of the SPLM’s separatist predecessor Anya Nya, has concentrated on keeping his fragmented region united. In October he offered pardons to renegade militias, inviting their members to join the movement and the southern army, and called a meeting with the region’s small opposition groups to try and agree shared positions ahead of the referendum.

Kiir has been good at bringing old

foes into the SPLM and the southern army — but worries remain about the ability of his party to accept rivals who insist on staying outside the fold. International observers accused the SPLM and southern army officers of intimidation of opposition groups during last year’s national elections.

Southern journalists have also complained about harassment, particularly when articles tackle corruption or some of the south’s more spendthrift and eccentric development projects. So far Kiir, in his late 50s, has kept himself insulated from accusations made against more confrontational supporters.

“He did survive the whole of the war. A lot of SPLM generals didn’t ... He’s got more political skills there,” said Roger Middleton, from London’s Chatham House think tank. “One thing we don’t know yet is what kind of government he wants to form once (South Sudan) is independent. How open he is going to be to non-SPLM parties? We can’t re-

ally tell that.”

Under the terms of the 2005 peace deal, Kiir also became First Vice President of all of Sudan. But he spent so much time away from Khartoum, preferring the southern capital Juba, that northerners nicknamed him Vice-Absent. In Juba, there has been little sense of a personality cult — the best way to hear Kiir speak remains to turn up at the Roman Catholic church where he worships on Sundays and listen to his impromptu addresses to the congregation.

SPLM veteran Atem Garang first met the future president when Kiir was an army intelligence officer in the southern city of Malakal in the early 1980s. At first he thought Kiir was so quiet because he was deferring to more senior officers. But the reticence has endured in high office. “He is quiet person who listens to you to the last word that you want to say,” said Atem Garang. “Salva has understood the Sudan political mentality. He has used it for the interest of the people of south Sudan.”



A NEWS reader from national television channel Kantipur Television reads the news beside a lantern in Kathmandu. The television channel is highlighting the Nepal Electricity Authority’s daily 14-hour load shedding introduced on its customers. The authorities said the generation of power has gone down due to the less water available from the rivers to generate power. — Reuters

## Dark days and darker news for Nepal

By Pratibha Tuladhar

THE television news programme opens with a studio lit by the glow of kerosene lamps rather than the bright lights that viewers are accustomed to. Producers of the Latin Bulletin programme came up with the ruse as a symbolic protest against the long power cuts that have become a part of daily life in the Himalayan country.

“Why not commemorate the problem the nation is facing by sarcasm — pressure to the government?” asked Bhushan Dahal, chief executive producer of private Kantipur Television. “We’d be more than happy if others join us,” he said of the gimmick, which was lauded by the Nepal Broadcasters Association as television stations faced heavy revenue losses because

of the power outages.

Nepal was to face 14 hours of daily power cuts starting yesterday, the Nepal Electricity Authority said. The daily scheduled cuts would go up from 12 hours to 14 hours because electricity generation had decreased with the receding water levels in reservoirs. Energy Minister Prakash Saran Mahat painted a bleak picture of the situation last week. “Since no major power plant construction has taken place so far, the country will still face power cuts for the next five years,” he said.

Nepal depends largely on hydroelectric generation for its electricity. It currently produces about 250 megawatts of electricity, but demand is 780 megawatts. “In the dry winter season, when the river flow is not uniform, the power production plummets to just 250 megawatts,” said Pradip Gan-

gol, executive manager of the Independent Power Producers Association Nepal, made up of 34 private energy firms.

“Twenty-five per cent of the generated electricity gets stolen,” he added, referring to people tapping into power lines without paying. Construction of additional power plants was hampered by Nepal’s decade-long civil war, which ended in 2006, and remained pending because of local political squabbling.

The existing eight plants are unable to meet rising demand, and the resulting power cuts are affecting everyone from the high school students studying for next month’s School Leaving Certificate exams to workers at darkened factories as the outages have brought industry to the brink.

The Sunsari-Morang industrial corridor in eastern Nepal has been experiencing 24

hours of power outages once a week and six hours of cuts on the remaining six days. That has reduced production in the industrial corridor by 60 per cent. “About 50 per cent of the labourers have lost their jobs due to the ongoing power crisis,” said Avinash Bohara, general secretary of the Morang Business Association.

The Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries said that although private generators are an alternative, they raise manufacturing costs. Nepal also buys power from India for districts near their border, but those supplies are to be suspended for about two months because of repairs to 12 transmission towers, Indian officials said.

Nepal’s electricity authority also announced that the eastern region would face 18 hours of daily power outages until the towers are repaired.

# The perfect anti-dote to dissent in Central Asia

By Robin Paxton

CENTRAL Asian leaders are likely to use a mixture of oil and gas revenues and cosmetic reforms to meet any threat of protests. Few in the strategic ex-Soviet region expect their leaders to succumb to any wave of public anger. However, in a region riven by ethnic tensions and poverty, where one country — Kyrgyzstan — has twice overthrown a president, authorities would be remiss in ignoring this warning, political analysts and opposition politicians say.

“The most important lesson? Don’t take your country to the brink,” said Mukhiddin Kabiri, chairman of the opposition Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan. Authoritarian presidents rule four of the five ex-Soviet states in Central Asia, a resource-rich region between China, Russia and Iran, which serves as a key supply conduit for US military operations in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan holds slightly more than 3 per cent of the world’s recoverable oil reserves, while the world’s fourth-largest

reserves of natural gas lie under the desert of Turkmenistan. These resources generate prosperity. Kazakhstan, the region’s largest economy, boasts per capita gross domestic product of more than \$9,000, four times that of Egypt.

In Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan, low utility bills help appease a population in a country where political dissent is not tolerated. “We have free gas, water and lighting,” said Aibibi, 34, a bookseller in an Ashgabat market. Inflation remains a region-wide threat. Unrest in Kyrgyzstan led to a colossal 19.2 per cent surge in prices last year, while in Kazakhstan food prices rose 3 per cent in January alone.

The riches of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan can be spread among relatively small populations, but Uzbekistan, a top-10 world gold miner and major cotton exporter, is home to 28 million people.

State figures portray a robust economy and the International Monetary Fund forecast 8 per cent GDP growth in 2010. However, perhaps nowhere in Central Asia are fear and repression more apparent.

President Islam Karimov, 73, says tough measures are needed to curb the threat of militancy. Human rights activists speak of religious persecution and torture. Mukhammad Salikh, 61, stood against Karimov in a 1991 election. He now lives in exile in Norway. “The danger of a social explosion has not only existed for the last 20 years. It has grown bigger with every year,” Salikh said in a recent interview with Ferghana News Agency, a private, Russian-language agency covering Central Asia affairs.

Could an “explosion” take place in Uzbekistan, immune to Western criticism of its rights record, where state television is controlled and a mainly rural population has limited access to the Internet?

UN data show 36 per cent of Uzbekistan’s population is urbanised. In Tunisia, whose president was ousted in a popular uprising in January, the figure is 67 per cent. Fear is a strong deterrent to would-be demonstrators. Uzbek government troops shot into crowds that took to the streets of Andizhan in 2005.

In Tajikistan, protests in Dushanbe

in 1992 lit the fuse for a five-year civil war. Taxi driver Turakul, 55, would rather swallow his discontent with President Imomali Rakhmon than risk a repetition. “I’ll never go out on the streets,” he said. “I have food on the table and my four sons work in Russia. We’ll tolerate this as long as we have our wages.”

Tajikistan, where the average monthly wage of \$80 is less than one-sixth of that in Kazakhstan, relies heavily on remittances from about 1 million migrant workers. Many young men, live abroad in Russia. Zardusht Alizade, an analyst in Baku, says developments in Moscow are more likely to define the direction of post-Soviet states than events elsewhere.

Kyrgyzstan is the odd man out in Central Asia. The overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev last April was its second revolt in five years. As political tension simmers, the country is experimenting with the region’s first parliamentary democracy. Kyrgyzstan had an opposition ready to seize on discontent. A sudden rise in utility bills was the last straw.

“How do you grab power in Kyrgyzstan? Gather your relatives, friends and the unemployed. Regional frictions become revolutionary movements where there is no premise but the hatred of authority,” said Bishkek-based analyst Toktogul Kakchikeyev. By comparison, political activism elsewhere is muted. Uzbek and Turkmen dissidents voice their opposition from abroad. Some countries, perhaps pre-empting the risk of popular discontent, have taken steps towards reform.

In Kazakhstan, 70-year-old President Nursultan Nazarbayev called snap elections after rejecting a referendum to let him rule unopposed for a third decade, winning US praise. In Turkmenistan, where schoolchildren and workers still line the streets to greet Kurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, the president has given a superficial nod to democracy by advocating the creation of an opposition party. Ashgabat resident Maksat, 32, said: “Tunisia and Egypt have shown there’s only a short leap between love and hate.”

## Divided in peace talks

By John Grafilo

SIXTY-year-old farmer Ambil listened intently as the leader of the Philippines’ major dissident group explained the importance of resuming peace talks with the government. Ambil, a longtime member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), is among a growing number of fighters and supporters who have expressed frustration over the slow progress in the negotiations. “I feel that the government is not serious in resolving our problem here in Mindanao,” he said, referring to the country’s conflict-racked southern region. “But I trust our leaders when they say a peace agreement is coming,” he said at an MILF camp on the outskirts of Cotabato City, 960 kilometres south of Manila.

“I hope the war would be over soon.” Ambil, who would only identify himself by his first name, said his three sons, who are also MILF fighters, do not share the optimism of their leaders. “I begged them to continue supporting the peace talks,” he said. “So far, they have agreed to give the talks a chance. We want peace, but we will not hesitate to go to war again if the government fools us.” But not everyone in the MILF is as patient as Ambil and his sons.

Ameril Umbrato Kato, a respected MILF commander, and an estimated 1,000 of his followers bolted from the organization in December in a major challenge to the leadership’s decision to continue the peace talks. “What has the negotiations achieved?” Kato asked in a video message in which he declared the formation of his new group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. “The present president wanted to restart the talks and ignored the past agreements,” he said. “They are just fooling us.” The negotiations between the MILF and the Philippine government began in 1997 but have been suspended since 2008. The two sides have agreed to resume the talks tomorrow through Thursday in Kuala Lumpur. Murad Ibrahim, chairman of the 12,000-strong MILF, said he believed a peace agreement could be achieved within a year or so if the government is sincere in the negotiations.

“We are in the last agenda of the negotiations, and we have already discussed it several times,” he explained. “We are telling our people that we have gone a long way already in the process. We have spent 14 years in the peace process. We do not want to waste the 14 years.” Security analyst Rommel Banlaoi said Murad’s optimism might be misplaced because substantive differences remain between the government and MILF relating to the issue of ancestral domain, which deals with the expansion of the current five-province Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It is the last agenda in the peace negotiations. “The MILF is asking for the setting up of a state within a state, and that is very hard for the government to accommodate,” Banlaoi said. In 2008, the Philippine Supreme Court declared as unconstitutional an interim agreement on ancestral domain between the MILF and the government of former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, which would have effectively led to a Muslim substate in Mindanao.

Three MILF commanders, including Kato, seized villages and attacked military camps in protest. The attacks and subsequent clashes between the group and security forces left more than 300 people dead and displaced more than a million. Banlaoi, executive director of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, warned that protracted peace talks would greatly erode support for Murad within the MILF. “If he will not get a peace agreement signed, it will have an adverse impact on his leadership,” Banlaoi said. “Protracted negotiations will allow hardliners to convince the mainstream fighters to join them.”





A CAMBODIAN boy walks through the grounds of the Preah Vihear temple in Preah Vihear province, some 500 km north of Phnom Penh, on the disputed border with Thailand. — AFP

## At the heart of a burning border dispute

PHNOM PENH — Built atop a cliff in the 11th century to honour the Hindu god Shiva, the Preah Vihear temple is the most celebrated example of ancient Khmer architecture outside of Cambodia's Angkor Wat.

Constructed under Cambodian King Suryavarman I during the 600-year-long Khmer empire, the temple ruins have largely withstood decades of war, but are again at the centre of a deadly border dispute with neighbouring Thailand.

French colonial surveyors in 1907 drew a map showing Preah Vihear temple perched along the Dangrek mountain range inside Cambodia. Thailand does not regard that map as valid, arguing that an earlier agreement showed the temple alongside a Thai mountain.

Thai troops occupied Preah Vihear in the 1950s, but were forced to leave after the World Court in 1962 accepted Cambodia's ownership claim. Mass demonstrations in Thailand followed the ruling.

Preah Vihear's cliff-top

position gives it a defensive military advantage, and it is reportedly the last place in Cambodia to have fallen to Khmer Rouge forces in 1975 as they swept through the country, emptying cities to create their vision of an agrarian utopia.

In 1979, Thai officials forced some 40,000 Cambodian refugees fleeing civil war and the Khmer Rouge back into their country over the heavily-mined Preah Vihear area, causing an unknown number to die.

Preah Vihear temple was also the scene of the final surrender of several hundred remaining Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces in 1998.

The temple issue lay dormant for years until Cambodia managed to get Preah Vihear listed as a UN World Heritage site in July 2008, reigniting nationalist fervour on both sides.

Each side claims ownership of a 4.6-square-kilometre area surrounding the ancient temple. Its main entrance lies

in Thailand. Unesco deemed the site exceptional for its location on a plateau with sheer cliffs overlooking a vast plain and mountain range, its rare architecture and the religious function of the temple, and its carved stone ornamentation.

Since the World Heritage listing, both sides have engaged in occasional, sometimes deadly border clashes though not as heavy or prolonged as the current bout of violence.

In 2010, Cambodia built a new road to Preah Vihear, improving access to the crumbling but picturesque structure that Phnom Penh hopes to turn into a major tourist attraction.

The road also makes it easier for Phnom Penh to send troops and weapons to the border when tensions boil over.

Cambodia has accused Thailand of damaging the ancient stone temple in the latest unrest. Local sources have reported seeing shells scattered around the grounds and lodged inside temple walls. — AFP



CARNIVAL floats kept ready in Nice, southeastern France, yesterday. The 127th edition of the Nice's Carnival, celebrating the "Mediterranean King", will start on February 18 and run until March 8.

## Car lights switched on day and night to boost safety

BRUSSELS — New cars and small vans rolling out of European factories as from yesterday will be equipped with automatic daytime lights in a new bid to raise road safety.

So-called Daytime Running Lights (DRL), that automatically switch on when the engine starts, are expected to increase road safety as they raise the visibility of vehicles for other road users, the European Commission said.

New trucks and buses will be equipped with the daytime lights in August 2012.

With 100 people killed a day on Europe's roads in 2009, the European Union is multiplying efforts to rein in reckless drivers, harshen penalties and introduce hi-tech systems to save lives. The commission said road users, including pedestrians and cyclists, detected vehicles using DRL more clearly and quickly than those equipped with dipped beam headlights.

DRL lights, said industry commissioner Antonio Tajani, would not only help reduce casualties but also contribute to environmental protection "as the lower energy consumption rates will reduce CO2 emissions compared to normal lights." — AFP

## Would-be royal brides swoon at waxwork Prince William

LONDON — Admirers of Britain's Prince William will get the chance to find out how Kate Middleton felt standing by his side when their engagement was announced, with the help of a life-size model unveiled yesterday.

American artist Jennifer Rubell has framed the wax model of William, which will be displayed at a London exhibition from today, ahead of the couple's wedding at Westminster Abbey on April 29.

The model is complete with a replica of Middleton's sapphire and diamond engagement ring — and would-be royal brides can live out their fairytale fantasy by slipping on the ring and standing arm-in-arm with the prince.

"It's the feminine equivalent of winning the lottery," said Rubell, 40.

"William is a living Prince Charming. When reality offers you a living, breathing human being that occupies a reality that's existed for thousands of years — that's very attractive."

Rubell, a former food writer from New York, also features in her exhibition five drinks associated with the monarchy and British empire which visitors can sample. — AFP

## Computers, people hit by virus

BRUSSELS — As Europeans cough and sniffle their way through another flu season, new data shows their computers are also quite likely to catch a bug.

Despite widespread use of antivirus software, nearly one-third of Internet users in the European Union were infected by a computer virus last year, according to official figures.

The highest rate of infection occurred in Bulgaria, where 58 per cent of those surveyed reported a computer virus, Eurostat, the European Union's statistical office, said yesterday.

Other countries with high rates included Malta, with 50 per cent, and Slovakia, Hungary and Italy each with slightly less than half of users reporting a virus.

The safest countries were Austria and Ireland, with a 14 and 15 per cent rate of infection respectively. Close behind were Finland, with 20 per cent, and Germany, with

22 per cent. Because the numbers only include users who realised they had a virus and noted it, Eurostat said the survey results were probably lower than actual infection rates.

Viruses often infect a computer when a user downloads a bugged programme or file, or opens a spam email with a corrupted link, among other methods.

Last month marked 25 years since the unleashing of the world's first computer virus, a mostly innocuous bit of code called "Brain" that was designed by Pakistani brothers to prevent software piracy. Since then, computer viruses have become more dangerous and widespread, with some of the most recent bugs targeting social networking sites such as Facebook.

Eurostat said many people reported viruses, despite the vast majority of those surveyed, 84 per cent, saying they used some sort of anti-

virus software or security tool.

The survey covered more than 200,000 computer users across the 27 countries in the European Union and was conducted during the second quarter of 2010. About 3 per cent of survey respondents said they lost money from a computer attack, through methods such as phishing or fraudulent card charges, while 4 per cent reported privacy violations.

The survey also showed that children in about 5 per cent of EU households were able to access inappropriate websites or connect with potentially dangerous people through a family computer, with the rate particularly high (11 per cent) in Italy.

EU regulators last month approved the purchase of anti-virus software maker McAfee by the world's No. 1 chipmaker, Intel, with the requirement that Intel keep its chips compatible with other antivirus makers' products. — Reuters



UNITED NATIONS Framework Convention on Climate Change executive secretary Christiana Figueres (C) releases green turtle hatchlings into the Arabian Sea at World Wildlife Fund turtle hatchery in Karachi yesterday. Figueres said mangrove forests prevent the damage of cyclones and sea intrusion and underlined the need for adopting appropriate measures to counter the disasters and natural calamities. — AFP



VISITORS look at an illuminated snow sculpture of Japan's national treasure "Hiunkaku of Hongwanji" at the 62nd Sapporo snow festival in Sapporo, on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, yesterday. About 250 snow and ice sculptures are exhibited in one of Japan's popular winter events which is held until February 13. — Reuters

## Digging a hole in quest of the Golden Shovel

TOKYO — Over a thousand people gathered on the outskirts of Tokyo, shovels in hand, to dig it out for the top prize in the Japan All-National Hole Digging Competition and claim the coveted Golden Shovel award.

The contest drew participants from all over the country to test their hole-digging prowess and claim awards not only for the deepest hole, but also for most imaginative hole and the most original costume worn during the digging.

Just over 200 teams took part in the Sunday event, with an additional 30 teams made up of either women only or groups of elementary school-age children, or

younger, competing in special categories.

"There are a lot of families and groups of friends," said Manabu Saito, a public relations officer at the Narita Dream Dairy Farm, just east of Tokyo, where the contest took place.

"However, the most numerous are those who are 'professionals' who dig for a living, such as gas company workers or those who deal with the water supply."

Participants were given 30 minutes to dig as deep as possible. Regulations govern the size of shovels, which are measured before the contest kicks off. Throwing dirt into a competitor's hole is, of course, strictly forbidden. — Reuters



THE 'Initiative for the prevention of violence with weapons' posters yesterday in Lausanne. Swiss citizens will vote on February 13 on an initiative that aims to have Swiss soldiers keep their personal army rifle in an arsenal instead of their home in order to prevent suicides and family tragedies, according to the initiative's instigators. — AFP

## Made in India, branded elsewhere

MEERUT, India — When the world's batsmen dazzle crowds at this month's cricket World Cup, many will use bats hand-made in India. But lucrative global branding that masks the bats' true makers threatens the country's craftsmen.

In cricket-mad India, family businesses that have supplied the country's leading cricketers for generations face an uncertain future of anonymity as global giants swamp the game with cash in exchange for TV-friendly logos on the big-hitters' bats.

"Buying players with advertising is far cheaper than investing in making bats. We are crafting bats, they are using stickers. They are ruining our brands, because we cannot afford to give that kind of money, those royalties to the players," says Rakesh Mahajan, director of B D Mahajan and Sons (BDM).

In his dust-filled workshop

in the northern Indian city of Meerut, dozens of workers cut, glue, sand and bend hundreds of bats everyday to the exact specifications of international superstars, who rely on their decades-old techniques.

"Sponsorship is no harm, but removing the manufacturer's branding is not fair. We are building the bats, but people are not recognising us: the sponsors are taking the credit," says Mahajan. Sat in his wood-paneled office, over the sounds of sawing and banging below, Mahajan proudly shows photos of players using BDM bats. But the pictures are undeniably dated: Former superstars carry the logo, but the current crop have followed the money.

"We have no issue with Gray Nicholls, or Kookaburra," says Mahajan, referring to the long-established UK and Australia-based equipment manufacturers.

"The problem is Nike, Reebok, Adidas, people like Britania and Hero Honda. They make biscuits and motorbikes, not bats!"

BDM employs 300 people in its two factories in Meerut, 80 kilometres north-east of Delhi, where hundreds of sports companies gather at a major hub in the country's estimated 10 billion rupee (\$219 million) cricket equipment market.

Wood shavings carpet the stone floor of the bat workshop, where scores of workers squat, filing the edges of countless bats to a smooth finish under towers of willow planks and cane handles that climb to the ceiling.

Boxes of finished bats pile up in every direction from the factory entrance, ready to be distributed across India and the world to global superstars, academy players and amateur batsmen. — Reuters



A WORKER adjusts the grip on the handle of a cricket bat at a factory in Meerut, 80 km northeast of Delhi, as cricket equipment makers race to meet a demand surge ahead of the Cricket World Cup. — Reuters

## No room on the flight for 100 rebellious passengers

BRUSSELS — Some 100 Belgian students were thrown out of a Ryanair flight after a heated argument with the crew over a luggage fee in the Canary Islands, officials and the low-cost airline said yesterday.

The shouting match erupted after a group of passengers refused to pay for oversized luggage at the gate before boarding the flight from Lanzarote to Charleroi airport outside Brussels on Saturday, the airline said.

Spanish police intervened and ordered all 166 passengers off the plane, Ryanair said in a statement.

"Following further disruptive behaviour, the police required for security reasons that this entire group (of 100) be refused travel," the airline said.

The remaining 66 passengers were allowed to board the plane three hours later. "There was a rather violent incident between a crew member and a passenger," a Belgian foreign ministry spokesman said.

A young woman who was part of the group of students said: "A flight attendant lost it and the situation degenerated due to fatigue and the stress."

Ryanair said it would bring back some of the 100 passengers who remained in Lanzarote on later flights but that individuals who "engaged in disruptive behaviour or refused to follow crew instructions" were banned.

The company will bring back some of the remaining 100 passengers in five or six groups on different flights, the Belgian foreign ministry spokesman said. — AFP



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 WANTED Male Nurse with MOH licence to work in Salalah with total special salary package. Contact ☎92444271, Fax 23294159, e-mail: liya159@gmail.com

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 A dynamic **Salesman/ Manager** required to sell electrical fittings etc, Past experience in this field a must. Must have a valid Omani or UAE driving licence. Salary and other perks negotiable. Contact with CV arto@omantel.net.om

4 BEDROOM villa South Al Hail, semi-furnished viewing recommended, available 1 April 550/- pm ☎99474200

VILLA for rent, in Mawaleh-3, near City Centre, 4 B/R, hall, 2 sitting rooms, 2 dining areas, split units, suitable for families and companies. For 650 rials. Call ☎96681229.

**VACANCY** for lady marketing executive with car and licence. Contact ☎24561010/ Fax: 24562168. E-mail: rti\_1986@yahoo.com.

**REQUIRED Dentist** with licence (preferable female) for a modern clinic in Salalah. Contact ☎99092722.

**REQUIRED** an investor partner for an existing restaurant at Muscat. Contact ☎95409484.

**OFFICE space for Rent**  
 Open Office Space on the Main Highway at Wattayah (Opposite Toyota Showroom) Contact 99338220/99263443

FLAT near Ruwi, store 100m ☎99025635

SUBSTANTIAL villa near Grand Hyatt Hotel suitable for embassy/ headquarters of major companies. Contact ☎99643760.

**REQUIRED housemaid.** Contact ☎93387962

**REQUIRED** a female partner for an office for translation services (management and marketing). Send your CV to wteoman@hotmail.com

**REQUIRED** an investor for manpower services office at Muscat. Contact ☎95409484.

**CLASSIFIED SECTION**  
 RUWI ☎24785668

3 BEDROOM flat in Al Khuwair opposite Ibis hotel, 3 toilets, living room, dining, kitchen, full split units (RO 500) no agents allowed ☎95488448, 92813443

LARGE 3 storey villa in Hay Shatti with 40 rooms and lift suitable for medical centre/ maternity hospital. Contact ☎24704994.

**REQUIRED** an investor for manpower services office at Muscat. Contact ☎95409484.

**REQUIRED** an investor for translation services (management and marketing). Send your CV to wteoman@hotmail.com

**REQUIRED** an investor for laundry shop at Muscat. Contact ☎95409484.

**CLASSIFIED SECTION**  
 RUWI ☎24785668



# 15 CLASSIFIEDS

OMAN DAILY Observer

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2011

## Sahara Hotel Apartments Rotana Hotel

We are glad to receive our honourable customers in our new hotel (Rotana Hotel) at our distinguished location at Al Khuwair area opposite the Ministries Street next to Al Zawawi Mosque. We have Single, Double rooms, suites and Meeting Hall.

For further information please contact us on the following numbers: For further information please contact us on the following numbers:  
24483888/+968-24487799 /+968-24488117 / fax : 968-24488221 +968-24476000/ 24394444 /99449009 fax: +968- 24476999

### SITUATION WANTED

CHEMICAL Engineer, Iraqi nationality having experience. (1 year) water treatment, (2 years) oil & gas field, (1 year) sales & marketing of (LPG), Central Systems Installation & Projects. Contact ☎95945927, E-mail: Fahadian\_Fahadian@yahoo.com.

NETWORKING professional + 3 years experience in network, system administration, structural cabling, Cisco switches Routers. MSc Telecom Engineering, BS Computer Engineering, CCNA, JNCIA-EX, JNCIA-ER, MCSE and RHCE. Contact ☎98813936/ 92223661

GENERAL Manager, seeks assignment, 20 years experience in Oman. Engineer, can turn around business. Experience in real estate, building materials, construction machinery, home appliances, overseas representation, joint venture, sales & marketing. Contact ☎92618954, e-mail: recruitment1234@gmail.com

HR generalist with experience in nurturing Omani Talent is looking for a challenging and exciting career in a dynamic Organisation. Contact ☎97369630.

INDIAN female nurse, having 19 years experience in MoH with licence, seeks suitable placement ☎99729288.

BUSINESS continuity planner, male, 25 yrs, looking for project management, co-ordination job, past experience in handling projects include BCP/DRP, ATM, SVS. Contact: e-mail: ammarirfan@yahoo.com

ARAB American female, 26 years, Business BA, 2 years experience (USA, Oman) placement Admin/HR Business development release available. Contact ☎98591626.

WELL qualified finance manager, with over 10 years of proven expertise in managing finance and accounts of leading companies from various backgrounds in Oman, is looking for a position in similar capacity. Contact ☎96341326.

26, male, Indian, graduate, seeks suitable placement in office administrator, Data Entry, visit visa for immediate placement. Contact ☎96248925, e-mail: shrinivas.devang@gmail.com.

MALE, 26 years, P.G Diploma in 3D Animation, more than 2 years experience as animator, proficient in Maya software-lighting, texturing and inorganic modelling (sets & props), multi-linguistic and good communication skills, presently on visit visa, seeks suitable placement. ☎98295939, email:febin.joshy@gmail.com

INDIAN female College Lecturer (IT Computer Science, MPhil/MSc qualified, with 8 years teaching experience in reputed university college in Oman and India, seeks placement. Call ☎96170812/92954948.

YOUNG & energetic Indian male, 32 years old with more than 7 years experience in HR & admin, presently working for a well established construction co, excellent in Word, Excel, Foxpro & ERP computer system, looking for a suitable placement. Please contact ☎96129755.

CHARTERED accountant, Indian female, with 4½ years of post qualification experience, seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎93291178.

ELECTRICAL Engg (higher diploma), 7 yrs experience in electrical installation, maintenance and repair, seeks placement. Contact ☎96115423.

ACCOUNTANT, 13 yrs experience, 7 yrs in Oman with knowledge of Tally & Oracle, seeks job. Contact ☎98075840.

INDIAN female, 24, B Com, experience in travel agency accounts, seeks placement as an accounts assistant, preferably close to Wadi Kabir. Contact ☎92125848.

PAKISTANI male, B Tech (Hons) Civil Engg with 5 years experience, 4 months Oman experience in PDO, seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎98849611.

SOFTWARE Engg, MCA, 3 + yrs experience, experience in VB, SQL, DOT, net, 2 + yrs exp in Oman, seeks better placement. Contact ☎96268492. e-mail: chailyantony@yahoo.co.in

INDIAN male, 8 years experience in Oman, having valid driving licence, seeks suitable job as office assistant and store in-charge. Contact ☎93530182.

INDIAN male, MBA (marketing) with 3 years experience in sales and marketing, presently on visit visa in Muscat, seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎95701738.

OFFICE boy Gulf experienced, fluent in English, attending telephone calls and front office etc, seeks suitable placement ☎95675143.

ENGLISH speaking Sri Lankan housemaid looking for full-time or part-time job. Contact ☎92480866.

SR Accountant, Indian male, 34, with 12 years experience (including 6 years in Oman) working in a reputed organisation, seeks suitable placement ☎92353285.

MBA (Marketing) B.Sc. (Biochemistry) with 2 years experience in sales and marketing currently on a visit visa in Muscat, seeks immediate and suitable placement. Contact ☎95701738, e-mail: wasimalig04@rediffmail.com.

ARCHITECT: Young, talented, female graduate Architect with good knowledge of AutoCAD, 3D Max & Photoshop, seeks placement in reputed firms. Please contact: 99242164 /email: esses@omantel.net.om

INDIAN male, graduate, holder of FIATA/DGR foundation with 5 years experience in shipping / logistic operations, seeks suitable placement ☎99284879 saviorodrigues2002@yahoo.com.

INDIAN female graduate having 9 years experience, good computer & communication skills, seeks suitable placement in Administration HR Dept. ☎99652943/9934422.

PART-TIME accountant upto finalisation, tally teaching. E-mail to aoneacct@gmail.com

MARKETING executive: A well experienced Indian male, 42 yrs, having driving licence, own car, space and familiar with Salalah market is ready to market your product/ service in Salalah on part-time/ commission basis. ☎99087175.

26 YEARS old female on family visa, B Com, PG in Marketing and Financial Services with Canadian experience in Banking operations. 93363358, jeanramacha@gmail.com

INDIAN male well-trained security officer, having experience in working in Indian Embassy and United Nations, serving various countries. Also having experience in International Airport, New Delhi as an immigration officer. Worked for 5 years as security officer in Jumeriah International Dubai (Burj al Arab), seeks suitable job. Contact ☎92383771, mohan\_nair84@yahoo.com

INDIAN Female, M Sc Bio-Chemistry, having 3 years experience in the relevant field, seeks suitable placement. ☎95785608/ 95463475.

INDIAN female, MSW, having 5 years work experience in hospital and charitable organisation seeks suitable placement in Muscat urgently. Contact ☎95372368.

INDIAN female, MSW having 5 years work experience in hospital & Charitable organisation, seeks suitable placement in Muscat. ☎95372368.

NETWORK/ instrumentation Engr. Indian male, B.Tech 4 years experience in Oman (PDO sites), seeks suitable placement now on visit visa. Contact ☎92870375. e-mail: manojdicula@yahoo.co.in

INDIAN male, having driving licence, looking for job in sales. Contact ☎96447531/99651214.

ACCOUNTS professional, 6+ years Oman experience in finalisation, finance, ERP, Credit control, MIS, Banking, seeks senior/ managerial post in MNCs/ reputed Cos. Release available ☎99283938.

MASTERS journalism, Mass communication, excellent English & communication skills, very good writing abilities, seeks suitable communication/Media/ Banks/MNCs/reputed Cos. Contact ☎99283938.

MBA (Marketing), B Sc (Bio-chemistry), with 2 yrs experience in sales and marketing, currently on a visit visa in Muscat seeks immediate and suitable placement. Please contact ☎95701738. wasimalig04@rediffmail.com

26 YEARS old Indian Mechanical Engineer with 3 yrs of experience in oil field projects related to installation and commissioning of centrifugal compressors with diploma in Mechanical Engineering, ASNT Level 2 certification and well versed in Autocad is looking for suitable opening. ☎95228261.

INSTRUMENT Technician. Indian male, 18 years experience in oil field Instrument maintenance and calibration seeks suitable placement in sales or Instrumentation and Electronics field in Muscat, having valid Oman D/L. ☎96377953. E-mail: jacobmampara@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 27 years MBA (Marketing), experienced in sales and marketing seeks suitable placement. Contact ☎95809231. e-mail: mdkazi.mba@gmail.com

OMANI seeks suitable position in a leading company. Experience in Administration, Business. asaleel@hotmail.com ☎99326700.

PAKISTANI male 30 yrs. Intermediate + computer office management diploma. 6 yrs office work experience as accountant, Data Entry and computer clerk in Pakistan Army. Good knowledge in English and Hindi (Urdu). Good typing speed in English. Release available on requirement. Looking for good job. ☎96182450 zafar8612@gmail.com .

OMAN experienced Indian Executive, having ability to sell almost anything is looking for a good paying sales job. Having driving licence and good educational background ☎95043952.

INDIAN male, BE Mechanical (HVAC) with 14 years experience, Oman experience 4 years, having valid D/L, seeks suitable placement. ☎96093552/95780203.

CHARTERED accountant, female, Indian, with 4.5 years of post qualification experience, seeks suitable placement. ☎93291178.

MECHANICAL Engineer, Iraqi male, 20 years of various MEP construction experience, MEP co-ordinator and Project Management, BSc Mechanical Engineering, resident in Dubai and has UAE driving licence. ☎+971 55 2029 100. e-mail: sabahna2003@yahoo.com

INDIAN male, age 28, B Com, 3 years experience in networking, presently working in Oman in IT section, CCNA, MCSE, MCSA, MCP, MCTS, ISA Firewall, Linux, Hardware, seeks suitable placement. ☎98427610, royp4u@gmail.com.

INDIAN male graduate, office administrator, 25 years experience in European Eng Co, driving licence, release available. ☎99340432.

INDIAN male, 6 years experience in 3D Max-Interior and exterior designing, landscaping (Muscat and Dubai), highly experienced in 3D Max-V RAY, Photoshop, Illustrator, AutoCad, revit and MS-Softwares, seeks suitable placement. ☎97162200, 97645059.

INDIAN female graduate as Executive Secretary cum office administrator with 8 years experience in Gulf, seeks placement ☎97369092 Mubashira.

CHARTERED accountant, Sri Lankan, expertise more than 13 years including heading the finance team, business analysis and quality management in large scale organisation in Oman, looking for suitable placement. ☎93044123, ca.mohamed1@gmail.com

INDIAN F/24 BE (E&C), dip in mobile communications, CCNA, sound in Windows back-up, Router, GSM, CDMA, administration, with 2 years Oman experience in IT field. Get CV: www.sajeeb.com/kabeela.doc ☎96152765.

INDIAN male BCom, 7 years experience in sales/ accounting/administration, seeks suitable placement, on family visit. Contact: ☎96458518/ 92203891.

IT-system administrator, MCITP certified, B Tech Computer Science Engineer, having 3 years experience seeks suitable placement. Indian male on visit. ☎98483286/ 92357666.

ORACLE Developer with DBA experience (OCP qi developer, OCA IIg Data base), Sudanese with resident visa, seeks job ☎95510397

A YOUNG male, 28 years old, third secondary graduate with an Islamic Institute certificate, seeks suitable job. ☎93276787

INDIAN female graduate as Executive Secretary cum office administrator with 8 years experience in Gulf, seeks placement ☎97369092 Mubashira.

INDIAN male, graduate, holder of FIATA/DGR foundation with 5 years experience in shipping / logistic operations, seeks suitable placement ☎99284879 saviorodrigues2002@yahoo.com.

OMANI male, graduated in electronics and communication engineering from Waljat College. Skills in computer programs and excellent in English, looking for suitable position. ☎96408050, shandoodi@gmail.com

B.COM Graduate Indian Male, 17 yrs experience in Oman operations, sales and marketing with valid Oman Driving License seeks suitable placement. ☎93540968/ 99035298

INDIAN male with 15 years retail and sales exp seeks suitable senior level placement, with valid Oman driving licence. Contact ☎95702304.

OMAN DAILY Observer

**FREE CLASSIFIEDS**

**SITUATION WANTED**

\* Now FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

Mailing Address: OBSERVER CLASSIFIEDS SECTION, P.O. Box 974, Muscat, P.C. 100  
Location: OEPPA HEAD OFFICE, Medinat Al Alam,  
Near Ministry of Information ☎ 24649 593, 594, 594, 595, 596, 597  
& OEPPA Ruwi Office, Next to Dhofar Bldg, Behind Ruwi Police Station ☎ 24785668

## ZAJEL weekly magazine evry saturday along with "OMAN DAILY"

for advertising contact :  
Mobile : 96224397 - 95181747

Tel : 24649593 Fax : 24649590

Email : zajeloman@yahoo.com





## FLIGHT SCHEDULE

ARRIVALS - TUESDAY				DEPARTURES			
Flight No	Aircraft	From / Via	STA	Flight No	Aircraft	To / Via	STD
KO318	B737-8	Dubai	0005	BA072	B777	Abu Dhabi-London Heathrow	0015
WY682	B737-8	Riyadh	0005	IC886	A330	Bombay-Almudhabad	0015
WY672	B737-8	Jeddah	0010	LX243	A330	Duba-Zurich	0040
WY670	B737-8	Doha	0010	9W539	B737-8	Bombay	0040
WY648	B737-8	Kuwait	0010	WY631	ATR42	Abu Dhabi	0055
WY660	B737-8	Bahrain	0010	WY661	B737-8	Doha	0055
EV384	A310	Dacca-Chittagong	0145	KQ318	B737-8	Nairobi	0105
TK858	A320	Istanbul	0210	WY651	B737-8	Bahrain	0055
QR170	A320	Doha	0215	WY601	B737-8	Duba	0110
EK866	A330	Dubai	0355	9W529	B737-8	Trivandrum	0110
GF560	A320	Abu Dhabi	0400	WY201	B737-8	Bombay	0130
MS930	B737-8	Cairo	0450	WY321	B737-8	Karachi	0200
WY322	B737-8	Karachi	0630	WY271	B737-8	Jakarta	0220
WY122	A330	Malpensa-Munich	0715	TK859	A320	Istanbul	0300
WY114	A330	Paris	0740	BG022	A310	Chittagong-Dacca	0315
WY632	ATR42	Abu Dhabi	0755	EK867	A330	Dubai	0500
WY652	B737-8	Bahrain	0800	9W535	A320	Abu Dhabi	0530
FZ043	B737-8	Dubai	0800	MS331	B737-8	Caro	0545
WY602	B737-8	Dubai	0800	QR171	A320	Doha	0550
WY674	B737-8	Jeddah	0800	GF561	E190	Bahrain	0655
WY202	B737-8	Bombay	0800	WY603	B737-8	Dubai	0730
WY902	B737-8	Salalah	0800	FZ044	B737-8	Dubai	0930
WY102	A330	London Heathrow	0840	WY293	B737-8	Calcutt	0900
WY662	B737-8	Doha	0855	WY823	A330	Kuala Lumpur	0900
WY272	B737-8	Japur	0900	WY311	B737-8	Chittagong	0905
WY326	B737-8	Islamabad	0920	WY403	A330	Caro	0920
EK862	A330	Dubai	0930	WY213	B737-8	Trivandrum	0940
QF166	A320	Doha	0950	WY243	B737-8	Dubai	0950
EY382	A320	Abu Dhabi	1000	WY263	B737-8	Dubai	1000
WY818	A330	Bangkok	1000	WY301	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1000
9W133	A320	Sharjah	1005	WY381	A330	Male-Colombo	1020
9W330	B737-8	Trivandrum	1025	WY283	B737-8	Bangalore	1020
WY160	B737-8	Bombay	1040	WY663	B737-8	Doha-Bahrain	1020
PK191	ATR42	Gwadur	1045	WY101	A330	London Heathrow	1050
DH8081	SA227F	Bahrain	1130	WY917	ATR42	Khasab	1030
GF562	A319	Bahrain	1250	WY605	B737-8	Duba-Abu Dhabi	1040
IX852	B737-8	Mangalore	1255	WY203	B737-8	Bombay	1040
WY3302	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1330	EK863	A330	Dubai	1045
WY918	ATR42	Khasab	1330	GF114	A320	Sharjah	1045
WY606	B737-8	Duba-Abu Dhabi	1450	WY223	B737-8	Cochin	1045
RJ800	ERJ175	Amman	1515	EY383	A320	Abu Dhabi	1050
WY674	B737-8	Doha-Bahrain	1545	QR167	A321	Doha	1110
WY906	A330	Salalah	1615	9W333	B737-8	Cochin	1125
WY294	B737-8	Calcutt	1640	PK192	ATR42	Gwadur-Turbat	1130
WY294	B737-8	Bombay	1700	WY905	A330	Salalah	1130
IC886	A320	Bombay	1700	WY335	B737-8	Kathmandu	1145
WY244	B737-8	Delhi	1710	WY701	B737-8	Dar-es-Salaam	1210
WY214	B737-8	Trivandrum	1745	DH886	SA227F	Abu Dhabi	1230
WY284	B737-8	Lucknow	1750	WY253	B737-8	Madras	1235
WY294	B737-8	Bangalore	1755	WY101	A330	London Heathrow	1305
WY3304	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1800	GF563	A319	Bahrain	1340
GF564	A320	Bahrain	1820	IX816C	B737-8	Abu Dhabi-Mangalore	1345
WY224	B737-8	Cochin	1855	WY303	ATR42	Mukhaizna	1430
GF117	A320	Sharjah	1855	WY233	B737-8	Hyderabad	1550
SV334	EMB170	Riyadh	1900	ERJ175	B737-8	Amman	1645
WY404	A330	Caro	1900	FZ046	B737-8	Dubai	1630
WY312	B737-8	Chittagong	1905	WY671	B737-8	Jeddah	1650
FZ047	B737-8	Dubai	2020	WY907	A330	Salalah	1745
TZ507	A330	Bangkok-Karachi	2035	IC886	A320	Delhi	1800
WY254	B737-8	Madras	2045	WY909	B737-8	Dubai	1800
WY336	B737-8	Kathmandu	2115	WY681	B737-8	Riyadh	1850
WY610	B737-8	Dubai	2145	WY647	B737-8	Kuwait	1900
IC823	A319	Madras	2200	GF565	A320	Bahrain	1905
WY381	A330	Male-Colombo	2220	WY683	B737-8	Dammam	1915
WY908	A330	Salalah	2230	WY909	B737-8	Salalah	1920
LH618	A340	Frankfurt-Abu Dhabi	2230	GF118	A320	Sharjah	1935
EA073	B777	London Heathrow-Abu Dhabi	2230	SV535	B737-8	Riyadh	2000
QR168	A320	Doha	2235	WY669	B737-8	Doha	2005
EY388	A320	Abu Dhabi	2240	WY635	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2010
GF566	E190	Bahrain	2250	WY659	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2015
WY624	ATR42	Al Ain	2300	WY625	ATR42	Al Ain	2010
IC885	A319	Almudhabad-Bombay	2310	WY623	ATR42	Al Ain	2015
WY234	B737-8	Hyderabad	2310	WY611	B737-8	Dubai	2030
WY636	B737-8	Abu Dhabi	2310	FZ048	B737-8	Dubai	2105
WY626	ATR42	Ras Al Khaima	2310	TS058	A330	Karachi-Bangkok	2140
9W334	B737-8	Cochin	2315	WY901	B737-8	Salalah	2245
LX242	A330	Zurich-Dubai	2320	IC824	A319	Madras	2245
WY910	B737-8	Salalah	2325	EY381	A320	Abu Dhabi	2330
WY612	B737-8	Dubai	2330	GF567	E190	Bahrain	2335
WY684	B737-8	Dammam	2335	QR169	A320	Doha	2340
9W450	B737-8	Bombay	2340	LH619	A340	Abu Dhabi-Frankfurt	2355
WY702	B737-8	Dar-es-Salaam	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

Thaiba 24421213

Al Sawaqam 24815336

Belqeas 24535398

Al Hashar 24595015

Al Safa 25542240

Al Aryaf Al Omania 25689715

Al Shamsi 25650452

Muscat 25410235

Muscat 23291635

### NIGHT DUTY

Scientific 24451195

Apollo 24787766

Global Polyclinic 24551002

Muscat 24485740

Al Jawi 25541188

Muscat 25689025

Badr Al Samaa 26884910

Muscat 26878631

Al Hafazh 25431650

Al Rahbi 25350153

Mirbat 23298268

## OMAN NATIONAL TRANSPORT COMPANY(S.O.A.C)

### Departure & Arrivals Timetable On Long Distance Coaches

From Muscat				To Muscat			
Route	Dep Time	Destination	Operating Days	Route	Dep Time	Destination	Operating Days
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Al Buraimi</b>				<b>Daily Services From Al Buraimi To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
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
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Sinaw</b>				<b>Daily Services From Sinaw To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
52	17:30	Samad Hosp	19:50 Daily	52	7:00	Al Mudhabli	7:20 Daily
52	17:30	Al Mudhabli	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
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Yanqul</b>				<b>Daily Services From Yanqul To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
54	14:30	Nizwa Suq	16:50 Daily	54	6:00	Ibra Suq	6:45 Daily
54	14:30	Ibra 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
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Ibra (Araaj)</b>				<b>Daily Services From Ibra (Araaj) To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
54	8:00	Nizwa Suq	10:20 Daily	54	15:40	Ibra Suq	15:55 Daily
54	8:00	Ibra Suq	12:15 Daily	54	15:40	Nizwa Suq	17:50 Daily
54	8:00	Al Araaj	12:30 Daily	54	15:40	Ruwi	20:20 Daily
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Sur</b>				<b>Daily Services From Sur To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
55	7:30	Ibra	9:45 Daily	55	6:00	Al Mintrih	7:20 Daily
55	7:30	Al Mintrih	10:25 Daily	55	6:00	Ibra	7:50 Daily
55	7:30	Sur	11:45 Daily	55	6:00	Ruwi	10:10 Daily
55	14:30	Ibra	16:45 Daily	55	14:30	Al Mintrih	15:50 Daily
55	14:30	Al Mintrih	17:25 Daily	55	14:30	Ibra	16:20 Daily
55	14:30	Sur	18:45 Daily	55	14:30	Ruwi	18:40 Daily
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Fahud - Jibal</b>				<b>Daily Services From Jibal - Fahud To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
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	13:35 Daily
62	6:30	Fahud	10:20 Daily	62	12:30	Izki	15:55 Daily
62	6:30	Jibal	11:15 Daily	62	12:30	Ruwi	17:30 Daily
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Salalah</b>				<b>Daily Services From Salalah To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
100	8:00	Salalah	19:00 Daily	100	7:00	Muscat	19:50 Daily
100	12:00	Salalah	1:00 Daily	100	10:00	Muscat	22:50 Daily
100	19:00	Salalah	7:40 Daily	100	19:00	Muscat	7:30 Daily
<b>Daily Services From Ruwi To Marmul</b>				<b>Daily Services From Marmul To Muscat (Ruwi)</b>			
101	6:30	Marmul	17:20 Daily	101	6:30	Muscat	17:20 Daily
<b>Daily Services From Salalah To Dubai</b>				<b>Daily Services From Dubai To Salalah</b>			
102	15:00	Thamrait	16:35 Daily	102	15:00	Buraimi	16:30 Daily
102	15:00	Haima	21:00 Daily	102	15:00	Hafit Check Post	17:45 Daily
102	15:00	Adam	9:45 Daily	102	15:00	Ibra	19:10 Daily
102	15:00	Nizwa Firq	1:25 Daily	102	15:00	Nizwa Firq	20:55 Daily
102	15:00	Ibra	3:10 Daily	102	15:00	Adam	21:35 Daily
102	15:00	Hafit Check Post	4:30 Daily	102	15:00	Haima	1:20 Daily
102	15:00	Buraimi	6:30 Daily	102	15:00	Thamrait	9:05 Daily
1							



# Packers win classic Super Bowl over Steelers



GREEN Bay Packers team celebrate their win over the Pittsburgh Steelers in the closing moments of the NFL's Super Bowl game in Arlington, Texas, on Sunday. PICTURE CENTRE: Green Bay Packers' quarterback Aaron Rodgers holds up the trophy. PICTURE RIGHT: Rashard Mendenhall (left) of the Pittsburgh Steelers avoids a tackle by Desmond Bishop of the Green Bay Packers. — AFP/Reuters



DALLAS — The Green Bay Packers reclaimed the greatest prize in North American sport when they beat the Pittsburgh Steelers 31-25 on Sunday to win the 45th Super Bowl.

Inspired by their dynamic young quarterback Aaron Rodgers, the Packers gave a masterclass demonstration, opening up a 21-3 lead in the second quarter and then showing amazing courage to survive a ferocious late comeback from the Steelers.

It was game that lived up to all the hype.

They scored seven touch-

downs between them but it was game characterised by hard-hitting defense as both teams lost key players, including Packers receiver Donald Driver and his team mate cornerback Charles Woodson, to injuries.

"We just kept battling. We had some adversity, we lost some guys to injuries and we had some rough plays out there," Packers head coach Mike McCarthy said.

"We knew it was going to be a heavyweight slug match. We knew it was going to come down to the wire."

Rodgers, who emerged from the shadows of his predecessor Brett Favre, was named MVP after completing 24 of 39 passes for 304 yards and throwing three touchdown passes but there were plenty of other worthy contenders for the award.

Greg Jennings scored two touchdowns, Jordy Nelson scored one (among his nine receptions) and Nick Collins intercepted a wayward pass from Ben Roethlisberger and raced 37 yards for a TD in the first quarter that gave the Packers a 14-0 lead.

"Wow, wow, wow," shrieked Jennings. "It's a great day to be great."

The Steelers, who were chasing a record seventh Super Bowl win, were brave in defeat.

They never led but pulled to within 28-25 midway through the fourth quarter when a costly turnover, their third of the night, handed the momentum back to Green Bay.

"We're not into moral victories," Pittsburgh head coach Mike Tomlin growled.

"We came here to win the football game and of course

we didn't do that."

For the Packers, it was their fourth Super Bowl win. Only the Steelers (six), Dallas Cowboys and San Francisco 49ers (five each) have won more.

Green Bay is the smallest city in the US with an NFL team but few franchises have a more sentimental attachment to the Super Bowl than the residents of Wisconsin.

The Packers won the first two Super Bowls, in 1967 and 1968, and the Vince Lombardi Trophy, which is presented to the winning team, is named after their legendary coach.

"The Vince Lombardi Trophy is finally going back home," McCarthy said.

Although the Packers were the slight favourites to win Sunday's game, they overcame some incredible obstacles just to get to the big one as the casualties starting mounting up during the season.

They needed to win their last two regular season games to secure a wildcard berth into the postseason and then win three playoff games on the road to win the NFC championship. Green Bay threatened to turn the game into a rout when

Rodgers picked out Jennings in the end zone with a superb 21-yard pass to give the Packers a 21-3 second-quarter lead. The Steelers began to claw their way back with Roethlisberger hitting Hines Ward on an eight-yard TD pass before Rashard Mendenhall scored on an eight-yard run.

A second Jennings touchdown gave the Packers some breathing room at 28-17 but the Steelers set up a grandstand finish when Mike Wallace collected a 25-yard touchdown pass from Roethlisberger and Antwan Randle El completed

a two-point conversion.

However, a 23-yard field goal from Mason Crosby with just over two minutes left gave the Packers the six-point lead they maintained until the end as the Steelers failed to mount one last challenge.

"What a great football game with two classic teams," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said.

"The smallest city in the league has won the biggest game."

The Black Eyed Peas performed a dazzling half-time show. — Reuters



BROOKS Laich of the Washington Capitals scores against Pittsburgh Penguins during their NHL game in Washington on Sunday. — Reuters

## Lecavalier's goal lifts Lightning over Blues

TAMPA BAY — Vincent Lecavalier scored in the final seconds of overtime to give the Tampa Bay Lightning a dramatic 4-3 victory over the St Louis Blues in the NHL on Sunday.

Lecavalier converted a backhand with seven seconds left in the extra session as the Lightning (33-16-5) maintained a three-point lead in the Southeast Division over the Washington Capitals, who earlier blanked Pittsburgh 3-0. A St Louis holding penalty set up Lecavalier's power-play that ended a back-and-forth affair and sent the Blues to their fifth loss in the last six games.

"Relentless. That's how we played today," Lecavalier told reporters. "To have a crowd like that (on the day of the Super Bowl) encouraging us was great."

Steven Stamkos scored his NHL-leading 40th goal in the first period to open the scoring, and Patrik Berglund answered for St Louis 30 seconds into the second period before Dominic Moore restored Tampa Bay's lead about two minutes later.

David Backes and Nikita Nikitin netted back-to-back scores to give the Blues a 3-2 lead at 13:09 in the second but Steve Downie's goal 30 seconds later tied it at 3-3.

Both teams went scoreless in the third. The Lightning controlled the action in the overtime, outshooting the Blues 9-1.

Ty Conklin made 36 saves for St Louis in his second start for injured goaltender Jaroslav Halak while Tampa Bay goalie Dan Ellis made 29 stops.

Stamkos had three assists on the day as the Lightning recovered from Friday's 5-2 loss to the Washington Capitals. "As a line we didn't have a very good game (Friday), so we made sure we came out and did everything to help our team," said Stamkos. "We didn't wait for things to happen, we went out and made things happen."

The Lightning have won seven of eight overall. Results: Washington Capitals bt Pittsburgh Penguins 3-0, New Jersey Devils bt 4 Montreal Canadiens 4-1, Tampa Bay Lightning bt St Louis Blues 4-3. — Reuters

## Rondo drives Celtics past Magic

BOSTON — Point guard Rajon Rondo, the NBA's assist leader, turned into a scorer on Sunday and paced the Boston Celtics to a 91-80 triumph over their Eastern Conference rivals, the Orlando Magic.

Rondo scored 11 of his team-high 26 points in the third quarter when the East-leading Celtics (38-12) took control to beat the Magic for the second time in the third and final meeting between the teams.

"I was trying to be aggressive and attack the rim. I took advantage of the opportunities I had (today)," Rondo told reporters.

"Things weren't going our way in the first half - a lot of technical fouls were called. We had to keep our composure."

Boston reserve Marquis Daniels suffered a neck injury in the second quarter and was taken off the court on a stretcher and sent to the hospital.

The Garden fell silent as Daniels lay motionless on the court, though the Celtics seemed to rally behind their fallen teammate.

Boston trailed by seven at the time of Daniels' injury but surged ahead by three at half-time and stretched their lead in the third.

Dwight Howard had 28 points and 13 rebounds for Orlando (32-20) but the visitors fell behind by 15 points in the



BOSTON Celtics point guard Rajon Rondo (right) drives around Orlando Magic point guard Gilbert Arenas in the second half of their NBA game in Boston, Massachusetts, on Sunday. — Reuters

third quarter and lost for the third time in four games.

"It was tough tonight. Dwight had it going early but (our defenders) stayed with it," said Boston coach Doc Rivers, who called the injury to Daniels "scary."

With the Celtics and Magic having met in the last two

postseasons, the rivalry between the teams grew testy at times. Howard drew a technical foul in the first half for throwing an elbow at big man Kendrick Perkins, who made just his second start of the season after missing extended time with off-season knee surgery. Paul Pierce had 18 points

and Kevin Garnett finished with 16 and nine rebounds for Boston.

Orlando was held to just 34 per cent shooting for the game. Results: Miami Heat bt LA Clippers 97-79, Indiana Pacers bt New Jersey Nets 105-86, NY Knicks bt Philadelphia 76ers 117-103, Boston Celtics bt Orlando Magic 91-80. — Reuters

## Kubica back in under a year: Renault boss

PARIS — Formula One driver Robert Kubica will be out for at least two months after his horror crash in a rally and doctors' predictions he could take a year to recover are overly cautious, Renault's team boss said yesterday.

The Pole, who needed seven hours of surgery involving seven doctors split into two teams after he sustained multiple fractures to his right leg and arm, was put into an induced coma after hitting a church wall at high speed in Italy on Sunday.

Doctors were worried at first about the functionality of his right hand but are now sounding positive, with Renault's Eric Boullier even more upbeat.

"When you have a big crash like Robert suffered on Sunday doctors always predict the worst case scenario," Boullier told the BBC on his way to visit Kubica along with fellow Renault driver Vitaly Petrov.

"He is definitely out for a couple of months. The recovery will be quicker than one year but it is a bit early to know exactly how long he will need."

Despite Boullier's optimism Kubica's surgeon said the possible recovery time could be around a year, with the next few days crucial to

see if the operation was totally successful.

"The hand is warm and this means the operation went well," surgeon Mario Igor Rossello told reporters at the Santa Corona hospital near Genoa. "We need at least six days to check if the circulation of the blood in the limb responds as it should."

With testing already under way in Spain and the first race of the season in Bahrain on March 13, Kubica's Lotus-backed team will have to find a replacement for one of the most popular and competitive drivers on the grid.

The team's official third drivers are Brazilian Bruno Senna and France's Romain Grosjean.

Senna competed last season for the HRT team while Grosjean started seven races for Renault in 2009.

Neither has scored a point in Formula One and media reports have quickly focused on Germans Nick Heidfeld and Nico Hulkenberg as possible long-term alternatives, although the latter is contracted to Force India as a reserve.

"We are already starting to think and work on a contingency plan," added Boullier who strongly defended Kubica's love of rallying in his spare time despite the risks. — Reuters

## Riesch-Vonn rivalry to be highlight of world meet

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany — The rivalry between Maria Riesch and Lindsey Vonn will be one of the highlights of the alpine ski world championships which start today.

The American Vonn has celebrated several Christmases at Riesch's home in Garmisch-Partenkirchen but neither of the two are ready to hand out gifts on the championship slopes. However, Vonn left it open yesterday after the inspection whether she will compete in today's opening super-G race in the wake of a concussion suffered in a training crash last week, saying she was still losing concentration in the lower section of courses.

"I will decide at the last moment whether I will go to the start house. It should not be dangerous," the defending super-G champion said.

Vonn is no stranger to injuries at big events.

She injured her thumb at the 2009 worlds and competed at the 2010 Olympics with a shinbone injury.

Vonn is the more successful of the two 26-year-olds with a medal haul of 1-0-1 at Olympics, 2-2-0 at the worlds, 39 World Cup race wins and three overall titles.

Riesch has two Olympic golds, though, plus one world title, 18 race wins, tops the current World Cup in the bid her for first title and would like nothing more than adding more silverware on the slopes where she has skied since childhood. "I wasn't even three years old," she said, recalling her first runs down the Kandahar piste where the speed events take place.

"But I got down without crashing and quite fast as well," Riesch's morale is further boosted by the fact that the piste is very icy, saying that "test skiers have said it's very icy. Lindsey doesn't like these conditions that much."

Vonn said yesterday that Riesch can deal with the pressure of competing at home but also played down the rivalry.

"This is not a duel between Maria and myself. We only ski

for ourselves. I hope that we can both win a gold medal. We are always good friends, period."

The Riesch-Vonn story is blessing for skiing although seven-times world champion Anja Paerson of Sweden, Olympic super-G champion Andrea Fischbacher of Austria, and Swiss Lara Gut (the only super-g season winner apart from Vonn), are out to spoil the party. "It (the rivalry) is very good for the sport," said Gian Franco Kasper, President of the ruling body FIS, yesterday.

The FIS boss added that "we don't have that on the men's side" where no new Alberto Tomba or Hermann Maier is around, let alone a rivalry.

Ivica Kostelic of Croatia is the runaway World Cup leader and Norway's Aksel Lund Svindal a great all-rounder with plenty of silverware (3-1-1 at the worlds and 1-1-1 at Olympics).

FIS general secretary Sarah Lewis named Svindal "a Roger Federer" for his perform-

ance on and off the piste in reference to the well-behaved Swiss tennis star.

Svindal stands in contrast to American four-times world champion Bode Miller, who at 33 is competing in the dusk of his career and his wild days seemingly over.

"Bode gave examples of being unique," said Lewis, but she also insisted that "you don't have to be a rebel to be a star." The 41st worlds bring together a total of 525 athletes from a record 69 countries in 11 events until February 20. They were due to be opened yesterday night in the presence of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Kasper also said he hopes for safe racing after the men's races have seen several horror crashes in recent weeks. He said that FIS is researching further improvements but that they will take time to be implemented. "It is a very complex issue. We do our best but there will always be a risk in the sport," said the FIS president. — dpa

## Olympic organisers hopeful

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany — Organisers of the Alpine World Ski Championships are hoping to put on a top-class event to help boost Munich's chances of hosting the Winter Olympics in Bavaria in 2018.

The world championships start here today with the women's super-G and finish on February 20 with the men's slalom.

Having last hosted the world championships in 1978, Garmisch-Partenkirchen will also host the downhill and nordic events if the Munich 2018 bid is successful when the International Olympic Committee decides on July 6.

If Munich beats France's Annecy and South Korea's Pyeongchang to host the 2018 showpiece, Garmisch-Partenkirchen will host nine competition venues, one of the two athletes' villages, a media village and media cen-

tre. What the world championships do not need are any more high-profile crashes like Austria's Hans Grugger who suffered severe head injuries at the start of the year in a training accident.

Just a few miles from the Austrian border, in the heart of the Bavarian Alps, the market town hosted the 1936 Winter Olympics.

It is now a regular fixture on the World Cup circuit and it was here that alpine skiing became part of the Winter Olympics programme for the first time.

The world championships' slalom events will be held on the Gudiberg slope and the Kandahar course will host the super-G, downhill, giant slalom and part of the combined events in the shadow of Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain. — AFP



# Ronaldo double as Real respond in style

MADRID — Real Madrid responded in style to Barcelona's record breaking, 16th consecutive league victory with Cristiano Ronaldo leading the way in a 4-1 win over Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Ronaldo was charged up for the game after being criticised for not scoring in four matches and having seen Lionel Messi hit a hat-trick in Barcelona's 3-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

That victory saw Pep Guardiola's side surpass the run of 15 victories set by Alfredo Di Stefano's Real Madrid team of 1960-1961 and put them ten points clear at the top.

"I have already said that even if Ronaldo's season ended now it would still have been fantastic. He always works hard and gives everything for the team," said Real coach Jose Mourinho after his side cut the gap to Barcelona back to seven points.

"It is more difficult for players up against him because they are afraid to tackle in case they don't get the ball. They kick him but he is strong and can cope with it."

Real, with Emmanuel Adebayor given a starting place after his goal in the Copa del Rey against Sevilla in midweek, pressed forward from the start with the visitors encamped in their own penalty area.

Sociedad were nervous in possession and a poor clearance from Gorka Elustondo fell to Kaka and the Brazilian slotted the ball into the corner after just seven minutes.

Ronaldo was toying with

the Sociedad defence and showing his full repertoire of flicks and back-heels.

He turned his man on the edge of the area and was given time to find his spot with his left foot to add to the lead.

Before half-time he powered home a header from a corner to notch up his 25th goal of the season and retake the lead in the goal-scoring charts from Messi.

Kaka hit the post and Adebayor miskicked in front of goal as Real continued to pressure but it was Sociedad who pulled a goal back with a rare foray forward.

Raul Tamudo's shot was blocked by keeper Iker Casillas but the rebound cannoned off Alvaro Arbeloa into the goal.

Adebayor had the last say for Real with a cool finish in the final minutes.

"It is important that we do not give away the title," added Mourinho.

"I have only finished second once and that was in my third season with Chelsea but if we finish second then it is not a problem."

Sociedad coach Martin Lasarte admitted his side was well beaten.

"It was the right result. We had some chances but they had a lot more and we did not play how we set out to do," he said.

Valencia kept up their impressive form with a 2-0 win over Hercules and moved onto the shoulders of third-placed Villarreal.

Valencia have now won six of their last seven games and



REAL Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (right) vies with Real Sociedad's Chilean goalkeeper Claudio Bravo during the Spanish league match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Sunday. Real Madrid won 4-1. — AFP

took full advantage of Villarreal's shock 1-0 defeat at home to lowly Levante.

Hercules may be fighting relegation but they have produced some surprise results including a victory at the Nou Camp against Barcelona and it was a tight opening to the game.

Valencia had more possession though and in the run up to half-time Mehmet Topal hit the post before Aritz Aduriz gave them the lead after beating the off-side trap.

Valencia looked stronger following the break and took full control of the match when

Tino Costa curled home a free-kick.

"In the first half we found it difficult to go forward and although the game was fairly even we were winning at half-time. After that we improved and we deserved to win," said Valencia coach Unai Emery.

"Below Barcelona and Real Madrid it is very tight and there is not much separating the teams."

Sevilla were left to rue wasted chances as they could only draw 0-0 in the Andalusian derby with bottom side Malaga and have lost further ground in the hunt for a Euro-

pean place.

**TOP TEAMS CLASH IN FRIENDLIES**  
Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo take the Barcelona-Real Madrid duel to international level when they turn out for their countries tomorrow.

The meeting between Messi's Argentina and Ronaldo's Portugal in Geneva is one of a number of attractive friendly internationals on an evening when France play Brazil and Germany meet Italy in two other classic encounters.

Meanwhile world champions Spain start their international year with a game against

Colombia, while England are up against Denmark in Copenhagen.

Among some two dozen games, losing World Cup finalists Netherlands entertain Austria, Croatia play Czech Republic while Euro 2012 co-hosts Poland meet Norway.

Fellow hosts Ukraine play Romania on Tuesday in a four-nation tournament in Cyprus, where the home side are up against Sweden. The final and third-place play-off take place Wednesday.

World player of the year Messi is vying with Ronaldo for the top goalscorers' crown in Spain, and both will be out to show who is the more effective for their countries in Geneva.

"For me, it is not just about Ronaldo against Messi, but above all about Portugal against Argentina — individual duels are for the fans," said Portugal coach Paulo Bento who succeeded Carlos Queiroz in September.

Portugal are on a high after thrashing world champions Spain 4-0 in November and are keen to start the year well ahead of what could be a tough task to qualify for Euro 2012 where Norway and Denmark are also looking strong.

"We want to win and play well. It is an important game to prepare the key qualifier against (next opponents) Norway in June," Bento said.

Argentina Sergio Batista, who took over from Diego Maradona after last year's World Cup, may use the game to test new players ahead of the Copa

America on home soil in July.

"This is a good moment to try out some youngsters," he said. France face Brazil in the Stade de France evoking memories of the 1998 World Cup final won by the hosts.

France's last meeting with Brazil was a 1-0 win in the 2006 World Cup quarter-finals, and coach Laurent Blanc is eager to see how his side now measure up against the five-time world champions as they continue to put last year's World Cup debacle behind them.

"For me, Brazil's the home of football and they've produced so many talented players over the years," Blanc told the FIFA website.

"We don't get that many chances to play against them, either in friendlies or in the World Cup." "The players are well aware that this is a unique opportunity, and my guess is that there were a lot more French players waiting on the announcement of the squad than usual.

"Taking on one of the top two teams in the world in front of our own fans could help the team grow in confidence." Germany host Italy in Dortmund, hoping to avenge defeat to the Italians at the ground in the 2006 World Cup semi-finals.

Germany have a negative record (7 wins, 8 draw, 14 defeats) against Italy and have lost their last three games against the Azzurri — their last victory going back to June 1995 when they won 2-0 in a friendly in Zurich. — AFP

## Six coaches short-listed to lead national team

MUSCAT — The Oman Football Association (OFA)'s board has entrusted its technical committee to engage in direct negotiation with six coaches that have been short-listed to lead the national team.

The six coaches were selected from among seventeen at the OFA's first meeting of the year here yesterday.

The meeting was presided over by Sayyid Khalid al Busaidy, the Chairman of OFA.

The board asked the technical committee to submit its recommendations as soon as it has completed study of the files of the six short-listed coaches, who include 62-year-old Serbian Radg Miraninsh (who was one of two who managed to train both Spanish rivals Real Madrid and Barcelona).

Others in the list are Serbian Milovan, Argentinian Marcelo Bielsa, Egyptian Hassan Shahata, Slovak Kake and Slovak Vladimir. — *Oman Arabic daily*

## '2022 Cup in summer'

LONDON — Fifa president Sepp Blatter has said that the 2022 World Cup in Qatar will be played in the summer as originally planned and discarded the idea of co-hosting the event with neighbouring countries. Blatter said there were no plans to stage a winter World Cup. — Reuters

# Friendly form a concern for Spain and Del Bosque

MADRID — Vicente del Bosque has been showered with honours since Spain won their first World Cup last year, but the coach must address wretched form in international friendlies when his side host Colombia tomorrow.

The match at Real Madrid's Bernabeu stadium (2030 GMT), in aid of the Spanish players' union (AFE), comes after the world and European champions suffered a 4-1 drubbing in Argentina in September and lost 4-0 to Portugal in Lisbon two months later.

Spain, who top the FIFA rankings, are playing 50th-ranked Colombia for only the second time — the previous meeting between the pair in a friendly in Bogota in July 1981 ended 1-1.

Del Bosque, awarded the honorary title of Marquis by



SPAIN'S Xabi Alonso takes part in a training session at the Spanish Soccer Federation headquarters in Las Rozas, outside Madrid, PICTURE RIGHT: Spain's coach Vicente del Bosque takes part in the training. Spain will face Colombia in a friendly match at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium tomorrow.

Spain's King Juan Carlos on Friday, said he did not want a repeat of the Portugal result and the match would be a chance for his side to hone their skills ahead of March's Euro 2012 qualifiers against Czech Republic and Lithuania.

"The players have shown some positive signs together, although we still have the blemish of the Portugal match which cannot happen again," the 60-year-old former Real Madrid player told a news conference on Friday.

Del Bosque has kept faith



with his World Cup-winning squad, with only Barcelona central defender Carles Puyol missing out through injury.

Midfielder Javi Martinez and forward Juan Mata have dropped to the Under-21s, although the injured Mata has

withdrawn from their friendly against Denmark on Tuesday.

Spain continue the defence of their European championship title on March 25 at home to the Czech Republic and four days later visit Lithuania. They top Group I with three wins from three.

Colombia coach Hernan Dario Gomez has picked an attack-minded squad which includes Giovanni Moreno, the best player in the Argentine league in the last six months playing for Racing Club, and Porto striker Radamel Falcao Garcia.

Gomez, who coached Colombia in their last appearance at a World Cup finals in France in 1998, took charge again last May. He is preparing his team for the Copa America in Argentina in July and the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

**Probable teams:**  
Spain: Iker Casillas; Sergio Ramos, Gerard Pique, Carlos Marchena, Joan Capdevila; Xabi, Xabi Alonso, Sergio Busquets, Andres Iniesta; David Villa, Fernando Torres.

Colombia: David Ospina; Pablo Armero, Mario Yepes, Luis Amaranto Perea, Camilo Zuniga; Juan Cuadrado, Yulian Anchico, Adrian Ramos; Giovanni Moreno; Radamel Falcao Garcia, Dayro Moreno.

# Coaches play it safe

PARIS — Very few cheap first caps will be frittered away in this week's international friendlies with most coaches opting to use the games to gel their existing teams rather than experimenting wildly.

That was the reason France coach Laurent Blanc used for failing to recall Patrice Evra despite the World Cup captain's five-match ban for their South African mutiny expiring for Wednesday's Stade de France clash with Brazil.

Blanc said he omitted the Manchester United man solely on "sporting criteria", namely left back Eric Abidal's good form.

"It doesn't help at all to look at the past. Let's try just this one time to turn the page," Blanc told reporters convinced he did not want to upset the apple cart ahead of March's resumption of Euro 2012 qualifying. With no ma-

rior international matches since November, coaches want their settled sides to quickly get on a groove again without any uncomfortable distractions — with Julio Cesar's return to the Brazil squad after injury anything but.

Germany boss Joachim Loew, whose side top their Euro 2012 group like France, opted not to call-up captain Michael Ballack for the home game with Italy despite the 34-year-old now fit after injury.

Many Germans think Ballack, who missed their run to third place in last year's World Cup through another injury, is a spent force and should be discarded. Italy have welcomed back previously injured 2006 World Cup-winning goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon. — Reuters

# France to use friendly to measure themselves against the best



PLAYERS of the Brazilian national team gather yesterday during a training session at the Jean Blot stadium in Coubevoie, outside Paris, two days before the friendly match against France. PICTURE RIGHT: French national team's forward Karim Benzema (centre) talks with defender Eric Abidal (right) and Florent Malouda during a training session in Clairefontaine.

PARIS — France will use tomorrow's friendly against Brazil as a chance to measure themselves against the best and gauge their progress since last year's disastrous World Cup.

The 1998 World Cup winners have not fully recovered from their first round exit and off-field controversies in South Africa but are on the right track after a 2-1 win in England last

November and some solid Euro 2012 qualifying results.

Coach Laurent Blanc, who famously missed the 1998 final against Brazil after being controversially sent off in the semi-final, said his players were preparing for a tough game.

"As a player, you don't have many opportunities to face Brazil in your career,"

Blanc told reporters.

"They are one of the two best teams in the world. It's going to be difficult. Brazil have a multitude of good players. To measure oneself against the best is the best way to make progress. It will be a good gauge," he added.

France's last clash with Brazil was a 1-0 win in the 2006 World Cup quarter-finals, and

Blanc's team top their Euro 2012 qualifying Group D with their next match against Luxembourg on March 25.

Blanc has chosen to keep faith in players such as Olympique Lyon's Yoann Gourcuff, Girondins Bordeaux's Alou Diarra and Loic Remy of Olympique Marseille, despite some under-par performances by the trio.



"I know these players very well. I know what they are capable of, even if they haven't shown it in a while.

"It is up to us to show them that we are counting on them, that they are important. It is also my role to make them feel confident again."

Blanc also chose to leave out Patrice Evra despite the left back having completed

his five-match ban for his role in the players' strike in South Africa. For Brazil Inter Milan goalkeeper Julio Cesar is back for the first time since the team's disappointing World Cup exit at the hands of finalists the Netherlands in the last eight.

"This was already part of our plans and it's with happiness that I call up Julio Cesar

for the first time", coach Mano Menezes said.

However there was no room for Kaka, the Real Madrid player deemed not fit enough by Menezes having only just returned following several months on the sidelines through injury.

The squad consists entirely of players based in Europe as Menezes said home players

were only just getting back into match fitness at the start of the 2011 season.

**Probable teams:**  
France: Hugo Lloris; Eric Abidal, Adil Rami, Philippe Mexes, Bacary Sagna; Yann M'Vila, Alou Diarra, Yoann Gourcuff, Florent Malouda; Kevin Gameiro, Karim Benzema. Brazil: Julio Cesar; Daniel Alves, Thiago Silva, David Luiz, Marcelo; Ramires, Lucas, Elias; Hernanes, Robinho, Alexandre Pato





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## Mark Wilson lifts title in play-off

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona — Mark Wilson rolled in a seven-foot birdie putt on the second hole of a sudden-death playoff to win the frost-delayed Phoenix Open over fellow-American Jason Dufner at TPC Scottsdale yesterday.

Wilson and Dufner both parred the first hole of their play-off after they finished the regulation 72 holes tied at 18-under-par 266.

It was the second win of the new year and fourth PGA Tour title for Wilson, who won last month's Sony Open in Hawaii.

"I'm just riding the train as long as I can," Wilson said after sinking the winning putt. "This is the best golf I've ever played in my life."

With the final holes of the weather-hit tournament completed yesterday, Dufner finished off a final round of five-under-par 66, while Wilson posted a 69 to force the playoff.

Wilson, 36, got a fortunate break on the last hole of regulation when his tee shot nearly landed in the water and wound up in a bunker, but he was able to salvage a par.

Returning to the 18th for the first hole of sudden-death, Wilson made a four-foot par putt to stay alive after running past the hole on a long birdie try. He claimed victory at the par-four 10th.

Dufner was two shots behind Wilson, who had six holes to finish, when play resumed yesterday but he made up the margin with birdies at the 16th and 17th. The 33-year-old Dufner, who finished tied for fifth at last year's US PGA Championship, was still looking for his first U.S. Tour win.

"I've been close a couple of times the



MARK Wilson of the US tees off on the eighth hole during the third round of play in the PGA Phoenix Open in Scottsdale, Arizona. — Reuters

last two or three years. This kind of adds to that," Dufner said. "I'm kind of tired of being close, so hopefully I can get one done sometime this year."

American Tommy Gainey, who trailed the co-leaders by one stroke in the final holes, hit it into the water trying to drive the green at the short par-four 17th and took a triple bogey to fall into a five-way tie for eighth at 14-under-par. Vijay Singh of Fiji (66) and Briton Martin Laird (65) tied for third at 16-under-par 268, one stroke better than Americans Nick Watney (68), J.B.

Holmes (67) and Gary Woodland (66)

Earlier, Wilson showed nerves of steel as he sank a 15-foot birdie putt at the par-three 12th to move two strokes clear in the final round on Sunday.

For the first time on a marathon day at TPC Scottsdale, he held the outright lead and the siren sounded one hole later to suspend play in fading light with the weather-hit tournament set for a rare Monday finish.

"I've got a two-shot lead, but that could evaporate quickly with an eagle by someone in front of us on 15," Wil-

son, 36, told reporters. "I know if I hit good shots coming in, make two or three birdies, I'm probably going to be holding the trophy. If I'm not, someone has beat me and I can handle that."

Big-hitting American J B Holmes, a double winner of the Phoenix Open, closed with a 67 to finish at 15-under, level with compatriot Nick Watney (68). The final round resumed at 1600 GMT yesterday with Wilson and Gainey each facing birdie putts from around 19 feet at the par-five 13th.

"It's just been a long ride — four holes the first day, 28 holes the next day, then four holes and now 31 holes," Wilson said of the weather-hit event.

"And we'll do five more tomorrow and see what happens." Gainey, one of the PGA Tour's most unconventional players, began the day with a one-shot lead over Wilson and he preserved that advantage by carding a five-birdie 68 in the third round.

After a brief break, the players set off for the final round and Gainey stayed one ahead of the chasing pack when he and Wilson each birdied the par-three fifth.

However, Wilson drew level by sinking a monster birdie putt from 36 feet at the eighth and he and Gainey parred the ninth to reach the turn in a tie for the lead at 18 under.

Gainey, who had not made a cut in three previous PGA Tour starts this season, had a chance to regain the outright lead after hitting a superb approach to six feet at the par-four 10th but his birdie putt slid past the left edge of the cup. — AFP

## Former champion Llodra eases past Davydenko

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands — The 2008 Rotterdam Open champion Michael Llodra of France cattered through his first round match here yesterday handing Russia's former top 10 player Nikolay Davydenko his second successive first round exit.

Llodra, who won the title at the Ahoy stadium in 2008 over Swede Robin Soderling — the two-time Roland Garros finalist and top seed at this edition — beat Davydenko 6-3, 7-6 (7/4). The 34th-ranked Russian, who had beaten Llodra four times in their prior six meetings, went out in the first round of the Australian Open after losing in the Qatar final to Roger Federer after beating Rafael Nadal in the semi-finals. Davydenko, who won his last title more than a year ago in Doha, came from a break down in the opening set but was never in the contest with 22-ranked Llodra, who fired a dozen aces in just over 90 minutes.

The Frenchman will play either Andrey Golubev of Kazakhstan or Russian qualifier

Dmitry Tursunov in the second round.

Croatian Marin Cilic, another former top ranked player whose game has fallen into a bit of a rut and sees him ranked 28th in the world, began his campaign with a comprehensive 6-2, 6-4 defeat of German Mischa Zverev.

The 22-year-old Croat reached his last semi-final in August, 2010, in Washington. He also failed to defend the early-season titles he won in both 2009 and 2010 in Chennai, India and the Croatian stop in Zagreb.

"It's my first time here and I played extremely well," said a satisfied Cilic. "I'm happy with my game and with my serve especially. It's coming along well. I'm pleased with that, it gave me more confidence. I also played relaxed in my return game. I didn't face any break points either."

"I lost to Nadal in Melbourne (fourth round) so it's important to bounce back," said Cilic, who lost last week in the Zagreb quarter-finals. "I'm looking forward to

this part of the year.

"I'm trying to get my good form back, I hope it comes soon. I feel I'm playing well, I just want to get some wins."

The Rotterdam event features Soderling defending his title with two-time Australian Open finalist Andy Murray expected to challenge.

The Scot decided last week to take his place in the field after hinting that he might take time away from the game after his heavy loss eight days ago to Novak Djokovic in the Melbourne final.

The Serb winner withdrew from the Dutch event, citing existing injuries, particularly the shoulder which appeared to bother him in the win over Murray. Soderling begins his campaign against Dutchman Robin Haase while Murray plays Marcos Baghdatis.

**Results (First round):** Marin Cilic (CRO) bt Mischa Zverev (GER) 6-2, 6-4, Michael Llodra (FRA) bt Nikolay Davydenko (RUS) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), Viktor Troicki (SRB) bt Thomas Schoorel (NED) 6-2, 7-6 (7/1), Dmitry Tursunov (RUS) bt Andrey Golubev (KAZ) 6-4, 7-5 — AFP

## Pakistan board says bans 'regrettable'

KARACHI — The head of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) yesterday said lengthy bans given to three Pakistani players for spot-fixing were "regrettable" but promised to help them in their rehabilitation.

An International Cricket Council (ICC) anti-corruption tribunal on Saturday banned former Pakistan captain Salman Butt for ten years, Mohammad Asif for seven years and Mohammad Aamir for five years after a hearing in Doha.

The charges against them related to alleged incidents during the Test against England at Lord's last year, when Britain's News of the World newspaper claimed the players were willing to deliberately bowl no-balls.

The newspaper alleged the three had colluded in a spot-fixing betting scam organised by British-based agent Mazhar Majeed.

"PCB terms the verdict against the three players as regrettable and a sad reality which must be faced," PCB chairman Ijaz Butt said in a statement.

Butt said the PCB had "full confidence" in the investigation and tribunal, but admitted the spot-fixing episode had been a gruelling time for Pakistani cricket.

"The time since August last year, when the spot-fixing case came to light, has been an extremely painful one for Pakistan cricket. I now hope that this unfortunate saga is put to rest and we can concentrate on cricket," Butt said.

"We will continue to work with ICC on this sensitive matter in future also. We will also see how we can help the three players with their education and rehabilitation programme."

Butt said the PCB was determined to root out corruption, which has dogged cricket in Pakistan in the past.

"The PCB is determined to ensure the threat of corruption is dealt with severely and will do everything in its power to ensure the integrity of cricket is protected," he said.

"Like all my colleagues in the ICC, I am determined to maintain the integrity of our sport. This is fundamental."

Since the spot-fixing scandal, the PCB has taken important steps, including the introduction of a corruption code in domestic cricket, he said.

The PCB had formed an integrity committee to check players and held lectures to create awareness against corruption and these steps were praised by the ICC, Butt said — AFP

## Nadal, Vonn win Laureus awards

ABU DHABI — Spain enjoyed a double celebration yesterday when tennis champion Rafael Nadal and their World Cup winning soccer team walked away with the top prizes at the Laureus Sports Awards.

Nadal was named Sportsman of the Year after a remarkable season in which he won the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open trophies while Spain's World Cup side were named Team of the Year at a glittering ceremony attended by celebrities and sporting greats. American Alpine skier Lindsey Vonn, who won the Olympic downhill gold at the Vancouver Games last February just days after suffering a shin injury, was voted Sportswoman of the Year.

Spain, the United States and Germany were the big winners with each country bagging two awards.

There was a rapturous welcome for Zinedine Zidane, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his remarkable career. The Spirit of Sport Award was presented to the European Ryder Cup Team to mark their emotional win over the United States in a match "which demonstrated great sportsmanship, golf played at the highest level and



RAFAEL Nadal arrives for the Laureus World Sports Awards. — Reuters

enormous and passionate galleries", a statement from the organisers said. The Laureus World Sports Awards, which recognise sporting achievement, are the premier honours on the international sporting calendar. The winners were:

**Laureus World Sportsman of the Year:** Rafael Nadal (Spain) **Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year:** Lindsey Vonn (US) **Laureus World Team of the Year:** Spain World Cup Team, **Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year:** Martin Kaymer (Germany) **Laureus World Comeback of the Year:** Valentino Rossi (Italy) **Laureus World Sportsman of the Year with a Disability:** Verena Bentele (Germany) **Laureus World Action Sportsman of the Year:** Kelly Slater (US) **The Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award:** Zinedine Zidane (France) **Laureus Spirit of Sport Award:** European Ryder Cup Team **Laureus Sport for Good Award:** May El Khalil, founder of the Beirut Marathon. — Reuters

## Pakistan greats call for reform

KARACHI — Pakistan cricket faces an abysmal future unless it cleans up the game and institutes sweeping reforms after three key players were banned on corruption charges, former players and commentators said yesterday.

The bans follow alleged incidents during last year's Test against England at Lord's, when Britain's News of the World newspaper claimed players were willing to bowl no-balls deliberately.

The newspaper said the three colluded in a spot-fixing betting scam organised by British-based agent Mazhar Majeed.

On Friday, British prosecutors charged the players and Majeed with corruption, summoning them to appear in a London court on March 17.

"Pakistan's cricket image is tainted badly," former captain Zaheer Abbas conceded.

"But on the other hand the latest bans

give us a last chance to root out corruption and indiscipline from our cricket or else we might be thrown out of international cricket," he said.

After the scandal surfaced, the International Cricket Council (ICC) ordered the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to keep tabs on players through an integrity committee and introduce harsher punishments.

PCB complied, refusing to clear some tainted players for selection in the national squad, introducing a corruption code for domestic cricket and bringing in anti-corruption lectures — all steps praised by the ICC.

Despite these measures, Imran Khan, the only captain ever to lead Pakistan to World Cup victory, called for major upheavals. "Our cricket system is wrong," said Khan.

"The chairman of the PCB should be

an elected person held accountable for all such incidents.

"What prevails in our system is that the patron of the PCB appoints the chairman who doesn't ban key players because he fears his team will lose and he will get sacked," he said.

Many believe Pakistan missed the chance to purge cricket after a match-fixing inquiry led by judge Malik Mohammad Qayyum between 1998-2000 saw Salim Malik and Ata-ur Rehman banned for life. Six other players — Wasim Akram, current national coach Waqar Younis, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Mushtaq Ahmed, Saeed Anwar and Akram Raza — were fined.

"I conducted a judicial inquiry which could have served as a way to purge our cricket but my recommendations to keep close eyes on Pakistan players were now followed," Qayyum said recently. — AFP

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# Fans protest as ICC officials inspect Eden Gardens

KOLKATA — Angry fans waved banners and shouted slogans yesterday as an International Cricket Council (ICC) inspection team assessed whether Eden Gardens could host three World Cup games after losing a marquee match to Bangalore.

Eden Gardens, one of India's best-known grounds, was stripped of the India vs England game on February 27 after an ICC delegation said the venue was under-prepared due to a delay in construction work. A three-member inspection team returned on Monday to assess if enough progress had been made to save three other matches — none featuring India — and was greeted by slogan-chanting fans holding up "Go Back ICC Officials" placards and waving black flags.

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB), who have headquarters at Eden Gardens, were hopeful of hosting their other three scheduled matches there in March. "We are confident," CAB joint secretary Biswarup Dey told the CNN-IBN channel. "We took them (ICC team) to the players' area, press box ... everything is now ready and there is nothing incomplete."



JOURNALISTS wait outside the Eden Gardens stadium in Kolkata, as International Cricket Council (ICC) observers visit the stadium yesterday. Three-member ICC team visited the ground to decide the possibility of hosting three other non-India World Cup matches at this venue. — AFP

Eden Gardens are South Africa vs Ireland March 18 and Kenya vs Zimbabwe on March 15, Ireland vs Netherlands on March 20. — Reuters

# Aussies ready for title defence: Coach

PERTH, Australia — Australia cricket coach Tim Nielsen says his team is in good shape for their World Cup title defence despite injury doubts over several key players.

The Australians, aiming for a fourth straight title, wound up their preparation for the tournament with a 57-run win over England in their final one-day international in Perth on Sunday.

It completed an emphatic 6-1 win over the tourists and Nielsen said the taxing seven-match series had been ideal for his team ahead of the World Cup in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

England were left to rue a lengthy injury list at the end of a series they believed

was too long and Australia have fitness concerns of their own, but Nielsen said he was happy with how his team was placed.

"We've had an excellent preparation," he said after the win in Perth on Sunday.

"The most pleasing thing about the seven games is we have had contributions at different times from pretty well everyone in the squad.

"Everyone has got the feeling their game is in pretty good order, everyone is pretty clear with their roles. We are going in pretty good shape."

While Nielsen's confidence is up, there is still considerable doubt over the final make-up of Australia's 15-man squad.

Captain Ricky Ponting (finger), veteran batsman Mike Hussey (hamstring) and first-choice spinner Nathan Hauritz (shoulder) all have to prove their fitness for the World Cup, which starts on February 19, while reserve Shaun Marsh is also sidelined by a hamstring strain.

Nielsen admitted the injuries were an unwelcome distraction and said some crucial decisions on player fitness would be made over the next 48 hours.

But he was upbeat about Ponting's prospects, after the skipper came through a batting session in Sydney on Friday.

"He seems to be getting better every day and is at least

where we would like him to be, which is great," Nielsen said.

"But he hasn't played any competitive cricket in a while, so that in itself is a risk."

Nielsen said Australia needed to be wary of the temptation to take injured players into the six-week tournament.

"We can't afford to just have 11 or 12 players in our first couple of games. We need to have some coverage," he said.

Australia, still the number one ranked side in ODIs despite their slide in Test cricket, go into the tournament on a 23-match winning streak in World Cup matches, having been undefeated at the last two tournaments. — AFP

# Porterfield looks to lead from the front

LONDON — William Porterfield will lead Ireland into the World Cup bolstered by his time in county cricket and a solid one-day international record. The 26-year-old left-handed opener, in common with several Ireland players, has supplemented his international experience by "crossing the water" for a county stint, in his case with Gloucestershire.

He boasts a return of five hundreds and four fifties in a total of 1,371 runs from 44 one-day internationals at an average of over 33.

Considering Ireland's relative lack of ODI cricket outside of World Cups, these are more than respectable figures.

Not all his runs have come against fellow associate or non-Test nations — his second highest ODI score of 108 was made in Ireland's seven-wicket win against World Cup group rivals Bangladesh in Belfast last year. Ireland will certainly look to Porterfield for runs at the top of the order as they try to emulate their World Cup heroics of four years ago. In the Caribbean, they tied with Zimbabwe, stunningly knocked Pakistan out of the tournament and then defeated Bangladesh in the Super Eights.

And with four teams from two groups of seven to qualify for the quarter-finals, Porterfield is confident of seeing Ireland move into the last eight from a pool featuring Bangladesh, England, India, South Africa, West Indies and associate rivals the Netherlands.

"We are confident of at least progressing to the quarter-finals," he said in a recent interview. "It will then be a question of kicking on from there. The World Cup in the subcontinent will be a different experience altogether. — AFP

# Ponting confident of playing World Cup despite injury

MELBOURNE — Australia captain Ricky Ponting said yesterday he was confident he would be fit to play in this month's World Cup despite a recent finger injury.

Ponting, who missed the final Ashes Test and the entire seven-match one-day series against England after surgery for a broken little finger, said the injury was improving quickly.

"It's a lot better now than it was last week," Ponting said at the Allan Border Medal presentation in Melbourne.

"I've been back in the nets this week, I've had three good hits, a bit of time out there, so it's actually probably a bit further advanced than I thought it would be."

Australia go into the World Cup, to be played in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, in search of a fourth consecutive title.



Ponting said he had endured a frustrating month on the sidelines, but believed the way the team had performed in his absence, thrashing England 6-1 in their ODI series, showed they were ready to defend their crown. "I'm really proud of the way the boys have played in

the last few weeks, Michael (Clarke) led the side well and Cameron (White) led the side really well in Perth and we did start to get a few guys back to full fitness at the right time," he said.

"We've still got a few injury worries, but hopefully by the middle of this month and early March we'll be on the right track to winning a World Cup."

Ponting said it was difficult playing on the sub-continent, but the Australian squad, which leaves on Wednesday, had the players who had proven themselves under those conditions.

"We go in there with a well-balanced team as far as youth and experience is concerned and players that have had some success there in the past," he said.

The tournament starts on February 19. — AFP

# Watson wins second successive Allan Border Medal

MELBOURNE — Shane Watson won the Allan Border Medal as the outstanding Australian cricketer of the season for the second year in a row yesterday.

Watson was also named player of the year for Tests and one-day internationals at a gala ceremony at a Melbourne casino while David Hussey prevented a clean sweep by winning the Twenty20 award.

The 29-year-old Watson has accumulated 2,067 runs at an average of 39 over the three forms of international cricket since the voting period began on Feb. 14, 451 more than the second most prolific runmaker Mike Hussey.

Despite opening the batting, Watson also took 47 wickets at an average of 26.53 for his country, Australia's



fourth highest wicket-taker over the same period.

One of the highlights of his year was the unbeaten 161 he scored to help Australia make a winning start in the one-day series against England, Watson sealing victory with a six at the start of the 50th over.

The all-rounder was eventually named Player of the Se-

ries on Sunday.

Watson will have been less happy with the three run outs he was involved in during the Ashes series.

Australia captain Ricky Ponting (2006 and 2007) is the only other player to have won the Allan Border Medal, which is decided by votes from players, umpires and media, two years in a row.

Former skipper Mark Taylor and middle-order batsman Doug Walters were also inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame at the ceremony. **Other awards:** State player — Usman Khawaja (New South Wales). Bradman young cricketer — Trent Copeland (New South Wales). Women's international player — Shelley Nitschke. — Reuters

# Lanka miss chance to train at new venues

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka have missed out on a home advantage after being denied a chance to train at two new World Cup venues because of construction delays, skipper Kumar Sangakkara has said.

The Sri Lankans open their campaign against Canada at the new Mahinda Rajapakse stadium in Hambantota on February 20, but delays in meeting building deadlines meant the venue could not be used for training.

Sri Lanka's hopes of getting a feel of the other new facility in Pallekele in the central district of Kandy were also dashed due to similar problems.

Sangakkara said the team

had been looking forward to playing some games at Pallekele and Hambantota a month in advance and were disappointed by the turn of events.

"We would love to train at all the grounds, but we also need to have the proper facilities to train," Sangakkara told reporters late Sunday after wrapping up a 2-0 one-day series win over the West Indies.

"We need to have side (practice) wickets, gyms, all of these things available at the venues, otherwise it is difficult.

"But things are what they are, so we accepted the fact that we'll have to go in and play World Cup matches on those grounds without know-

ing the conditions too much."

Pallekele and Hambantota are set to host five World Cup games while the renovated R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo will host seven.

Sangakkara said the players were happy with the facilities in Colombo, where the squad has played a few domestic matches in the past few weeks. "It's a bit too late now to go and work camps in Pallekele or Hambantota. We have only got two weeks and we've got to prepare as well as we can in those two weeks with the best of facilities and those facilities are here in Colombo.

"We are ready to play on the wickets we get and we can't, no matter how you talk about

it, change anything any more. They are what they are."

Sri Lanka, 1996 winners and losing finalists of the 2007 World Cup, are co-hosting the showpiece event with India and Bangladesh.

Sangakkara was upbeat about playing most of their matches in Sri Lanka in front of supportive home crowds. "The crowd will be there and we'll be playing at home, so at least we've got two factors going for us," he said.

Sri Lanka are placed in Group A with defending champions Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Canada and Kenya. The event begins in Dhaka on February 19. — AFP

# England ponder injury list after Australia tour

SYDNEY — An injury-depleted England squad departed Australia yesterday after a gruelling three-month tour with the prospect of a short break before the World Cup.

A 6-1 hammering in the one-day series will not have wiped out the euphoria of the Ashes triumph but a string of injuries is sure to have a bearing on their preparations for the World Cup, which starts on February 19.

Big-hitting batsman Eoin Morgan was the sixth player to leave the squad because of injury during the tour when he departed on Sunday after fracturing the middle finger on his left hand.

"There's obviously got to be a chance that he's not going to feature (at the World Cup)," skipper Andrew Strauss told reporters after the 57-run defeat in Perth on Sunday.

"We're going to have to think through — at what stage is the cut-off point the guy needs to be replaced. We're pretty confident the other guys are going to be fit, but Eoin Morgan we are not sure of at this stage.

"It's a big loss for us potentially. He is particularly

important in those conditions as well, being able to clear the ropes in the manner that he does.

"Hopefully there will be an opportunity for him to play. If he isn't available someone is going to have to fill those shoes."

The "other guys" were Stuart Broad, who injured his side during the Ashes series, Tim Bresnan (calf tear), Ajmal Shahzad (hamstring), Graeme Swann (knee and back injuries) and Paul Collingwood (back).

With such a short turnaround before World Cup, which takes place in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, England will have little time to consider their options.

"The first thing to ponder is who is fit and who is not fit," Strauss added.

"That's going to be important to see exactly where we are and have a clear idea of who our best 11 players available are. "We've got to think about what we haven't done well on this tour and we've got to think about how to adapt our game to the conditions in the sub-continent pretty quickly." — Reuters

# Watch out for World Cup minnows: Marsh

SYDNEY — Australia Test great Rod Marsh yesterday warned the major countries not to take the smaller cricketing nations lightly at this month's World Cup.

Marsh, 63, has worked with players from Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands and Canada extensively over the past two years in preparation for the tournament from February 19.

"I am not saying one of those teams will win the World Cup, but I am saying they will give a very good account of themselves," Marsh said. "These guys have prepared probably better than most of the Test nations, because they haven't had all the other competitions and distractions.

"Australia and England, for example, have had the Ashes and a long one-day series."

Ireland reached the Super Eight stages in 2007 and Marsh believes they have the talent to repeat that achievement this year.

"Ireland are always well prepared, they have experienced players, most are playing county cricket and they are in pretty good shape," he

said. "They actually think they can win the tournament and not just compete, which I think is fantastic."

Batsmen from the ICC Associate nations have been using advanced batting and bowling machines as they look to give themselves the best possible chance of success at the tournament in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

"We've strived to get them into a position where they know all about batting on the subcontinent," Marsh said. "We identified that the biggest problem for these guys in the past was that they didn't make enough runs.

"There has been a heap of footage shown to them about how the top players bat on the subcontinent and how they handle reverse swing. They cannot be any better prepared." Marsh was in charge of the Australian youth academy between 1990 and 2001 before taking on a similar role with England for five years.

He believes Australia are still the team to beat in the World Cup. — AFP

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## BankMuscat offers yuan payments

BANKMUSCAT, a leading financial services provider, has become the first Omani bank to enable payments in Chinese currency Renminbi (RMB) or Yuan (CNY). BankMuscat has opened a Yuan account with Bank of China to facilitate trade related payments between Oman and China. • Page 23



## Al Omaniya Financial net jumps

AL Omaniya Financial Services declared its audited results for the year 2010 showing a Net Profit of RO 4.131 million for the year ended December 31, 2010, an increase of more than 10.1 per cent over the previous year. This is subject to the approval of the CBO and the AGM. • Page 23

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## India's SKIL to support development of Logistics Park at Freezone Sohar

By Conrad Prabhu

MUSCAT — Sohar Free Zone LLC envisions a significant role for Indian infrastructure major SKIL Infrastructure Limited in the development of a major Logistics Park at Freezone Sohar, according to a top executive of the operating authority.

Jamal Tawfiq Aziz, Deputy CEO of the Port of Sohar and Chief Operating Officer of Sohar Free Zone LLC, says SKIL — India's leading infrastructure development company well known as a pioneer in conceptualising and developing special economic zones (SEZs) — is expected to use its considerable expertise in promoting Freezone Sohar as a logistics hub.

Mumbai-based SKIL has a 26 per cent shareholding in Sohar Free Zone LLC, the operating authority set up by the

government to oversee the development and management of the 4,500 hectare scheme adjoining the Port of Sohar. The Omani Government and the Port of Rotterdam are also partners in the operating authority.

"SKIL is a strategic partner with huge networks in India," Jamal Aziz said at a recent briefing on Oman's biggest free zone development. He added that SKIL would be looking at logistics development at Freezone Sohar, particularly in the establishment of a large Logistics Park.

The proposed Logistics Park, the official said, will cater to third parties looking to invest in storage facilities for various types of merchandise, including perishable foods, such as frozen meats, fruits and vegetables, as well as a wide range of consumables. Investments in purpose-built warehousing are also

envisaged.

Besides developing the first private port in India, SKIL has also built one of the world's largest shipyards at Pipavav on India's Gujarat coast. The company is also credited with pioneering a role for the private sector in the operation and management of rail and road networks, and the development of special economic zones. SKIL's success in introducing double-stacked containers on rail wagons is regarded as another first for the Indian market.

Significantly, Freezone Sohar also sees SKIL as a bridge to the booming Indian market, says Jamal Aziz. "SKIL is a link for us in India — a market of critical importance to Freezone Sohar's development because of geographical and cultural ties. Furthermore, India represents a fast-growing market that gives rise to opportunities for exports from

Sohar to the sub-continent. Freezone Sohar also represents an ideal half-way hub for adding value to Indian exports destined for eventual distribution around the Gulf region. In essence, Sohar has the potential to serve as a logistics springboard for the Indian market," the Chief Operating Officer stated.

Jamal, who was part of a high-level Omani delegation to the Partnership Summit 2011 held in Mumbai last month, also said he was heartened by the strength of interest in the Freezone Sohar development.

The two-day forum, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), provided a vital platform for both Oman and India to explore opportunities for economic co-operation and investment in either country.

Of a total leasable area of 350 hectares that will com-

prise the Phase I development of Freezone Sohar, the operating authority has earmarked a sizable 200 hectares for Logistics and Warehousing-related activities.

The proposed Logistics Park at Freezone Sohar is expected to benefit immensely from its proximity to the world-class logistics terminals of Sohar Port.

In addition to maritime links with the burgeoning markets of India, China and the wider Middle East, the Logistics Park will also stand to gain from the multimodal transportation system being put in place in Sohar, complete with rail, air and enhanced road connectivity.

In addition to hosting a wide spectrum of trading activities, the Logistics Park will also attract investments in common and dedicated, as well as public and bonded warehousing.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY (S.A.O.G)

Oman Telecommunications Group (Omantel and Oman Mobile) is interested in updating its records with regard to supplier's information. The information required are as follows:

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## i2Offshore launches new corporate pension product

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Muscat-based i2Offshore, one of Oman's best established financial services companies, has launched a unique new pension and savings product that will bring significant benefits to employers and individual employees — both Omani nationals and expatriates.

The new product is the first in Oman to be genuinely 100 per cent capital protected for the full amount of the investment, is totally flexible in nature and is structured and backed by a highly respected London-based pension specialist company.

Senior executives from i2Offshore outlined the impact the new product will have alongside financial experts from the City of London at a special investment seminar hosted by the company that featured senior executives from Brooklands Trustees, LCF Rothschild, AMT Futures and Castlestone.

Speaking at the seminar, i2Offshore said that the product has already generated significant interest among the corporate sector in the Sultanate with two leading organisations already signing up to the product and offering it to their employees. The scheme has been set up in a way that individuals companies can brand the product as their own — giving

a stronger ownership and sense of belonging to the organisation and its staff.

i2Offshore has launched the new product in response to growing demand from the corporate sector and individual employees for the provision of additional and strengthened pension and savings schemes to complement the existing PAsI schemes and end of service payments for expatriates.

The company believes that company's who adopt the scheme make themselves more attractive to talented staff in an increasingly competitive labour

“We have decided to develop and introduce this product after extensive research into the requirements and demands of companies and individuals in Oman”

market in the country — and also help in the longer-term retention of Omani nationals and expatriate employees.

It has partnered with the well respected Brooklands Trustees who operate out of the City of London to provide the new product that has a number of significant benefits compared to other savings products currently available in Oman.

Barry Woodgate of i2Offshore says: “We have decided

to develop and introduce this product after extensive research into the requirements and demands of companies and individuals in Oman. A key differentiator in our product is having trustee partners in the form of Brooklands Trustees who operate out of offices in the City of London and Dubai and a financial nominee in the shape of Brown Shipley Private Client Bank, a FTSE 100 company in London.

“Having the pensions and savings in trust ensures they are not so exposed to the volatility of the global financial markets and also ensures that the money saved is not linked to the future of the individual company — ensuring the individual's savings are fully protected.

“The product is already generating interest among Omani businesses, and we believe this will be a real added benefit to companies in their recruitment strategies in recruiting and retaining senior executives and staff, helping them to be seen as visionary in their approach to the financial security of their employees.”

i2Offshore is convinced that the time is right for the introduction of more sophisticated and advanced financial services products as the Sultanate's economy and its businesses become stronger and more developed — requiring a new era of pensions and savings planning. The company is an inde-

pendent financial consultancy that has been operating in Oman for the past 15 years and also has offices in Kuwait and Baku and is part of the Tamimah Consultancy Group, led by Shaikh Mohammed al Harthy, an aide to the Cabinet of the Government of Oman, and is widely respected, experienced and knowledgeable about the challenges facing companies in the Sultanate.

Woodgate from i2Offshore added that another important asset to companies was giving them control of the investment strategy with a recommended approach for companies to adopt 100 per cent capital structured products that could give a growth return of between 6-17 per cent per annum.

“We wanted to create a product that keeps companies away from the volatility of local or global equity and bond markets — especially in light of the recent global financial downturn from which nowhere in the world has remained immune,” he added.

The recent seminar organised by i2Offshore at the Grand Hyatt is the first in a number of seminars the company plans to for businesses and organisations in Oman to explain and brief them about the benefits of the new products and how they can bring real and tangible benefits to both the employer and the employee in the future.

## KPMG survey shows VAT function remains under-measured

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Around the world the shift towards indirect tax away from direct tax is clear. According to KPMG International's 2010 Global Corporate and Indirect Tax Survey, since 2009 the average global corporate tax has dropped slightly from 25.44 per cent to 24.99 per cent in 2010.

Meanwhile, the average indirect tax rate rose slightly from 15.41 per cent in 2009 to 15.61 per cent in 2010. This is evidenced by increases in VAT/GST rates, the introduction of new indirect tax regimes and major reforms of existing tax systems.

However, despite this significant shift in tax policy, a new benchmark survey from KPMG International shows that VAT/GST remains under-resourced, under-measured and under-managed in most organisations.

“Indirect tax performance can now be benchmarked globally based on real data obtained from over 100 global businesses,” says Niall Campbell, KPMG's Global Head of Indirect Tax Services.

“Something that has been missing, until now, is a set of benchmarks that provide valuable insights into how businesses are currently managing their VAT/GST obligations globally”.

The survey found that just fewer than 75 per cent of respondents have no specific goals agreed to between the Head of Tax and the Head of VAT/GST to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the VAT/GST. Furthermore, over 65 per cent of businesses do not have a Global Head of VAT/GST.

When then asked if the business has Regional Heads of VAT/GST, again over 65 per cent of respondents said that they do not.

For those that do have Regional Heads, the significant majority covered the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region — this is almost three times as many than are covered in the Asia Pacific (ASPAC) and Latin American (LATAM) regions.

Resourcing is a clear issue around the world. The survey showed that the majority of organisations (66 per cent) do not have a global or regional head of VAT.

Those that do are largely EU based with the UK, Germany and The Netherlands being the top three locations. Even at the largest global organisations surveyed (USD20bn + turnover), 50 per cent did not have a global head of VAT/GST.

Furthermore, 75 per cent of respondents say they have 10 or less full-time VAT/GST specialists employed globally and just fewer than 10 per cent

have 40 or more.

In terms of accountability for VAT/GST, the picture is not clear — 12 per cent of respondents did not know who was accountable and the balance were broadly split between saying VAT/GST is a tax function responsibility to being a finance function responsibility.

Larger businesses trended towards accountability for VAT/GST residing within the tax function.

The existence and quality of documented processes designed to manage VAT/GST across the entire business was limited. Only 40 per cent have policies in the EMEA region, and only 17 per cent in the ASPAC and LATAM regions.

Only 9 per cent of respondents rate their policies as excellent.

Campbell comments, “Given the scale of VAT/GST throughput being handled by multi-national organisations today, in many cases over US\$5bn, there is clear evidence that organisations do not have sufficient resources or processes in place to manage the increasing complexity and scale of VAT/GST obligations globally.

Investment in VAT/GST management by businesses does not appear to be keeping pace with the demands of global reforms, presenting a major business risk.”

Ashok Hariharan, Head

of Tax of Oman and UAE, said that the findings of the KPMG International survey are important for Oman and the region as well in view of the introduction of the VAT in the near future.

Ashok commented that, “It is essential that every organisation has a very clear idea of where it is headed in terms of its VAT management. It is critical that all businesses seriously consider what the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures are for their business, put in place a programme of continuous improvement and demonstrate over time how real business value can be generated through better indirect tax management.”

The KPMG International Benchmark Survey on VAT/GST will be conducted on an annual basis to track the evolution of indirect tax benchmarks globally. KPMG's Global Indirect Tax practice expects that this, and subsequent surveys, will help companies enhance performance through greater visibility and the setting of more challenging indirect tax performance goals.

For the current survey, there were 124 respondents to the survey from 27 countries. Seventy-six per cent of respondents have turnover in excess of \$1bn and at least 30 per cent have turnover in excess of \$20 billion.

## US not ready for Arctic oil drilling: officials

WASHINGTON — The United States is ill-equipped to deal with a major oil catastrophe in Alaska, the Coast Guard admiral who led the US response to the massive Gulf of Mexico oil spill and others warn.

Only one of the US Coast Guard's three ice breakers is operational and would be available to respond to a disaster off Alaska's northern coast, which is icebound for much of the year, retired admiral Thad Allen told reporters.

Former Alaska lieutenant governor Fran Ulmer said that before drilling in the Arctic, the United States must “invest in the Coast Guard.”

“It's not an option; it's a mandatory next step for our country to take,” said Ulmer, who was a member of a presidential commission that last month called for more government oversight to prevent a repeat of the Gulf of Mexico disaster.

But funding for expensive new icebreakers is unlikely to be high on the list of priorities of Republicans who gained control of the House of Representatives by vowing to slash spending.

And yet, Republicans are likely to push for more drilling off Alaska's coast, an area rich in oil.

Allen drew a grim picture of the difficulties that would face authorities responding to an offshore emergency in the Arctic.

Hundreds of clean-up workers, spill investigators, counsellors and advisers poured into Louisiana after the



Gulf of Mexico spill, taking over entire coastal towns.

But the town of Barrow, which is close to the offshore areas and where some rigs and offshore islands have already been erected, there are few facilities to house workers, let alone oil spill response crews or rescuers, he said.

“If you have 30 people, you've maxed out the beds,” he said.

The town has no de-icing facilities and no hangar for fixed-wing aircraft, which were used extensively in the aftermath of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

“At this point the lack of a forward operating base would be a significant impediment not only to oil spill response but to search and rescue,” said Allen.

Eleven rig workers died when a BP-leased rig exploded some 50 miles (80 kilometres) off the coast of Louisiana in April, sending a record 4.9 million barrels of toxic crude seeping into the Gulf before

the gushing deepwater well was capped three months later.

The impact is still being felt in the region, where oil washed up on beaches, tainted fragile marshlands, caused the authorities to close down vast areas of water to commercial fishing and shrimping, and crippled tourism.

The oil spill panel that Ulmer sat on blamed the accident on “systemic” failures in oil industry safety practices and weak enforcement of safety rules and warned that without reform a disaster like that in the Gulf of Mexico might happen again.

Drilling in Alaska would be in shallower water than the BP well, but challenges including harsh weather, ice floes and the fact that the closest Coast Guard base is hundreds of miles away would make rescue and clean-up operations very difficult, said Marilyn Heijman, director of the Pew Environment Group's offshore energy reform and US Arctic

campaigns.

In December, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar banned new drilling in the eastern Gulf and the Atlantic until beyond 2017, but said drilling in the Arctic could go ahead.

The one company that had applied for a permit to drill off the Alaska coast, Royal Dutch Shell, on Thursday said it was delaying the start of exploration because it has been unable to obtain permits.

The delay brought praise from environmental groups but criticism from Alaska politicians like Republican Governor Sean Parnell who said the delay was an example of the “federal government dragging its feet, killing jobs and making us even more reliant on oil from the Middle East and elsewhere.”

Alaska Democratic Senator Mark Begich also railed at the government, saying it has “taken virtually every opportunity to block responsible development of Alaska's resources.” — AFP



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**MSM Daily Bulletin As on 07/02/2011**

**Regular Market**

Security Name	Volume	Turnover	Trades	High	Low	Close Pr.	Prev. Close	Diff (RO)	Diff %	Last Pr	Last Bid	Last Offer	Market Cap	Par Value
TRANSULF IND. INV. HOLDING	2,489,901	200,156	177	0.082	0.079	0.080	0.078	0.002	2.564	0.081	0.080	0.081	5,350,000,000	0.100
RENAISSANCE SERVICES	500,161	647,971	216	1.300	1.280	1.296	1.266	0.030	2.370	1.290	1.290	1.300	365,594,412.384	0.100
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS IND.	135,747	9,083	22	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.066	0.001	1.515	0.067	0.066	0.067	5,695,000,000	0.100
UNITED FINANCE	123,966	9,528	23	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.076	0.076	0.077	19,250,925.540	0.100
SOHAR POWER	40,100	65,123	25	1.625	1.605	1.624	1.605	0.019	1.184	1.625	1.610	1.625	45,147,200,000	1.000
AL JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	781,959	257,579	168	0.333	0.324	0.329	0.326	0.003	0.920	0.330	0.330	0.331	41,091,428.840	0.100
DHOFAR INT.DEV.AND INV. HOLD	11,364	6,818	6	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.596	0.004	0.671	0.600	0.600	0.619	120,000,000,000	0.100
AHLI BANK	370,923	120,672	20	0.326	0.324	0.325	0.323	0.002	0.619	0.326	0.326	0.327	231,525,000,200	0.100
AL HASSAN ENGINEERING	10,100	5,434	4	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.000	0.373	0.538	0.535	0.544	40,461,904,000	0.100
OMAN INTERNATIONAL BANK	200,538	55,285	44	0.277	0.273	0.276	0.275	0.001	0.364	0.273	0.273	0.275	252,058,981.680	0.100
SHELL OMAN MARKETING	17,500	43,260	5	2.475	2.465	2.472	2.464	0.008	0.325	2.475	2.385	2.475	234,840,000,000	0.100
BANK MUSCAT	185,857	178,205	73	0.965	0.955	0.959	0.957	0.002	0.209	0.955	0.952	0.955	1,291,214,041.096	0.100
OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	69,869	84,729	18	1.216	1.211	1.213	1.211	0.002	0.165	1.211	1.211	1.214	108,806,100,000	0.100
OMAN OIL MARKETING	27,254	35,263	5	1.300	1.292	1.294	1.292	0.002	0.155	1.292	1.292	1.300	79,289,850,000	0.100
AL ANWAR CERAMIC TILES	201,943	72,538	13	0.360	0.359	0.359	0.359	0.000	0.000	0.359	0.358	0.359	58,245,286.079	0.100
AL ANWAR HOLDING	322,938	43,144	65	0.134	0.132	0.134	0.134	0.000	0.000	0.132	0.132	0.133	16,080,000,000	0.100
AL BATNAH DEV. INV. HOLDING	48,885	2,884	8	0.060	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.000	0.000	0.059	0.058	0.059	3,540,000,000	0.100
BANK DHOFAR	964	702	1	0.728	0.728	0.728	0.728	0.000	0.000	0.728	0.729	0.785	592,268,893.952	0.100
DHOFAR POWER	1,921	3,842	8	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	20,791,400,000	1.000
NAT. ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS	211,408	116,345	46	0.552	0.550	0.550	0.550	0.000	0.000	0.550	0.550	0.552	18,464,297.500	0.100
OMAN CHROMITE	2,386	8,947	4	3.750	3.748	3.750	3.750	0.000	0.000	3.750	3.700	3.900	11,250,000,000	1.000
SALALAH MILLS	1,081	746	1	0.690	0.690	0.690	0.690	0.000	0.000	0.690	0.690	0.694	28,462,500,000	0.100
SALALAH TELE SERVICES	920	441	3	0.480	0.479	0.481	0.481	0.000	0.000	0.479	0.000	0.479	86,501,789.400	0.100
OMAN TELECOMMUNICATION	97,200	121,448	17	1.250	1.245	1.249	1.250	-0.001	-0.080	1.250	1.247	1.250	938,750,000,000	0.100
GALFAR ENGINEERING AND CON.	175,442	104,571	44	0.596	0.595	0.596	0.597	-0.001	-0.168	0.595	0.594	0.595	137,678,000,000	0.100
PORT SER. CORPORATION	31,390	18,334	4	0.585	0.580	0.584	0.585	-0.001	-0.171	0.583	0.583	0.585	55,503,360,000	0.100
RAYSUT CEMENT	23,000	26,869	6	1.170	1.167	1.168	1.170	-0.002	-0.171	1.167	1.167	1.168	233,600,000,000	0.100
OMINVEST	140,786	68,339	28	0.490	0.483	0.485	0.486	-0.001	-0.208	0.484	0.486	0.489	111,550,000,000	0.100
OMAN CEMENT	303,100	184,892	8	0.611	0.610	0.610	0.612	-0.002	-0.327	0.611	0.611	0.615	201,832,353.100	0.100
NAWRAS	371,770	299,784	135	0.810	0.802	0.806	0.809	-0.003	-0.371	0.805	0.805	0.809	524,661,049.380	0.100
AL JAZEERA SERVICES	164,323	34,965	31	0.215	0.211	0.213	0.214	-0.001	-0.467	0.213	0.213	0.214	13,036,510.149	0.100
NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN	81,958	27,505	13	0.340	0.335	0.336	0.338	-0.002	-0.592	0.335	0.335	0.338	363,216,000,000	0.100
OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	164,845	26,337	33	0.161	0.159	0.160	0.161	-0.001	-0.621	0.160	0.159	0.160	16,000,000,000	0.100
OMAN FLOUR MILLS	120,500	72,402	7	0.605	0.600	0.601	0.605	-0.004	-0.661	0.600	0.580	0.605	94,657,500,000	0.100
ACWA POWER BARKA	6,962	9,688	13	1.405	1.380	1.392	1.405	-0.013	-0.925	1.380	1.350	1.380	44,544,000,000	0.500
VOLTAMP ENERGY	15,914	10,697	21	0.679	0.670	0.672	0.679	-0.007	-1.031	0.675	0.673	0.675	36,960,000,000	0.100
GULF INVESTMENT SER.	223,021	18,754	26	0.085	0.083	0.084	0.085	-0.001	-1.176	0.083	0.083	0.084	4,942,830.228	0.100
OMAN INVESTMENT AND FINANCE	407,298	92,973	91	0.230	0.225	0.228	0.231	-0.003	-1.299	0.225	0.225	0.226	27,360,000,000	0.100
MUSCAT FINANCE	6,630	1,459	2	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.223	-0.003	-1.345	0.220	0.220	0.230	33,001,573.000	0.100
ONIC HOLDING	46,678	16,822	24	0.365	0.360	0.360	0.365	-0.005	-1.370	0.360	0.359	0.360	59,459,400,000	0.100
GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT	1,116,444	78,375	58	0.071	0.069	0.070	0.071	-0.001	-1.408	0.071	0.070	0.071	21,000,000,000	0.100
GULF INT. CHEMICALS	66,943	15,964	34	0.240	0.238	0.238	0.242	-0.004	-1.653	0.240	0.239	0.240	4,998,000,000	0.100
DHOFAR CATTLE FEED	338,242	53,250	65	0.162	0.156	0.157	0.160	-0.003	-1.875	0.156	0.155	0.156	10,990,000,000	0.100
OMAN CHLORINE	194,012	89,525	34	0.465	0.460	0.461	0.470	-0.009	-1.915	0.461	0.461	0.465	27,120,861.883	0.100
BANK SOHAR	1,485,340	290,034	95	0.199	0.195	0.195	0.199	-0.004	-2.010	0.195	0.194	0.195	195,000,000,000	0.100
MAJAN COLLEGE	8,000	1,716	1	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.292	-0.006	-2.055	0.286	0.281	0.286	8,580,000,000	0.100
FINANCIAL SERVICES	163,418	18,176	24	0.115	0.110	0.111	0.118	-0.007	-5.932	0.115	0.111	0.120	7,215,000,000	0.100
Sum:	11,529,306	3,653,980	1,777											
Traded Sec.			48											

**Parallel Market**

Security Name	Volume	Turnover	Trades	High	Low	Close Pr.	Prev. Close	Diff (RO)	Diff %	Last Pr	Last Bid	Last Offer	Market Cap	Par Value
NATIONAL FINANCE	7,000	973	2	0.139	0.139	0.139	0.135	0.004	2.963	0.139	0.131	0.140	21,035,096.014	0.100
DHOFAR TOURISM	7,609	7,558	3	1.000	0.990	0.993	0.990	0.003	0.303	1.000	1.000	1.089	7,944,000,000	1.000
AL FAJAR AL ALAMIA	4,000	3,008	1	0.752	0.752	0.752	0.752	0.000	0.000	0.752	0.000	0.752	37,096,348.000	0.100
OMAN REFRESHMENT	50	440	1	8.800	8.800	8.500	8.500	0.000	0.000	8.800	8.900	9.350	25,500,000,000	1.000
OMAN TEXTILE HOLDING	500	220	1	0.440	0.440	0.438	0.438	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.404	0.447	2,628,000,000	1.000
SALALAH BEACH RESORT	163	233	1	1.430	1.430	1.430	1.430	0.000	0.000	1.430	1.430	0.000	8,937,500,000	1.000
ASAFFA FOODS	10,000	4,600	2	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.468	-0.008	-1.709	0.460	0.441	0.460	46,000,000,000	0.100
Sum:	29,322	17,032	11											
Traded Sec.			7											

**Bonds Market**

Security Name	Volume	Turnover	Trades	High	Low	Close Pr.	Prev. Close	Diff (RO)	Diff %	Last Pr	Last Bid	Last Offer	Market Cap	Par Value
BANK MUSCAT BONDS-NONGUARANT 7	10,000	10,360	1	1.036	1.036	1.036	1.030	0.006	0.583	1.036	1.035	0.000	25,900,000,000	1.000
AL OMANIYA FIN.SER. BONDS	166	166	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000	1.099	1,555,779.000	1.000
BANK MUSCAT CONVERTABLE BONDS7	450	482	2	1.070	1.070	1.070	1.070	0.000	0.000	1.070	1.070	1.080	34,575,991.770	1.000
Sum:	10,616	11,008	4											
Traded Sec.			3											

**Trading Summary**

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,569,244	3,682,020	1,792	*****	17	26	15	58

**Indices**

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSM30 Index	6,906.70	6,885.74	6,892.92	6,885.98	6.94	0.10
Banks and Investment Index	8,364.92	8,295.13	8,297.36	8,366.96	-69.60	-0.83
Services and Insurance Index	2,947.15	2,936.49	2,939.44	2,938.43	1.01	0.03
Industry Index	7,443.71	7,428.67	7,431.03	7,432.14	-1.11	-0.01

**Nationalities Trading**

Nationality	Buy % Volume	Buy % Value	Sell % Volume	Sell % Value
OMANIS	91.00%	85.68%	90.45%	79.10%
GCC	3.24%	5.74%	4.41%	8.17%
ARABS	2.09%	2.26%	0.66%	0.44%
OTHERS	3.67%	6.32%	4.48%	12.29%



**BUSINESS ALERT**

**Yaris hatchback — stylish, smart pick**



MUSCAT — "I looked at many cars, believe me, I tried everything, finally I settled for Yaris hatchback," says Salem al Kharbooshi, a smart, young executive in a large organisation. "My choice is based on solid facts and not just on an attractive design or eye-catching looks."

Here's what (he thinks) make the Yaris 'a smart choice'. Squeezing in an enormous amount of innovation into the curvy contours of its astonishingly compact frame, the Toyota Yaris Hatchback represents a remarkably clever transportation solution.

The Yaris interior is unexpectedly roomy, and packed with an astonishing array of high-end features. These include power outer mirrors & driver's seat height adjusters. The 60/40 split rear seat that reclines, slides and folds flat, the rear flat floor which helps in increasing the legroom for rear occupants and the large luggage area — all add to the appeal of the vehicle.

The Yaris represents a 'styling leap' in terms of exteriors as well as interiors. Attractive grille, headlamps and fog lamps, together with 8-spoke alloy wheels add to its appeal.

Responsive power and a surefooted stance make driving the nimble Yaris a delight. A choice of powerful 1.5 and 1.3L engine variants offer impressive fuel efficiency and excellent performance, assuring low cost of ownership.

Yaris has also been awarded a 5-star safety rating and high score (35 points) for adult protection in a round of Euro NCAP safety tests. That's not only because the Yaris' highly rigid cabin, forged from high-strength steel, is designed to absorb shock and disperse impact energy. High-end safety features such as dual airbags (driver and passenger), 'anti-lock brake system' (ABS) with 'electronic brake-force distribution' (EBD) and 'brake assist' (BA) in addition to the 3 point ELR seatbelts, the high mount stop lamp, engine immobiliser system, fog lamps and rear spoiler, all add to its top class safety standards.

This outstanding performer comes from Toyota, Oman's most coveted brand. Toyota offers enduring quality and nothing comes close to it in terms of value-retention. It is no surprise, therefore, that Toyota soars far above the rest, with a dominant market share and ever-expanding customer base.

The unmatched, nationwide parts and service support of Saud Bahwan Group

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.

**Kia shines at Muscat Festival**



KIA'S prominent presence in Muscat Festival 2011 has created a wave of admiration amongst all visitors.

According to a spokesperson, "Kia is a part of part of Saud Bahwan Group (SBG) which is an organisation that prides itself on moving ahead in-line with national goals and priorities. SBG has once again become lead sponsors of the Muscat Festival, and we have a very prominent presence at Qurum Garden and Naseem Garden.

At Qurum Garden, Kia's latest cars and kiosks are on display. The attractive Kia models include the new Optima, Cerato, Cerato Koup, Sportage, Cadenza and the Soul. At the other venue, Naseem gardens, the Kia models on display include Optima, Cerato Koup, Sportage and the Soul.

The Muscat Festival celebrates traditional arts, culture and heritage while providing people of Oman fun, adventure, excitement and entertainment. The event line up provides great excitement in the City of Muscat.

The 2011 Kia range offers a wide variety of models. According to a Kia spokesperson, a very large number of people are switching to Kia, "Kia is the newest and most exciting force of change in the automotive world and is ready to change the way people feel and think about driving. More than just a promise, Kia is committed to making driving a true pleasure for customers across the globe. With youthful styling and the latest in advanced technologies, Kia cars are turning heads the world over with the power to surprise. From the Picanto to the Mohave, Kia offers a full line-up of cars, SUVs and MPVs that are not only practical but downright exhilarating to drive.

In Oman, Kia's line-up is formidable: All-new Cadenza is a luxurious and spirited sedan being hailed as Kia's 'big step into the future', while the attractive new Kia Cerato Koup really does have the power to surprise. Picanto fills the life with colours, Rio is the nifty little city sprinter while Cerato has become Kia's leading style icon and Kia

Optima is the choice of mature targets. Large families travel together in Kia Carens or Kia Carnival MPVs. The rugged 4WD line-up of the Mohave, Sportage and Sorento can satisfy anyone's thirst for adventure. The funky Soul is perfect for the cool urban soulsters of Muscat. For those who mean business, there's the recently launched Kia K4000 truck series. Hence, we can say that when it comes to Kia, the best is yet to come."

Reliable International Automotive, the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and an unmatched after sales support of 18 sales outlets, 19 service centres and easily accessible 28 parts outlets ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the Kia 'Dealer of the Year' award; Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award, 'Family Like Care' service award and the 'Zenith Club' award for excellent performance. The prestigious 'Kia Award for Overall Excellence and Outstanding Performance' amongst Kia distributors worldwide was bestowed most deservedly.

**NBO Al Kanz draw at Qurum today**

NATIONAL Bank of Oman (NBO) will conduct its Al Kanz draw for the month of January 2011, at Al Qurum Natural Park — Heritage Village Theatre, today.

As part of the activities of Muscat Festival, the function will be held under the auspices of the President of the Marketing Committee of Muscat Festival, in the presence of customers, the general public, representatives from the Media and members of the bank's senior management.

This evening, the Bank will announce the names of the winners of the guaranteed monthly prizes for each Branch, which amounts to RO 1,000 per branch, the guaranteed regional prizes of RO 25,000 per region, and the monthly 'Sadara' prize for RO 50,000.

These prizes are offered within the unique and popular Al Kanz Scheme 2011, which is considered the most successful scheme that encourages the savings habit among customers. What distinguishes this year's Al Kanz Scheme is that it also offers a monthly prize of RO 50,000 for NBO Sadara customers. Additionally, the Grand Prize Draw, for half a million riyals, will be held in June 2011.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdul Qadir al Sumali, NBO's Assistant General Manager — Head Branch Sales said, "We are delighted with the positive response that our Al Kanz Scheme 2011 has received from the different segments of society. We encourage our customers and others to invest in this scheme, as it is an exciting opportunity to save and at the same time win fabulous prizes in a short time, that will help fulfill their aspirations and goals."



**S Korea to start emission trading in 2013-15**

SEOUL — South Korea will start carbon emission trading between 2013 and 2015 after strong opposition from industry to the government's initial plan to start in 2013, a presidential secretary said yesterday.

The decision is a breakthrough for powerful export-led conglomerates, which have been pushing for a delay given competitor nations such as Japan and the United States have delayed or shelved emissions trading schemes for now.

"It is no longer an issue whether or not the govern-

ment would implement cap-and-trade systems. We aim to get parliamentary approval on the bill before its general session," Kim Sang-hyup, a secretary to the President for green growth, said in an interview.

Parliament's general session begins on September 1 each year.

"However, we will fully reflect industrial opinions in the bill to prevent them from reducing international competitiveness and help them minimise any damage," he said.

The revised bill, which would be presented to parli-

ament later this month, would include an increased percentage of free carbon allowances from the 90 per cent originally planned, but not as high as 100 per cent, Kim said.

Under the original plan, the remainder would be auctioned, with the proportion to be auctioned to increase over time after the first phase.

Europe's \$100 billion emissions trading scheme, the world's largest, covers nearly half of all EU emissions and relies on member states allocating emissions allowances to 11,000 industrial installations. Companies get most

permits free now but many power generators will have to pay for all of these from 2013 in the scheme's third phase.

South Korea's scheme would cover about 60 per cent of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. If passed by legislators, it could become the region's second cap-and-trade scheme after New Zealand's.

**REACHING CONSENSUS:** The government initially set a plan for a three-phase cap-and-trade scheme, with the first phase starting in 2013 to run through 2015, then two subsequent phases running for five years each from 2016.

"We are not backing off. Unlike other countries, we reached further consensus with industry to move forward...as this scheme should be conducted under consensus with industry," he said. He added the government would rework penalties as industries have demanded lighter fines for non-compliance.

President Lee Myung-bak earlier yesterday urged flexibility on the trading plan, saying the government would introduce the scheme "at an opportune time after thoroughly sounding out the opinions of industries". — Reuters

**Asian stocks near 3-year highs on US job data**



**HONG KONG** Stock Exchange Chairman Ronald Arculli (2nd R) and Chief Executive Charles Li (2nd L) with floor traders during the first trading day of the Lunar New Year in Hong Kong yesterday. — Reuters

HONG KONG — Asian stocks pushed towards a near three-year peak yesterday as the US job market showed further signs of recovery, highlighting a brighter economic outlook, while the dollar eased against a basket of currencies.

South Korea and Japan led gains, with the former ending up below a record high and the latter closing at a nine-month peak.

Japan, which is the best performing Asian market this year with year-to-date gains of more than 3 per cent, has benefited from a shift into developed markets and generally strong corporate earnings. The index closed up 0.5 per cent.

South Korea has seen inflows from investors rotating out of last year's hot performing emerging markets in South and Southeast Asia due to relatively attractive valuations.

The broader MSCI index of Asian stocks outside Japan was up 0.4 per cent to within striking distance of a three-year peak tested in January.

So far this year, Asian stocks have underperformed the MSCI world index by nearly three percentage points due to a variety of factors such as frothy valuations in some markets in South and Southeast Asia and strong data out of the US.

Investors pulled out \$7 billion from emerging markets equity funds in the week of February 4, their biggest outflow in three years, data from fund tracker EPFR Global showed, putting a sizeable dent in record inflows seen in this category in 2010.

But indications that Asian authorities are demonstrating greater urgency to tackle inflation, with Indonesia being the latest country to increase interest rates by a quarter point last week, have made investors optimistic about the near-term outlook.

"Policymakers are likely to adopt more administrative measures and front-load rate hikes as inflationary expectations continue to rise," Barclays Capital strategists said in a note.

Most Asian markets which were closed for the Lunar New Year holiday late last week reopened yesterday with the exception of China, where trading will not resume until Wednesday.

Boosted by Friday's data, which showed a sharp drop in the US jobless rate, the dollar gained briefly against a basket of currencies. The dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of major currencies, had dipped 0.2 per cent by midday, nearing a three-month low of 76.881 tested last Wednesday.

The euro was up 0.2 per cent at \$1.3617 with traders citing talk of euro-buying by Asian names.

Reports of euro zone infighting over a French and German push for a comprehensive package of reforms to address the region's debt crisis also kept a lid on the euro.

Indeed, Credit Agricole said many of its Asian clients were sceptical about any signs of improved sentiment towards the eurozone's debt troubles.

Japanese government bond yields rose, reflecting a rise in US Treasury yields, with the 10-year yield hitting a nine-month peak of 1.30 per cent. But losses were limited due to some mild bargain buying.

US crude futures edged above the \$89 per barrel mark, recovering from a 2 per cent drop the previous session, due to the political crisis in Egypt while Brent crude stayed above the \$100 level. The Egyptian government opened talks with the opposition at the weekend to try to resolve the country's deepest crisis in 30 years, but it was far from certain the situation had been defused. — Reuters



BERTH	CODE	VESSEL NAME	CARGO	LASTPORT	NEXTPORT	BERTH/ANCHOR TIME	ETD/SAILED	AGENT	STATUS
01	ARBY	APL Ruby (ARBY)	Containers	Mumbai	Djibouti	06-Feb-11 15:00	07-Feb-11 01:00	GAC	Alongside
02	ACAF	Api California (ACAF)	Containers	Singapore	Port Said	07-Feb-11 02:27	07-Jan-11 12:00	GAC	Alongside
04	AALM	APL Almandine (AALM)	Containers	Port Kelang	Jeddah (KSA)	07-Feb-11 09:15	07-Feb-11 12:00	GAC	Alongside
05	ERCA	ER Caen (M31C) (ERCA)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania)	06-Feb-11 20:22	07-Feb-11 09:00	Maersk	Alongside
05	MHAA	Hansa India (MHAA)	Containers	Port Said	Colombo (Sri Lanka)	06-Feb-11 20:42	07-Feb-11 10:00	Baekker Haji	Alongside
06	MRTH	Northern Valour (MRTH)	Containers	Sukhna	Djibouti	06-Feb-11 21:15	07-Feb-11 16:00	Sharaf Shipping Services	Alongside
22	TIMC	Timor Challenger (TIMC)	NIL	Muscat	Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania)	06-Feb-11 01:05		Inchcape	Alongside
23	BARW	Banwaaqo (BARW)	NIL	Berbera (Somalia)	Berbera (Somalia)	05-Feb-11 10:32		Dhofar	Alongside
30	NESE	Neptune Sea (NESE)	NIL	Salalah	High Sea	07-Feb-11 10:45	07-Feb-11 10:00	GAC	Alongside
D	DECA	Delmas Nacala (DELM) (DECA)	Containers	Port Victoria	Pointe des Gaiets	03-Feb-11 23:12	06-Feb-11 18:00	Al Fayha	Anchorage
D	M530	Maersk Tanjung (M530)	Containers	Port Said	Port Kelang	05-Feb-11 00:00	05-Feb-11 16:00	Maersk	Anchorage
D	MMAG	MSC Magali (MMAG)	Containers	Mombasa	Jebel Ali (UAE)	05-Feb-11 11:40	08-Feb-11 12:00	Sharaf Shipping Services	Anchorage
DRF	MDAN	MSC Danit (MDAN)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Singapore	05-Feb-11 12:00		Sharaf	Expected
	ARVE	ARABIAN VENTURE (ARVE)	Barley	Chennai	Shualiba	08-Feb-11 06:00		Inchcape	Expected
	BRPA	Bruce Park (BRPA)	NIL	Singapore	Suez	11-Feb-11 00:00		Towell Barwil Co LLC	Expected
	CCME	Melina (CCME)	Containers	Aqaba (Jordan)	Singapore	07-Feb-11 21:00		Al Fayha	Expected
	CCQU	CMA CGM Quartz (CCQU)	Containers	Mundra	Djibouti	10-Feb-11 18:00		Al Fayha	Expected
	CCYX	CMA CGM Onyx (CCYX)	Containers	Port Said	Khor Fakkan (UAE)	10-Feb-11 07:00		Al Fayha	Expected
	CHIO	Chios (CHIO)	Bulk Fuel	Singapore	Ash Shihir (Yemen)	08-Feb-11 21:00	08-Feb-11 22:00	GAC	Expected
	GL808	Golden Lake No.808 (GL808)	Frozen Fish	Bosaso (Somalia)	Ajman	08-Feb-11 00:00		OSSC	Expected
	GOLDY	Golden Yuka (GOLDY)	Bulk Fuel	Singapore	Suez	10-Feb-11 10:00	10-Feb-11 11:00	GAC	Expected
	IXTH7	ixthius No.7 (IXTH7)	Frozen Fish	Bosaso (Somalia)	Ajman	08-Feb-11 00:00		OSSC	Expected
	LIBPR	Liberty Pride (LIBPR)	General Cargo	Jeddah (KSA)	Karachi (Pakistan)	07-Feb-11 20:00		Inchcape	Expected
	M215	Maersk Semakau (M215)	Containers	TBA	TBA	10-Feb-11 21:00		Maersk	Expected
	M258	Caroline Maersk (M258)	Containers	TBA	TBA	11-Feb-11 03:00		Maersk	Expected
	M543	Maersk Tukang (M543)	Containers	Port Kelang	Suez	09-Feb-11 20:00		Maersk	Expected
	M58A	Maersk Warsaw (M58A)	Containers	TBA	TBA	11-Feb-11 04:00		Maersk	Expected
	M681	Nexoe Maersk (M681)	Containers	Durban (South Africa)	Jebel Ali (UAE)	10-Feb-11 06:00		Maersk	Expected
	M6MF	Nedlloyd Europa (M6MF)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Suez	09-Feb-11 21:00		Maersk	Expected
	M6VF	Maersk Dalton (M6VF)	Containers	TBA	TBA	11-Feb-11 08:00		Maersk	Expected
	M77G	Safmarine Cunene (M77G)	Containers	Port Qasim	Port Qasim	07-Feb-11 17:00	07-Feb-11 12:00	Maersk	Expected
	MANF	MSC Anafi (MANF)	Containers	Bin Qasim (Pakistan)	Bin Qasim (Pakistan)	08-Feb-11 23:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MDRW	Darwin (MDRW)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	TBA	11-Feb-11 11:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MJMM	MSC Jamima (MJMM)	Containers	Mombasa	Karachi (Pakistan)	08-Feb-11 15:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MMUR	MSC Maureen (MMUR)	Containers	Jeddah (KSA)	Nhava Shiva	10-Feb-11 05:00		Sharaf	Expected
	MOLCR	MOL Creation (MOLCR) (MOLCR)	Containers	Rotterdam	Singapore	10-Feb-11 00:00		Kanoo	Expected
	MOSL	Msc Oslo (MOSL)	Containers	Jebel Ali (UAE)	Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania)	07-Feb-11 20:00		Sharaf	Expected
	OLCA	Olympic Carrier (OLCA)	NIL	Muscat	TBA	07-Feb-11 00:00		SSMS	Expected
	SCFVA	SCF Valdai (SCFVA)	Chemical	Marsa Bashyar	Singapore	08-Feb-11 01:00	08-Feb-11 02:00	Inchcape	Expected
	SEWA	SEAWAY NO.5 (SEWA)	NIL	Jeddah (KSA)	Jebel Ali (UAE)	08-Feb-11 03:00	08-Feb-11 08:00	Sharaf	Expected
	SKYR	Skyros (SKYR)	NIL	TBA	TBA	09-Feb-11 08:00		Khimji	Expected



# Mazoon has true flavours of Oman



**'Mazoon, the name of ancient Oman, seeks to focus on the same theme by bringing to you write-ups on the Sultanate's lifestyle, covering thereby its heritage, culture, cuisine, events and business'**



By Kaushalendra Singh

The first edition of *Mazoon* not only looks attractive, it has all the qualities of a good light magazine. It has touched sections like heritage, culture, tourism, automobile, dance, food and healthcare

FROM the launch of the first edition of the *Oman* daily in Arabic on the second National Day (November 18, 1972) and the first edition of the *Oman Daily Observer* in English on November 15, 1981 to the first edition of its new lifestyle magazine, *Mazoon*, yesterday, the Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising (OEPPA) has covered a long way and has produced many publications of repute.

The launch of monthly lifestyle magazine, *Mazoon*, witnessed the impressive presence of ministers, under-secretaries, government officials and representatives of public and private sector establishments at the Oman International Exhibition Centre.

The first edition of the magazine was released by Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and the event coincided with the first exhibition on Human Resources Development at the same venue.

Commenting on the launch of the magazine, Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Chief Executive Officer of OEPPA said: "We have immense pleasure to present to our readers *Mazoon*, a brand new monthly lifestyle magazine.

"*Mazoon*, the name of ancient Oman, seeks to focus on the same theme by bringing to you write-ups on the Sultanate's lifestyle, covering thereby its heritage, culture, cuisine, events and business".

Fahmy bin Khalid al Harthy, Editor-in-Chief of the *Oman Daily Observer* termed this to be yet another feather in the *Observer's* success story. "The magazine was long overdue as we were feeling a big gap in this area and we tried to come out with one of its kind product."

"There could not have been better occasion than this when all major public and private sector establishments are sitting under one umbrella showcasing their human resource services. This magazine has been perceived with a view to cater to the needs of our readers who always longed for quality light and colourful articles focusing



Oman," he said.

The first edition of *Mazoon* not only looks attractive, it has all the qualities of a good light magazine. It has touched sections like heritage, culture, tourism, automobile, dance, food and healthcare. The magazine has dedicated sections for women and kids and lovely short pieces on Hollywood and Bollywood.

"The magazine looks colourful and covers my area of interest, that is food. Turning the pages I found the food section and I found nice recipes of soup, honey vanilla soup

cake, green salad with wild mushroom and tomato consommé with lemongrass and ginger," said Sarah who visited the exhibition with a view to have some latest on training and human resources in Oman.

Radhiya bint Ghulam al Zadjal-iyah, Director of Public Relations at OEPPA was upbeat over the launch of the new magazine as also on the participation of OEPPA in the exhibition. "We have many things to showcase in the exhibition. We are maintaining best practices in human resources and I am proud to say that

*Daily Observer* has been ranked among the top five English language newspapers in the Gulf based on a recent survey conducted by ArabianBusiness.com. The *Observer* occupies an important position among the leading English language daily newspapers in the region.

OEPPA is one of the most important pillars of Oman's media establishment. OEPPA has a proven track record of expertise, accomplishment and success in the areas it operates — advertising, publishing, printing, distribution and news-gathering. Reassurance is the driving force behind everything that it does.

The *Observer* prides itself on the quality of service in producing a slew of supplements, magazines, books and special supplements on important occasions.

A fully integrated organisation, OEPPA has simplified its business operations into several units such as *Oman Daily Observer*, Arabic daily *Oman*, Al Omaniya Advertising and Public Relations, Al Omaniya for Marketing and Distribution and Oman Printing and Publishing.

In addition, OEPPA brings out other prestigious publications such as *Nizwa*, a cultural quarterly, *Port of Sohar*, an annual publication and *Youth Observer*, among others.



The *Oman Daily Observer* is an indispensable feature of the daily lives of thousands of readers, serving as an essential lifeline to news and developments within and outside Oman.

Along with its wide repertoire of daily editorial offerings, ranging from opinion pieces to mirthful cartoon strips, the *Observer* has endeavoured to inform, enlighten, inspire, enliven, entertain, and indeed enrich the lives of its reader.

The *Observer* has published several important books, including *Dhofar — Land of Frankincense*, *Muscat — Past and Present*, *Oman — 30 Glorious Years*, celebrating the 30th Renaissance Day anniversary and *Success Stories of Omani Entrepreneurs*, focusing on the achievements of Omani business leaders.

— Pictures by Shamsa al Harthiya





# Oman's first HRD Exhibition opens

## Exhibition highlights HR Development

By Abdulaziz al Jadhmani

**T**HE Exhibition for the Human Resources Development 2011 is the first of its kind to highlight the process of human resources development in the Sultanate.

The three-day exhibition serves as a collaborative platform for participating government departments and private institutions to exchange ideas and experiences. This event is opportunity for public sector employees to get familiarised with the training courses and programmes, laws, plans and strategies concerning human resources development in the Sultanate.

Many private and government bodies are participating in this outstanding exhibition. Among the participating private establishments is Oman Arab Bank that was established in 1984. The bank participates in all major infrastructural development and industrial projects in Oman. It provides the best services to the customers in managing their investments in the securities market. It also introduces products to meet the needs of real estate financing and tourism projects in the country.

Sumaiya al Sabri, Sales Executive, Retail Marketing and Business Development at Oman Arab Bank, commented: "The exhibition is an excellent initiative to bring together different private and government establishments in the Sultanate to highlight human resources development sector. What distinguishes the bank is that it reached 92 per cent in Omanisation which is the highest rate scored among other banks in the Sultanate. It also offers less loans interest comparing to other banks".



**F**IRST of its kind, the country's first Human Resources Development Expo was inaugurated under the auspices of His Excellency Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. Organised by the Ministry of Civil Service in co-operation with Oman International Trade and Exhibitions (OITE), the three-day event will showcase Government employee-focused courses, training packages, policies, plans, human resource development strategies and recent developments in the human resource development sector in the country. The event will

The main objective of this exhibition is to highlight the importance of training, skills development and HR Management in the Sultanate

event also aims to raise the interest of individual and the collective value of training, as well as to communicate and work with public and private organisations and individuals on matters related to training and human resources. The focus is on encouraging research and dissemination of material relevant to the development of

signed up to date. Organisations and companies which have extended their support to the event include the Oman International Exhibition Centre as the Main Sponsor; Polyglot Institute, Rusayl Institute, Sohar Institute, Oman International Bank, Oman Arab Bank and Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) as



Oman International Bank SAOG, one of the leading banks in the Sultanate, was also participating in the exhibition. The bank is the first 100 per cent Omani owned commercial bank in the Sultanate. It is the largest bank in the Sultanate with a network covering every corner of the country.

OIB also have branches overseas in India and Pakistan. It has pioneered a range of services and systems in Oman to provide our customers and clients with a higher level of quality service and satisfaction. Some of the bank's outstanding achievements are that it is the first Omani bank to introduce ATMs as well as first 100 per cent computerised bank in the Sultanate. OIB is the first bank with Staff Training Centres.

Commenting on OIB's participation in the exhibition, Ameer al Zadjali, Head of Human Resources Department at OIB, pointed out: "Our participation in the exhibition came to highlight the great efforts made in human resources development for staff working at OIB. We also co-operate with colleges through the course they offer and we propose the appropriate courses to our training centre in order to conduct such courses for our staff."

Institute of Public Administration, the leading government institution in human resources development, was also participating in the three-day exhibition. Commenting on the institute's participation, Abdullah al Amri, Head Trainees Affairs Department, said: "The institute plays a vital role in developing human resources in government establishments. It offers training courses, consultation services and conducts researches and studies. We participate in this event to familiarise the public with the institute's contribution to human resources development process in the Sultanate. We are also looking for needs of other private establishment regarding the training courses or programmes they plan to conduct for their employees".



enable interaction between various Government HR and training departments to compare, share best practices and network with peers. "The main objective of this exhibition is to highlight the importance of training, skills development and HR Management in the Sultanate. The

training and human resources in the country," said Sayyid Salim bin Musallam bin Ali al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Service. The event has attracted much interest from the industry with more than 40 government bodies, specialised training institutions and companies

Platinum sponsors; Almana-rah Alelmeya Training Services and Caledonian College as Gold Sponsors and AMIDEAST and The Achievement Centre as Silver sponsors. **Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising (OEPPA), publishers of Oman Daily Observer**

and Arabic daily Oman, is the media sponsor of the event.

The event will act as a platform for direct communication between the government, institutions and training providers for the advancement of training levels in the Sultanate. An ideal platform to exhibit initiatives and corporate human resource development projects to the public, the event will also include a two day workshop to bring ideas and people together, develop better networks, structure and initiate projects to support government employees in a wide range of skills and policy formation.

According to organisers, an abundance of prizes awaits visitors to the HRD Expo ranging from laptops, Blackberries, Android devices, Internet modems, SIM cards, training programmes, e-courses and much more. The Ministry of Civil Service will conduct daily draws at 6 pm to pick the lucky winners.



# HRD key to Oman's development agenda

By Hasan Kamoopuri

**T**HE ongoing Human Resources Development Expo 2011 (February 7-9) at the Oman International Exhibition Centre assumes significance on several counts. The event is a first time opportunity to showcase government employee focused courses, training packages, policies, plans, HR strategies and overall development of the technical skill of employees. This three-day event explores the scenario of human resource development (HRD) in the Sultanate of Oman. The HRD Expo is conducted in view of an increased emphasis on HRD initiatives at a national level in Omani firms. There is a significant degree of awareness among the top managers regarding the benefits of a strategic approach to HRD. It is worth mentioning here

that in November 2010, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos asked the authorities to set aside RO 100 million in the Eighth Five-Year Plan for human resource development programme. The grant also included 1,000 external scholarships for Omani students to pursue graduation studies as well as study in specialised fields as may be required by the state. The focus of 1,000 scholarships would be on technical disciplines in the fields like medicine, engineering, economics, accounting and financial analysis and information technology. It is important to note that the external scholarships are in addition to the RO 130 million set aside for study grants in the Eighth Five-Year Plan. The key aim of the grant is to develop potential and scientific capabilities of Omani citizens so that they play a key

role in the development of the country. **HRD strategy** The Sultanate's HRD strategy focuses on the dissemination, encouragement and patronage of knowledge and the development of education by: Creating a climate that encourages the spread and promotion of knowledge and eradication of illiteracy; According priority to the spreading of basic education, upgrading and the provision of access to education for all people, so as to ensure equal opportunities for all people; Establishing a post-secondary and technical educational system based on the provision of the main specialisations required by the national economy, together with the provision of the necessary facilities for carrying out applied research in the social or eco-

nomics fields; Creating employment opportunities for Omanis in public and private sectors in addition to equipping them with training and qualifications that conform to labour market requirements; Substituting expatriate labour with highly qualified Omani labour in order to shift the economy from a low value to a high value added economy. Furthermore to increase the participation of Omanis in the labour market in general with particular focus on the participation of women; and Increasing the efficiency of the Omani labour market by narrowing differentials between public and private sectors. From time to time on different occasions, His Majesty and his government announced new initiatives aimed at encouraging Omani people

to take education seriously and benefit from the fruits of modern advances. In May 2009, during an official visit to the Sultan Qaboos University, His Majesty stressed the importance of scientific research, stating in his speech, "we have to keep abreast of development at all times." To achieve this, His Majesty sanctioned an annual allocation of RO 500,000 to support scientific research programmes. His Majesty's firm belief in the power of education is rooted in the teachings of the Glorious Quran: "the ignorant are not equal to those who know." During his meet-the-people tour in 2009, His Majesty announced an annual Royal Grant designed to help meritorious Omani girls to pursue higher studies. Five hundred Omani girls who obtain 80 per cent or more marks in their

annual General Diploma Certificate Examinations will be given scholarships to study in the Higher Educational Institutions in the Sultanate. The Royal gesture will give further fillip to young and talented Omani girls to fulfil their higher education ambitions. Human resource development is one of the basic dimensions of the Vision for Oman's Economy (1996-2019). In view of the current situation and the challenges at local and international levels, the broad focus of the vision for human resource development is "to develop human resources and the capabilities of the Omani people to generate and manage technological changes efficiently, in addition to facing the continuously changing local and international conditions in a way that ensures maintaining the Omani traditions and customs.



*On the Lighter Side*  
Nizar al Musalmi

## Why do men ignore their partners?

**T**HE father of junior has now got a phone with high functionalities like Internet, Bluetooth, great sound and touch pad. But the mother of junior, his wife, is not impressed. She is complaining that I spend all the time discovering what that phone can do, so much so that I easily forget her presence. The mother of junior is experiencing a stiff competition with her man's attention and she is finding it difficult to cope especially so when her competitor is a gadget. She says that there is a virus going around where men spend hours on their computers, cellphones, cars, televisions and completely ignore their partners. As a result most women feel lonely which makes them want more social interaction from their husbands than what they actually get.

Last week I heard her arranging for a meeting with all wives in the neighbourhood to brainstorm on how to deal with the problem. She argues that if husbands paid as much attention to their women as they do to their 'men toys', maybe they would have happier relationships. "We need to have a showdown with I-phones, BlackBerries, Bluetooth and data packets and those so called laptops". She said adding that these days' men have become like children.

You see when the mother of junior comes up with something, there is always some sense in it. Take for example the other day when I had lunch with a friend of one of my cousins, who owns the latest Nokia touch screen. We talked for a long time but I doubt if he heard half of what I said because he kept touching his phone all the time. It is a wonder that guys keep asking why the women in their lives sulk so much. One friend of my colleague spends hours cleaning his music instruments and goes buying the latest drums and guitars and even talks to them. One of my cousins is in for cars and spends hours washing, polishing and accessorising them. The guy then goes ahead to pamper them like there is going to be a contest. I always thought naming non-living things was only done in the movies, but this cousin of mine has in the same way given all his cars names, usually feminine. I once heard him say "my waitress has spent too much time in the sun today".

These days it does not matter what the age, but guys and their toys are inseparable... even video games. You think play stations are only for kids and teenagers? Wait until you meet one 38-year-old friend of mine. The guy is unbelievable. If you met a group of guys discussing the latest gadgets or exchanging video games or transferring data on Bluetooth, you could mistake it for a business discussion. They compare notes on what the latest phone can do, its advantages over version 1.01, the software, memory size, and countless other details. Indeed some men spend a lot of hours on electronic gadgets and tend to ignore their partners. Maybe the mother of junior is actually right. These days' men are like children.



# Mazoon, a window on Omani lifestyle



**T**HE new lifestyle magazine, *Mazoon*, is an attempt from the reputed publishing house of Oman to be a window of understanding on Omani lifestyle, heritage and socio-economic events.

It is aimed at bridging the information gap on Omani lifestyle by showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage and promoting it as a tourist destination.

This is also an endeavour to encourage aspiring young Omani writers and artists to hone their skills. Most of the writers for *Mazoon* are Omani nationals.

Many people in the country may not be aware that there is an exceptionally beautiful rock garden in Oman that provide visitors with an "impressive insight of the geological wonders of our planet." The story about Duqm's 46m-year-old rock garden tells all these in detail.

The feature about the 'Ghala Greens' gives a clear picture of the country's international standing in attracting corporate hospitality, for leisure and vacation in Oman. "Situated in the heart of the city, just a few minutes drive from the Muscat International Airport, it is fondly referred to by the local golf lovers as 'Ghala Greens'. It is one of its kind in the region with its own special features.

With this magazine, readers can gain insights into the traditional Omani lifestyle, and get to know about its programmes, policies related to a whole lot of issues through the coverage of various artistic and cultural activities, and seminars held in Oman regularly.



It is aimed at bridging the information gap on Omani lifestyle by showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage and promoting it as a tourist destination. This is also an endeavour to encourage aspiring young Omani writers and artists to hone their skills. Most of the writers for *Mazoon* are Omani nationals

*Mazoon* seeks to be an invaluable source of information and inspiration offering those in the social arena as well as non-professionals a comprehensive yet succinct overview of current events in the Sultanate

Beside their main purpose, Omani souqs, mosques, festivals and fairs have long been a focal point of social interaction. By covering all of these and more, this magazine will be a must read for those who want to have a look at today's Oman.

Whether it is Omani Khanjars (daggers), rose-water sprinklers, fragrant frankincense, incense burners, garments, rugs and saddles, dates and 'Halwa', women's jewellery ranging from small silver boxes, to earrings and rings, bracelets, anklets and necklaces, or aromatic Omani coffee (kahwa) it is all part of Omani lifestyle, which *Mazoon* will cover.

Similarly, Omani cuisine is a tasty blend of flavour as a long tradition of seafaring and trade has brought culinary influences to Oman. Different regions of the country are known for distinctive styles of cooking.

Oman is dotted with a wide variety of restaurants, offering Arabian, Indian, African, Chinese, French and International cuisine.

*Mazoon* seeks to be an invaluable source of information and inspiration offering those in the social arena as well as non-professionals a comprehensive yet succinct overview of current events in the Sultanate.

*Mazoon* will be distributed free along with Observer throughout the country.



**Reflections**  
Reflections  
Dr Rajan Philips  
rajanph@yahoo.co.uk

## A Few Lessons from Traffic Safety Awareness Campaign

'CHARITY begins at home'. Likewise, safety consciousness must begin with individuals and then extend to the community. No safety measure is too trivial to be ignored. Never assume that accidents happen only to others.

These were the some of the home truths I gathered at an absorbing and fruitful interactive session of the National Traffic Safety Campaign held last week at the Indian Social Club, Muscat.

The two seasoned and committed presenters Shaikh Khalfan al Esry and Ali bin Hamad al Farai from the Coach Company were able to take the spellbound audience on an exciting and unnerving ride through the horrifying spectre of the tragic consequences that result from acts of omission and commission by road users.

Well-chosen video clips and attention riveting demos coupled with very lucid and interactive presentation kept the audience engrossed. While Shaikh Khalfan dwelt on the common misconceptions people fall a prey to, Ali took them through the four main causes of road mishaps — not wearing seat belts, over speeding, distractions and fatigue. By the end of the session they had motivated the audience to pledge to follow all standard safety principles and become role models to the community.

For this writer who is firmly convinced of the pivotal role of the media and teacher educators in reaching out, especially to the younger generations, the session provided a further fillip. While it is difficult to reflect on all aspects of the session, let me touch up on just one 'seemingly simple' safety practice that could make a huge difference — using the seat belt.

It is one of the first mandatory actions we perform before embarking on a driving test. Not something to be done as an afterthought or not at all as some do once they have the licence. What about others in the vehicle? At the most we might remind the one by our side in the front seat since it is a legal requirement and we wish to avoid getting hauled up by the cops. What about the passengers at the back? Do we ever think seat belts are necessary for them?

Then again, when we drive to a very nearby place at a slow speed, particularly, on pocket roads or service roads where the appearance of a police patrol car is not very likely, don't we think wearing the seat belt is a needless ritual? Don't we let our children free to play around in the car?

These were some of the issues the presenters highlighted and proved that taking things lightly can lead to heart-rending consequences. A video depicted such a situation that ends in tragedy for a family of four. Mind you, only one of them seated at the back was not wearing a seat belt! Their car was moving slowly too but the heavy truck that crashed into it was not. The way that one 'unbelted' person was thrown about and caused fatal injuries to two others in the car was absolutely shocking.

The message was reinforced unmistakably and poignantly by the video clip of a wheelchair-bound young man handing out leaflets to drivers who instantly fasten their seat belts before driving away. The caption of the leaflet: I DID NOT WEAR A SEAT BELT!

The campaign seminar was truly an eye opener for all present and I am confident they would all be ardent ambassadors of the message for road safety since the 'road belongs to all and compliance is the only solution.'

**Quotes:**

- Even the best driver can't control what other drivers do. Wearing a seat belt is one thing you control. — Jay Ofsanik
- Only Superman doesn't need a seat belt. — Anon.

## LEADERSHIP CORNER

Your difference between interest and commitment will show up in the difference between success and mediocrity in all areas of your life. Put a little in; get a little out. Put a lot in; get a lot out



By Susan Bagyura

'THERE'S a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when circumstance permit. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.'

Your difference between interest and commitment will show up in the difference between success and mediocrity in all areas of your life. Put a little in; get a little out. Put a lot in; get a lot out. Examine your results in the major areas of your life:

- Career/Financial
- Ethical/Spiritual
- Family
- Friends/Community
- Health (Physical & Emotional)
- Mental/Education

Rate your level of satisfaction in each area on a scale of

## Interest or Commitment?

doesn't start. A high spark and the car immediately fires with a force.

Do this same exercise for your organisation. Examine your results in these areas:

- Communication/Relationships
- Decision Making/Problem Solving
- Goal Setting/Achieving
- Leadership
- Managing Change
- Managing Stress
- Motivation
- Personal Productivity
- Team Building/Team

**Achievement**

Rate your level of satisfaction from 1 to 10 and order these areas of your organisation by the level of importance to you. How is your level of commitment showing up?

Are you putting your focus, commitment and energy into the areas that you say are important or are you making excuses?

How would your colleagues and employees rate your level of commitment in these areas?

If you are an employee,

then rate your level of satisfaction in each of these areas and order these areas in level of importance to you. Are your results showing the level of commitment that you would actually like to see? Is your level of commitment in these areas going to take your career where you want it to go? Do you have a job or are you building a career?

- Communication
- Customer Responsiveness
- Decision Making/Problem Solving
- Dependability

- Independent Action
- Leadership
- Planning/Organising
- Reliability
- Safety
- Skills/Knowledge
- Improvement
- Teamwork

**Work Skills and Experience**

As you can see, you can use these scales to measure your commitment level in all areas of your life. But understand this; your results are your responsibility and have a direct correlation to your level of commitment.

Demonstrating commitment may at times seem like hard work. The easy way out is to make excuses; because commitment requires a person to hold themselves to a set of values, beliefs and principles with unwavering determination and persistence.

If you want different results; then ignite your level of commitment.

(Susan Bagyura, a leadership/business coach and author of *The Visionary Leader: How to Inspire Success From The Top Down*. The book is available at *The Family Bookshop in Madinat Qaboos*. Listen to the audio at <http://www.susanbagyura.com/audio/commitment.html>.)





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# Health, safety and blood donation campaign at Qurum Natural Park

By Maryam Khalfan

**F**IRMLY established as Oman's leading annual cultural event, Muscat Festival 2011, promises to be more innovative and informative than ever before. The health and safety exhibition and awareness campaign welcome visitors to a variety of programmes related to health and safety.

They provide you with a wealth of health and safety related information.

Several government organisations dealing public health and safety, responsible for health protection, health improvement have come together to make the festival a memorable one with their awareness campaign started at Qurum Natural Park.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) Directorate General of Civil Defence is one among such organisations. Its task is quick response to emergency rescue operation services using some of the most advanced equipment and rescue tools. Also on standby includes the ROP's Road Safety Ambulance, which is dedicated to enhance awareness on the first aid approach in incidents resulting from



road accidents.

The Ministry of Health's (MoH) Emergency Ambulance Services and the Department of Blood Services are highly represented at the venue of the festival activities.

The Mobile Blood Donation Unit collects blood from eligible donors to save the lives of unknown recipients.

"On an average about 30 units of blood are collected everyday from people of different nationalities and

recipients who are in desperate need of blood," said Dr Ahmed al Khashif, Senior Medical Officer, Department of Blood Services, MoH.

"The process of blood donation is always a continuous procedure for meeting the needs and to conquer the problem of shortage of this natural resource. There is constant need of blood to meet the needs of frequent episodes of accidents and the needs of many other healthcare services," he added.

Blood is also highly needed in treatment of patients with inherited blood disorders like thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia, cancer and other surgical conditions requiring blood transfusion.

However, prior to the donation process, the donor is obliged to fill in the blood donation form to 'ensure that the potential donor is well and healthy enough to donate safe blood and the donation will not affect the well-being of the donor and that of the recipient.

It is also obligatory for the donor to read and understand all the respective questionnaires prior to signing

the consent form and to know that after the donation process, the blood will be tested for infectious diseases like HIV/Aids, hepatitis, inherited blood disorders and other diseases.

The signing of the consent form also obliges the donor to understand that in case the test is abnormal, the blood will not be used and donor will be confidentially informed.

Likewise, prior to the donation process, we examine the haemoglobin level and the blood pressure to determine if the potential donor will be accepted or deferred.

"For donation to be accepted, the haemoglobin level for male donors should be 13 to 18 grammes per decilitre (gm/dl) and between 12 to 17 gm/dl among females", advised the medical officer.

On agenda the Emergency Ambulance Service includes minor first aid care and health education services on diabetes, high blood pressure and to facilitate the evening doses of insulin to diabetic patients in need of such care and are actively taking part in the activities of the festival, said Naila bint Abdullah al Omairi, Staff Nurse, MoH.

The team also attends to visitors



who sustain minor injuries like bruises and wounds during their visit to the park and other general emergencies like headache, abdominal pain and complications of the gastritis to name a few.

"We have received about three cases of nasal bleeding that occurred due to unknown causes and several complications caused by insect bites," said Dr Majdi Mansoor, Medical Officer, Wattayah Health Centre.



## Return of the Stranger

**I**T was difficult for me to adapt to the situation, as watching my family wondering. I have never had a feeling to this family nor to the society. It was God's will that I joined one of the universities in the capital city, so I went and there I found a new world that was quite different from the small remote village in which I grew up. It was in vain that I tried my best to adapt to the new situation and harmonise with my surroundings. I failed mostly because my mind was filled with thoughts contrary to common sense. One day I sat alone contemplating people's deeds and manners ...

Laith is preparing for his wedding, he is going to tie the knot with his cousin soon despite the doctor's warning that the likelihood of their children getting inherited diseases exceeds 50 per cent.

My father caught me in my silent meditation, he came closer to me and hummed. I took notice of him. "I am surprised at people's irrational behaviours, spend too much money on a wedding party while we don't have enough money for our expenses till the end of the month; buy luxurious cars that strain our resources by paying instalments that last for a lifetime, squander hundreds of thousands on cellphones we give to our children, isn't time to make rational preference and to choose what suits us," I enquired.

My father gave no satisfactory answer to my questions, so I decided to put my queries to the outside world, what made me travel to a Western country for study in a bid to find the civilization that I am longing for. There I was fascinated by the reality which appeared to me quite different from the world of movies and stories. It was a glamorous world in which anything was possible, unknowingly the current swept me away, in the bitter and sweet of that world I was lost, at a moment I felt that I was unable to find myself let alone find answers to the queries swirling in my mind, until time for departure came. I came back home with great hope that ten years of absence were enough to change the reality but I was mistaken because everything remained as same as before. I came back same more perplexed I once tried in vain to adapt. I made an effort to convince my family that spending the money extravagantly does them no good which will eventually lead them to nothing but more losses and debts. I told them that we have to rationalise the way we make our choices as to which options suit us and which don't. My advices fell on deaf ears of those who reject the attempts to change themselves for the better, and who refused to benefit from the kernel of the human civilization.

I could no longer bear the situation so I decided to travel in search of mine own self, on the way I met Hamid, a childhood friend, now a renowned scientist. We talked for a long time and at the end of our conversation I did not forget to complain to him about what I see is wrong. My companion nodded for a while as if he was summoning his thoughts and said at length, "What you are calling for is "being civilized" in a true sense as distinct from the civilization itself. Civilization exists both in the East and the West. The missing thing is having a civilized way of thinking and behaving. The concept of being civilized is something different from the civilization itself. One can be living in a country of civilization that is deeply rooted in history, yet uncivilized unless he possesses certain characteristics that qualify him to be described as a civilized person. When he becomes able to recognise other people's opinions, and when he accepts their humanity despite the differences in convictions and lifestyle, only then one can be called a civilized person. When he acts in a responsible, ethical manner he deserves to be called a civilized person because being civilized is not about having and using advanced technologies and high-rise buildings, it is rather a set of values and principles that brought about these inventions. Being civilized is not in harmony with the notion "the end justifies the means" because both the ends and the means of a civilized person should be legal and ethical.

Civilization is not about elegant clothes and agile bodies, it is about a positive behaviour. He who cares about nothing but fulfilling his own selfish desires at the expense of others is far from being civilized because a civilized person is well aware that his own freedom comes to an end when it contradicts other people's freedom.

Being civilized has everything to do with the values of sincerity, candour, gratefulness, helping the needy, respect of time and duty, being economical and rational in spending the money, respecting other people's privacy and many more positive behavioural attitudes which formed the basis of great civilizations and eventually led to the present modern civilization.

What you see, stranger, is the kernel of civilization, not its essence. If you want to know the true side of the civilization look at yourself. Remember that mankind was created with a purpose, it has a great mission, to develop the land, you have to consider the origin out of which the entire human civilization emanated, despite the fall of some civilizations and the rise of others, the seed never vanishes, it is always existent waiting to be sowed in a fertile soil so that it can grow and bear fruit, you, stranger and the like of you, the young population are the seeds of a true sort of civilization with your knowledge and thoughts of a genuine civilization; just don't give up, don't succumb, your mission is yet to be accomplished, inculcate in the minds of the posterity the values of a true civilization and positive principles that will eventually lead to the progress of the society, so return, stranger, to your village because it needs you and if you choose to depart things will certainly fall apart.

— Translated by Khalid al Kush

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## Chocolate healthier than many fruit juices

**C**HOCOLATE is healthier than many fruit juices and is a 'superfood' in its own right, says a new study conducted by a US-based chocolate company. Superfoods are high in anti-oxidants and compounds that help prevent damage to healthy cells.

Researchers from the Hershey Centre for Health & Nutrition in the US found that powdered dark chocolate had more anti-oxidants and polyphenols, believed to protect us from cancer and cardiac conditions, the *Chemistry Central Journal* reports.

They compared single servings of dark chocolate, cocoa, and hot chocolate mix with fruit juices including acai berries, cranberries and pomegranates, according to a Hershey statement.

The research showed that both dark chocolate and cocoa had more antioxidant activity and more flavonols than fruit. Debra Millar, who led the study, said chocolate should be labelled a "superfruit". — IANS