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 ADVERTISEMENT

OPEC 'READY TO MEET ANY SHORTAGE'

Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al Naimi said that Opec is prepared to meet any shortage of supplies due to unrest in the Middle East and that its members have sufficient spare capacity to do so. >C2



CABLES

HM sends greetings to Brunei, Guyana

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam on the occasion of his country's National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings along with his best wishes of good health and happiness to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and his country's

people further progress.

His Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Bharrat Jagdeo of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations along with his best wishes to Jagdeo and his country's people. -ONA



OUT OF BOUNDS: Protestors chant slogans in the main square of Tobruk, yesterday. Libyan soldiers in the eastern city of Tobruk said they no longer backed Muammar Gaddafi and the eastern region was out of the Libyan leader's control. - Reuters See also >A6, A7 & A10



ENGLAND SURVIVE DUTCH SCARE

THE Netherlands' Ryan ten Doeschate scored a dazzling World Cup century against ragged England yesterday but the three-times finalists fought back to win a nervy game.

In a contest the competition badly needed after a series of mismatches, the Dutch, inspired by ten Doeschate's knock of 119 off just 110 balls, racked up a challenging score of 292 for six in Nagpur. But England kept their heads, despite two wickets for ten Doeschate, and helped by a skipper's knock of 88 by Andrew Strauss, reached their target with eight balls to spare, ending on 296-4.

Ahead of their first match against Kenya today, Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi vowed to win the World Cup for millions of weary fans back home who lost out on the showpiece when their country became a no-go zone. "Not playing in our country is on our minds," Afridi said. >D1-D8

I shall remain here defiant: Gaddafi

The Arab League said it has barred Tripoli from attending its meetings until the Libyan authorities respond to demands, guaranteeing the security and stability of its people

TRIPOLI/MANAMA: A defiant Muammar Gaddafi vowed yesterday to die "a martyr" in Libya and said he would crush a revolt which has seen eastern regions already break free from his rule.

The Arab League said it has barred Tripoli from attending its meetings "until the Libyan authorities respond to demands, guaranteeing the security and stability of its people."

The 22-member body said "Arab people's ambitions for freedom, democratic reforms, development and justice are legitimate and must be respected".

In Bahrain, Shiite protestors filled streets in Manama demanding the fall of the government in the biggest protest since unrest began last week.

Swathed in brown robes, Gaddafi seethed with anger as he banged the podium outside one of his residences that was heavily damaged in a 1986 US bombing raid that attempted to kill him.

"I am not going to leave this land, I will die here as a martyr," Gaddafi said on state television, refusing to bow to calls from his own diplomats, soldiers and protestors clamouring in the streets for an

end to his four decades at the helm. "I shall remain here defiant," said Gaddafi.

Anti-government protestors were "rats and mercenaries", he said, who under Libyan law deserved the death penalty. Gaddafi said he would call the people to "cleanse Libya house by house" unless protestors surrendered.

Call for loyalty

Gaddafi urged Libyans to take to the streets today to show their loyalty to his government.

"All of you who love Muammar Gaddafi, go out to the streets, secure the streets, don't be afraid of them ... Chase them, arrest them, hand them over to the security (forces)," he said.

State television showed what it said was live footage of hundreds of government supporters in Tripoli's Green Square waving portraits of Gaddafi and banners supporting the veteran leader.

But refugees streaming across the Libyan border into Egypt said Gaddafi was using tanks, warplanes

and foreign mercenaries to fight the growing rebellion.

Eastern Libya is no longer under Gaddafi's control, rebel soldiers in the city of Tobruk said a news correspondent there.

Out of control

Tobruk residents said the city was in the hands of the people and had been for three days. They said smoke rising above the city was from a munitions store bombed by troops loyal to one of Gaddafi's sons. There was the occasional explosion.

"All the eastern regions are out of Gaddafi's control ... The people and the army are hand-in-hand here," said the now former army major Hany Saad Marjaa.

The White House offered its condolences for the "appalling violence" in Libya and said the international community had to speak with one voice on the crisis.

The UN refugee agency meanwhile urged Libya's neighbours to grant refuge to those fleeing the unrest. >A2

Information is beautiful

MILESTONE

Times of Oman brings great offers on 36th anniversary

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Thirty-six and counting!

Times of Oman, the Sultanate's largest-selling English daily, today celebrates 36 years of its dominance in the media business in Oman. The newspaper that re-defined English journalism in the Sultanate has grown from strength to strength since its inception in 1975. From a weekly tabloid to its present 44-page avatar, it has been a long and fruitful journey.

Withstanding several competitive challenges over the years, the newspaper has evolved and reinvented itself, thus finding a place in the hearts of thousands of its esteemed readers.

To commemorate this special



occasion, *Times of Oman* announces a special subscription offer.

The first 36 persons who walk in to subscribe the newspaper will get it for free for a year.

The next 100 persons would have to pay only RO1 per month to subscribe (for a minimum of 12

months and on advance payment.)

Others will get a two-year subscription of *Times of Oman* for just RO36, along with a RO10 voucher from Al Aktham Restaurant and a coupon from Mc Donald's. They will also have the option of nominating a person for the free one-year subscription.

The offer is valid for three days, starting from February 23 to February 26 (excluding Friday).

Al Aktham Restaurant, the exclusive partner for this promotion, is one of the leading restaurants in Oman that was founded in 1984 and has bagged several awards over the years. Abdul Aziz Zainuddin, managing partner, Al Aktham Restaurant, expressed his pleasure in being associated with the leading newspaper of the Sultanate.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

WORLD
'Darkest day' claims 65 lives in NZ

1 Rescuers searched through the night for survivors after a powerful quake killed at least 65 people in New Zealand's second city Christchurch, crushing buildings and vehicles. Up to 200 people may still be trapped inside buildings. >A10

OMAN
New regulation against begging

2 The Sultanate's Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with the begging combating team, is planning to introduce new regulations that will heavily penalise those who will be caught begging. >B1

BUSINESS
India's billionaire 'heroes' get humbled

3 One of the most telling images from the frenzied media coverage of India's corruption scandals in recent months was billionaire Anil Ambani emerging from the federal police headquarters after questioning. >C5

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UPDATE

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UNREST CONTINUES

< FROM A1 Thousands of protestors march in Manama

Human Rights Watch said 62 people had died in clashes in Tripoli in the past two days, on top of its previous toll of 233 dead. Opposition groups put the figure far much higher. UN rights chief Navi Pillay said the killing could amount to crimes against humanity and demanded an international probe.

World powers have condemned the use of force against protestors, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon accusing Libya of firing on civilians from warplanes and helicopters. The Security Council met in closed session to discuss Libya.

Washington and Europe have demanded an end to the violence.

In Manama, tens of thousands of opposition supporters marched to Pearl Square to press demands for political reform in the country.

Led by opposition groups such as Wafaq and Waad, it was the first organised demonstration and followed spontaneous protests by a rising youth movement relying on social media.

State media said the king had ordered the release of convicted prisoners whose names would be released today and a stop to ongoing court cases — opposition figures said they understood this to mean the trial will be shelved.



HAND-IN-HAND: Bahraini anti-government protestors march towards Pearl Square in the largest rally in more than a week of protests in Manama, yesterday. - AFP

Clashes

Supporters of Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh armed with daggers and batons clashed violently with students in Sanaa before police intervened, a news reporter said, adding five people were hurt.

About 1,000 students had spent a second night camped at a square near Sanaa university, dubbed Al Huriya (Liberty) Square, where they erected a huge tent.

The crowd swelled to about 4,000 and as the protestors demanding Saleh's ouster moved yesterday morning from the square close to where Saleh's loyalists are bunkered down, the group attacked them with daggers and batons. The students, some of whom were also armed with batons, responded.

Algeria's cabinet adopted an order to lift the 19-year-old state of emergency, the official news agency reported. An instruction to lift the state of emergency will come into force from its "imminent" publication in the official gazette, the APS news agency reported.

Cabinet reshuffle

Jordan's King Abdullah II faces unprecedented calls by a mix of liberals and traditional supporters for moves towards a constitutional monarchy, Jordanian politicians said.

Around 4,000 demonstrators crowded Tahrir Square in the centre of the Iraqi city of Sulaimaniyah. Demonstrators in the city carried

banners reading, "Don't Forget Hosni Mubarak".

Egypt's key portfolios of defence interior, foreign, finance and justice were unchanged in a cabinet reshuffle, state television confirmed when it broadcast the swearing in ceremony for the new ministers.

The list of new ministers included changing the veteran oil minister, as well as introducing politicians who had been opposed to the rule of Hosni Mubarak, who stepped down from office on February 11 after widespread protests.

But the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's biggest opposition group, said the new cabinet showed that Mubarak's "cronies" still controlled the country's politics. - Agencies

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Israel: Iran's move a provocation



IN THE STRAIT: A police coastguard boat travels past an Iranian naval ship in the Suez Canal near Ismailia, some 120km north of Cairo, yesterday. - Reuters

Tehran appears to be testing the state of affairs in the Middle East after the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak

ISMAILIA: Two Iranian naval ships passed through Egypt's Suez Canal into the Mediterranean yesterday heading for Syria, a source at the canal authority said, a move that Israel condemned as a 'provocation'.

Iran appears to be testing the state of affairs in the Middle East after the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

A long-standing peace treaty with Egypt is crucial to Israel's regional security.

The ships entered the canal at 5.45am (0345GMT) yesterday and passed into the Mediterranean at 3.30pm (1330GMT), the Suez Canal Authority source said. "Their return is expected to be on March 3," the source said.

The Suez Canal cuts through Egypt and allows shipping to pass

from the Middle East to Europe and vice versa without going around the southern tip of Africa.

The canal's northern mouth, Port Said, is around 100km from Israel, but the ships' route would take them into the Mediterranean along Gaza and the Israeli coast.

Frigate and supply ship

The vessels, the first Iranian navy ships to enter the canal since Iran's 1979 revolution, are a frigate and a supply ship.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had previously said he would take a "grave view" of the passage of Iranian naval ships.

Deputy Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon told Israel's Channel 2 television, "It's an Iranian provocation. When you look at the Middle East, wherever the Iranians

weigh in, the situation is not good."

He added, "It certainly does not bode well, but these two ships are not an immediate threat against us".

Israeli media have quoted unnamed navy officials as saying the Iranian vessels would be tracked, but not confronted.

Iran's deputy commander of the army Abdolrahim Mousavi was quoted by the official Irna news agency as saying that Israel was "astonished" by the presence of Iranian naval vessels in the canal. Using a term by which Iran refers to the United States, he added, "The global arrogance must know that the Islamic Republic of Iran's army is fully prepared to defend its goals."

"The world should know that the presence of Iranian warships in the Suez Canal has taken place ... through the deep guidance of the Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) and our young and brave personnel's self-confidence." A recently completed Israeli war game, the first since Mubarak quit Egypt's presidency, concluded it would boost military preparations but try to avoid confrontation unless it sees a greater threat from Iran. - Reuters

DEFENCE

UAE may finalise \$7b missile deal soon

DUBAI: A Lockheed Martin official said yesterday that he expects an agreement to be concluded this spring for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to buy an anti-ballistic missile system reputedly worth about \$7 billion.

"I think ... sometime this spring, we'll get some positive news that the two governments have reached an agreement" on the Terminal High

Altitude Area Defence system, said Dennis Cavin, Lockheed Martin vice-president for international air and missile defence.

"The discussions started way back in 2007 when the Emirati government expressed interest in an integrated air and missile defence system," he said at a defence exposition in Abu Dhabi.

The missile defence consists

of "the Patriot PAC-3 system, the THAAD system and then the integration" of the two.

"It's a layered defence system," said Thomas McGrath, Lockheed Martin vice president and THAAD programme manager, with Patriot missiles covering lower altitudes while THAAD covers higher ones.

THAAD exclusively targets ballistic missiles, McGrath said. - AFP

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INDIA

BRIEFS

Limbless singer gives voice to rural poor

PUNJAB: Bant Singh, a scarred survivor of class violence in rural India, has an indisputable claim to be a voice for country's impoverished and muted millions. The folk singer lost both arms and a leg in an attack five years ago after he dared to challenge high-caste landlords in his area of the northwestern state of Punjab who had raped his 17-year-old daughter. "We as the proletariat want the same rights as the rich, a life of respect and equality," the Communist party member said. Taru Dalmia, a Delhi-based hip hop artist known as Delhi Sultanate, has started a collaboration with Singh along with other artists who share a dislike of the way India is developing socially and economically. "Most mainstream music in India is Bollywood culture, it's commercial and elitist. There should be political songs," says the 30-year-old. Dalmia and Singh's joint project is called "Word, Sound, Power" and can be seen at <http://www.wordsoundpower.org>.

Bill to prevent harassment of sportswomen on the anvil

NEW DELHI: The government wants to bring in a legislation on national sports policy that, besides other things, would prevent sexual harassment of sportswomen and make sports bodies and administration transparent in the country. The proposed legislation would have "measures to prevent sexual harassment of women by following the guidelines enunciated by the Supreme Court", Sports Minister Ajay Maken told the Lok Sabha yesterday. He said the government wants to develop sports at the national level and is intending to have a debate on the need to have the legislation.

Chaplin's grandson weds girlfriend in Karnataka

SIRSI: Iconic comic actor Charlie Chaplin's 60-year old grandson Mark Joplin married his girl friend Tera Tiffani according to Hindu traditions at Gokarna, a renowned religious centre in south Indian state Karnataka, last week. Dressed up like typical Hindu bride and groom, the couple participated in various wedding rituals performed by the priest Rajagopal Adi here. The grey-bearded groom, wearing the customary white and gold shimmering Karnataka 'peta' or headgear and dressed in a white 'dhoti' and 'vastaram', was led to the wedding 'mandap' in a procession with young women carrying trays full of auspicious symbols including a hand mirror and flowers. The ceremony was marked by various rites. - Agencies

2G scam: Singh announces JPC

A formal motion for constitution of the JPC would be moved soon, the prime minister said in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI: Giving in to opposition demand, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday announced government's decision to set up a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to probe the 2G spectrum scam, saying the country could "ill afford" disruption of the crucial budget session of Parliament.

Making the announcement in Lok Sabha, the Lower House, as soon as it met for the first working day of the session, Singh said a formal motion for constitution of the JPC would be moved soon.

"We could not succeed in spite of our sincere efforts" to persuade the Opposition not to insist on a JPC probe, Singh said.

To root out corruption

Asserting that his government was committed to root out corruption, the prime minister said "all effective steps" were taken to convince the Opposition in this regard. "We can ill afford a situation where Parliament is not allowed to function during the crucial budget session. It is in these special circumstances that our government agrees to the setting up of a JPC," he said.

Singh requested Speaker Meira Kumar to proceed with the process of formation of the JPC and said a formal motion would be moved soon. Welcoming the gov-



DETERMINED: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh arrives at Parliament House yesterday to attend the first day of the budget session, in New Delhi. -Reuters

ernment's move, Leader of the Opposition Sushma Swaraj thanked the prime minister and Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee for the decision.

Victory of democracy

"We should not see this as a victory or defeat. This is a victory of democracy. We should all work together putting aside any talk of victory or defeat," she said.

Recalling that the winter session of Parliament had been lost on account of controversy over 2G spectrum allocation, Singh said, "In paralysing Parliament, I believe, we all do disservice to those who have elected us." The opposition has been adamant on a JPC probe in the 2G scam, which according to the Comptrol-

ler and Auditor General of India, has resulted in a presumptive loss to the tune of Rs1.7 trillion.

A Raja, who was forced to resign as Telecom Minister three months back, is now in jail.

Insisting that the government was committed to root out corruption, the prime minister listed the steps taken by the government on the 2G issue which included CBI investigation supervised by the Supreme Court and the independent inquiry conducted by former judge Shivraj Patil.

"We are a functioning democracy and must strive to resolve our differences in a spirit of accommodation and collaboration, not confrontation," he said, hoping that it would "renew our confidence in India's forward march." -PTI

LOTTERY SCAM

'Kerala CM's son scuttled CBI probe'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: In the first open attack against Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan, the Congress-led opposition in the assembly alleged that his son V. Arunkumar was behind scuttling a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the lottery mafia.

Congress legislator V.D. Satheesan, speaking in the house, blamed Achuthanandan for playing to the gallery by writing to union Home Minister P. Chidambaram seeking a CBI probe into the lottery mafia operating in the state.

"The home minister wrote back asking you (Achuthanandan) to register a case and then demand a probe, but it is 55 days since you received the letter but you are silent on it, and it is now clear that your son is behind the scuttling of the CBI probe," said Satheesan.

The opposition also attacked Achuthanandan for influencing the judiciary to get a favourable verdict in the Idamalayar corruption case.

However, Achuthanandan provoked the opposition benches by drifting away from the lottery issue and instead referring to the recent Kozhikode ice cream parlour sex case and the Idamalayar corruption issue which has seen former minister R. Balakrishnan Pillai cooling his heels in jail here after the Supreme Court last week confirmed his sentence of a year's imprisonment.

On seven occasions in the course of this debate the opposition rushed to the well of the house and the treasury benches shouted down the opposition.

To cool tempers, Speaker K. Radhakrishnan adjourned the house for close to an hour but after resumption, the situation remained the same, forcing the speaker to rush through the listed business for the day and adjourn the house.

"A major counterattack is all set to be launched, which the LDF would be unable to withstand," said a senior UDF leader. A major bombshell which would expose several of the LDF leaders involved in several conspiracies," he added. -Agencies

FOOD WASTAGE

Big fat weddings could face the axe

MUMBAI: The government is considering proposals to limit the number of guests allowed at weddings to reduce food wastage, an official said yesterday.

Indian weddings are famous for their extravagance and a wave of new money in the country has led to ever more lavish marriage celebrations, often involving multi-cuisine buffets and hundreds, or even thousands, of guests.

"We are looking into the possibility of reintroducing the executive guest control order created in the early 1960s," an official at the ministry of food and consumer affairs in New Delhi said.

The rules limited the number of guests at weddings and other functions to deal with the scarcity of food, he said.

"Today the issue is not scarcity, but food is still being wasted and maximum amount of food is wasted at weddings," the official, who declined to be named, added.

Such a potentially unpopular move attracted sharp criticism from the opposition, which slammed the



15 per cent of all grain and vegetables in India was wasted through weddings

KV Thomas
Food minister

government for failing to address serious issues such as food price inflation.

"This is an absurd and obnoxious proposal," Prakash Javdekar, spokesman for the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), told the *Mail Today* newspaper, which ran the story on its front page.

Food minister K.V. Thomas calculated nearly 15 per cent of all grain and vegetables in India was wasted through weddings and other social events, the paper said.

"We believe we can preserve foodgrains for the poor and needy of this country by restricting its use at such extravagant and luxuri-

ous social functions," Thomas was quoted as saying.

India's booming upper middle classes have been inspired to create their own displays. No wedding is now complete without at least three different cuisines offered to guests: north or south Indian, "continental" or European and a third, selected from Mexican, Japanese and Chinese, or chinjabi, as the local version of the latter is known.

The ostentation goes well beyond food. One new trend is the use of helicopters instead of the traditional white horse or decorated coach for the bride and groom.

The people hit hardest by the food inflation - the poor - are the core constituency of the current government, led by the centre-left Congress party. However, the ambitious food security bill aimed at eradicating hunger in India is proving difficult to draft. It would guarantee more than two-thirds of the population had enough to eat, its supporters claim. About half of India's children under five are malnourished. -Agencies

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31 convicted in Godhra train burning case

It was on February 27, 2002 that the train coach was set on fire, killing 59 people. Within days, violence erupted in Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat, killing more than 1,000 people



CLOSE WATCH: Police outside Ahmedabad Central Jail during the pronouncement of the verdict on the Godhra case, in Ahmedabad, yesterday. - PTI

AHMEDABAD: A fast track court here yesterday convicted 31 people for hatching a conspiracy to burn the Sabarmati Express train in Godhra in Gujarat in 2002, killing 59 people and sparking one of the bloodiest communal riots in India. But it let off 63 people, including a key accused, for lack of evidence.

The sentence will be pronounced on Friday.

Additional Sessions Judge P.R. Patel delivered the verdict in the highly guarded complex of the Sabarmati Central Jail where the accused were lodged after the February 22, 2002 burning of a passenger coach of the train near the Godhra railway station.

Almost all those who died were Hindu activists returning from Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

After 20 months of trial, they were held guilty of, among other things, murder, dacoity and robbery, arson and causing grievous hurt.

The court let off 63 others, including Maulvi Saeed Umarji, dubbed the prime accused. Many had rotted for years in prison pleading they were innocent.

His son Saeed Umarji said the judgment had strengthened his faith in the judiciary. "(But) the way he was kept in jail for eight years, it was a big injustice."

Defence lawyer A.A. Hassan said the court had accepted the theory that arsonists entered the coach by cutting the vestibule, poured petrol inside and set it on fire.

According to him, there were 95 accused in the case, of whom 80 were in jail and 15 out on bail.

Unhappy

Many were unhappy with the verdict. Activist lawyer Mukul Sinha said the ill-feeling generated among Muslims would continue because the judgment takes cognisance of the conspiracy theory without any evidence of it.

He added: "Moreover, if 63 are innocent, how can others from the same crowd be conspirators?"

Within hours, all 63 walked out of the prison, some looking visibly relieved. Some looked grim. They boarded two buses to be driven to Godhra, 160km away, accompa-

nied by policemen. Those acquitted have to furnish a personal bond of Rs10,000 and a surety of the same amount. They cannot leave India without permission.

Gujarat's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government hailed the verdict.

"We have all along maintained that the fire in the coach was not accidental but a pre-planned conspiracy. Now an impartial judicial process has confirmed our point of view," said Jainarayan Vyas, Gujarat's tourism minister and the government's official spokesperson.

The Congress declined to comment. But it blamed Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi for triggering the state-wide communal riots that followed the Godhra tragedy. "We don't comment on a judgment of court, it is part of a legal process," Congress spokesperson Jayanthi Natarajan said.

J.M. Panchal, the special public prosecutor, said clinching evidence for the conviction came from Gandhinagar's Forensic Science Labo-

ratory report, witnesses and circumstantial evidence.

It was on February 27, 2002 that the S-6 train coach was set on fire. In no time, leaping flames engulfed it, killing 59 people who could not escape.

Most of them were linked to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

Within days, violence erupted in Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat, killing more than 1,000 people in one of the worst outbreaks of sectarian violence in the country. Most victims were Muslims.

Earlier probes

While an earlier probe by the Nanavati-Mehta probe panel ruled that the incident was a conspiracy, another inquiry by Justice U.C. Banerjee, set up by the railways, concluded that the incident was "accidental".

BJP's national spokesman Tarun Vijay said: "The verdict has exposed the malicious intentions of the central government and the pseudo secularists who tried to blame Hindus as the culprits." - IANS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

US group joins fight for 500 Indian workers

WASHINGTON: The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has joined a class action lawsuit brought on behalf of over 500 guest workers brought from India by an American company to work in US shipyards after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The non-profit group has charged

that the workers were trafficked into the US through the US government's H-2B guest worker programme with dishonest assurances of becoming lawful permanent US residents and subjected to squalid living conditions and fraudulent payment practices. - IANS



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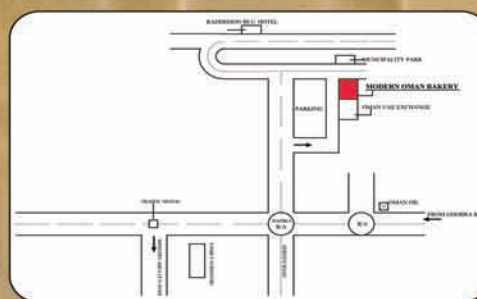
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COMMENTARY

ROYAL SPEECHES



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 18th National Day

18/11/1988

serve the interests of our peoples. We shall work with our brothers and friends throughout the world to develop our relations in pursuit of these goals for the prosperity of our people and the world community.

To be concluded



GADDAFI HAS RUINED LIBYA BEYOND QUICK RECOVERY

THE conceits and bankruptcies have all tumbled out of Muammar Gaddafi's closets in Libya. A commission set up to study Libya's socio-political structures concluded in 1948 that most Libyans were thoroughly indifferent to the format of their government. The commission's conclusion stands changed today. In their opposition of their government the Libyans have torn down Gaddafi's conceited claim that he successfully abolished the conventional concept of state and replaced it with an organic system that empowered the masses. The uprising of the same Libyan mass against him and his fraudulent administration evidently demonstrate how disparaging and vicious has been his rule for the past 42 years. And this by no means is any of Gaddafi's achievements. The Libyan society, highly fractured by traditional tribal structures, has been clobbered together into unification by Gaddafi's ruthless and destructive rule for close to half a century, which has been both gallingly divisive and weakening. Libyan civil society, even after its independence over 50 years ago, still remains chillingly bankrupt of any institution worth the name.

Libya today stands poised at the threshold of a historic transition. And that is certainly a cause good enough to be scared about. The days of Gaddafi's rule in Libya are numbered as the system has started faltering and the uprising in Benghazi and Tripoli gaining perceptible momentum. Unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, Libya never had an enlightened and developed middle class. Neither did it ever develop the culture of political opposition. And this definitely is most worrying in Libya. The picture of post Gaddafi Libya is more appalling than that of its two recently liberated neighbours — Egypt and Tunisia. Smooth transition from destructive autocracy to benevolent democracy is by no means assured in the blood-soaked Libya.

As in nature so also in politics vacuum does not exist. In Libya, preparations to fill the void likely to be created after the exit of Gaddafi and his sons are already underway. Some men, more shrewd than decent or ethical, have either resigned, rather disassociated, from the regime or have defected only to resurface after the end of the revolution to claim their pieces of the pie. Solidarities expressed by ambassadors, diplomats, air force pilots and officers in the armed forces with the common Libyans on the streets in Benghazi and Tripoli do not appear without conditions or prompted by their conscience alone. The mayhem unleashed by Gaddafi has soaked the nation in the blood of its own citizens. Libya will remain in a state of mourning long after the revolution will be over. But more dangerous is the prospect of what Leone Caetani, an Italian oriental scholar said way back in 1911 when the Italian Parliament debated colonisation of Libya. The country, Caetani said, had "no roads, no ports, no railroads, no buildings, nothing, nothing, nothing!" A century later Libya still stands as bankrupt as ever.

Berlusconi's abject performance



ROGER COHEN

IT says something about the miserable European response to the Arab spring that Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's personal contribution to North African affairs — his alleged liaison with a then-17-year-old Moroccan dancer — only just takes the prize for most abject performance.

His foreign minister, Franco Frattini, was not far behind with his response to the brave uprising of the Tunisian people that ousted the long time ruler Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali: "Priority number one is the deterrence of fundamentalism and terrorist cells."

All manner of worthy things may be wished for Arabs just across the Mediterranean — and they were by President Nicolas Sarkozy's fatuous brainchild, the 43-member Union for the Mediterranean — but of course democracy and freedom are not among them.

The Barcelona-based Union, which should be disbanded forthwith, preferred to concentrate on matters like the "depopulation of the Mediterranean". That, for Europeans, generally meant keeping Arabs away.

No wonder Orhan Pamuk, the Nobel-prize winning Turkish novelist, wrote an essay late last year called *The Fading Dream of Europe*. He noted the inward, small-minded, anti-immigrant turn of a European continent that had once represented the summit of his own and many Turks' aspirations. And that was penned before the latest European niggardliness.

In his own way the ageing multi-billionaire Berlusconi — with his too-black hair and his fawning entourage and his control of the media and his private villas and his debasement of the Italian state — has aped the manners of some of the rulers whom the people of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have risen to oust. Like them he has confused self and nation, entranced by the cult of his personality.

Or, and it hardly matters which, these rulers and their business acolytes have aped Berlusconi, mimicking the worst of the West while bringing nothing of its political openness, creating a valueless simulacrum of moneyed European sophistication while their people languished without the most basic rights the European Union upholds.

Designer labels without freedom of speech or the rule of law constitute a virulent form of contemporary savagery.

Berlusconi epitomises a long trans-Mediterranean connivance. Men and women across North Africa have taken to the streets to overturn this dignity-denying status quo. They want to stand on their own two feet rather than forever being cast as peoples in decline.

A judge, Cristina Di Censo, has now indicted Berlusconi, 74, on charges that he paid for intimacy with a 17-year-old girl, Karima el-Mahroug, who has denied having a relation

with him. People power, Italian-style, brought a half-million protesters into the streets on February 13.

I'd say this particular Italian soap has run long enough: A leader more consumed with his virility and Middle East women one quarter his age than with governance does not serve Italy well.

Berlusconi's is not the only European resignation in order. The French foreign minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, has piled gaffe on gaffe since the Tunisian uprising began on December 17.

It's not enough that she offered the "know-how" of French security forces to Ben Ali. It's not enough that she accepted a ride on a private jet from a Ben Ali business partner while on a Tunisian vacation during the protests.

It's not enough that her parents signed a property deal with this Ben Ali sidekick. It's not enough that she was on the phone to Ben Ali although she earlier denied she had any "privileged contact".

Yes, Madame Minister, it is enough.

True, Prime Minister Francois Fillon was also accepting flights and lodging from Hosni Mubarak at the time. But Egypt had not arisen then; and Fillon's record is distinguished, unlike Alliot-Marie's comedy of errors since becoming foreign minister.

The European Union must rethink its relations with the Muslim world at its doorstep, beginning with accepting Turkey, whose membership would help usher the continent from the small-mindedness Pamuk describes.

I'm not sure booming Turkey's still interested; keep someone at the door long enough and that person will turn away. But a union with Turkey in it would not have responded to the Arab awakening with such tiptoeing awkwardness.

A new European pact with democratising Arab neighbours is also urgently needed. Cancel the funds for nice environmental projects and those Barcelona bureaucrats' salaries. Put European money behind forming decent democratic societies across the water. This will be a generational project, but it's the only way to stop the desperate human tide into southern Spain and Italy.

The first major international challenge for post-Lisbon Europe has revealed that the 2009 treaty did nothing to change the lowest-common-denominator approach that makes the EU such a foreign-policy pygmy. I guess that must be the way middling-power European nation states want it.

One shout-out is called for: to Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen for being first to say: "Mubarak is history. Mubarak must step down." Contrast those declarative sentences with Brussels mumbo-jumbo. Danes, as World War II showed, sometimes stand apart from the crowd and do right.

- The New York Times New Service

“ Like the ousted leaders of Egypt and Tunisia Berlusconi has confused self and the nation, entranced by the cult of his personality



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Import restrictions will help sale of local products

This refers to the news story, *Consumers urged to buy Omani products* (February 23). Urging people to buy local products and services is the right step taken. In fact, we all must try to buy local products and services to the best of our abilities. Such an activity will help the economy to grow, create a stable market for local producers and service providers and reduce the country's dependence on imports. A stable domestic market is essential for any growing nation. If we take the case of India we can clearly see that its local markets and consumption helped it to tide over the recession so effectively. I, too, would like to request all to buy local products and help the producers. In fact, government too must prevent imports of items which are and can be produced locally. I feel that unless imports of such items are stopped and consumers are left with no alternatives but to buy local products the habit cannot be inculcated.
Ashok Paniker
Seeb

Is Pakistan a fiefdom of the United States?

This refers to the news story, *Davis is a CIA agent, says ISI* (February 22). The case of Raymond Davis is getting murkier. Two days before Davis allegedly shot and killed two Pakistani nationals, the US embassy in Pakistan submitted a list of its diplomatic and non-diplomatic employees to the Pakistani Foreign Office, as all foreign nations are required to do annually. We learnt that Davis was not on the list. The day after the incident, the US embassy suddenly submitted a "revised" list to the Foreign Office which added Davis' name. It is obvious that the United States is trying to shield a murderer just because he is an American. The question, therefore, is can Americans get away doing anything in Pakistan. Is Pakistan a fiefdom of the United States?
Asif Rehman
Ruwi

Stabilisation of property prices long overdue

It was encouraging to read the sto-

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The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers

THOMAS JEFFERSON

ry, *Property prices poised to stabilise* (February 22). During the past one year property prices in Oman witnessed some fluctuations and the market remained rather choppy due to economic downturn and reduction in expatriate popu-

lation in Oman. Stabilisation of the prices and market is truly the need of the hour. The choppiness of the market, in fact, encouraged many builders temporarily suspend their constructions last year. The sector will indeed be much benefited if

the market and prices stabilise in the next 12 months.

A. L. Rawat
Ruwi

ICC World Cup has become boring within six days

When one can anticipate the result the game and the match not only loses charm but also turns very boring. And that is exactly what has happened with the ICC World Cup, currently underway. In just about five days the tournament has lost all charms and I am sure very few are really watching minnows playing. The gaps between matches for every team are inordinately long and this is one of the primary reasons why the tournament will continue tediously for six long weeks.

Joseph Mutturajan
Seeb

Seeing Murali lifted for a six was painful

It was a bit painful to see the wizard of spin bowling struggling despite bagging two wickets against

Canada. I am talking about Murtiah Muralitharan. He was hit for a six even by an inexperienced and aggressive Canadian batsman. And that wasn't a treat to our eyes. I am sure as the tournament progresses Murali too will start showing his magic. But we must remember that age has caught up with him and the wizard is no longer nimble with his fingers as he used to be earlier. He would have done better if he had retired earlier and not played this World Cup at all.
Sandeep Vishwanath
Muttrah

Cricket in Pakistan tainted by a few black sheep

This refers to the story, *Corruption row will not haunt Pakistan: Waqar* (February 22). We hope Waqar is right. It is important for Pakistan to put up a good show in the ICC World Cup. Cricket in Pakistan will otherwise be seriously affected where it has already been tainted because of a few black sheep.
Yahyah Mubeen
Ruwi

PERSPECTIVE

STEEPED IN BLOOD

A Libyan stain on Britain's reputation

DOMINIC LAWSON



FOR sheer blood-curdling menace, the televised address by Saif Al Islam Gaddafi takes some beating. His broadcast to the Libyan nation included the threat that his father's regime would "fight until the last man, until the last woman, until the last bullet ... instead of crying over 200 deaths we will cry over hundreds and thousands of deaths".

He did bizarre as well as bloodcurdling, offering the demonstrators the concessions of "a new flag, a new national anthem"; and he accused other rioters of being "on hallucinogens or drugs" — although his own rambling delivery gave every impression that Muammar Gaddafi's son was under the influence.

Yet this was the man promoted as the entirely acceptable face of a 40-year-long dictatorship, not least in this country. He was feted by the last government, especially by Peter Mandelson, with whom he would socialise in the grand style. He was also fawned on by academia. Nine months ago, he was accorded the accolade of giving the Ralph Miliband lecture at the London School of Economics (LSE).

Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that Saif Al Islam Gaddafi's very own foundation had written out a cheque for £1.5m to the LSE. Or perhaps not; anyway Professor David Held of the politics faculty at the LSE gave an excruciatingly smarmy introduction, telling the audience that "the Gaddafi Foundation devotes itself to humanitarian work ... especially in the field of human rights" and that "deep liberal values are at the core of his inspiration".

Tell that to the unarmed demonstrators under machine-gun assault from the Gaddafi family's mercenary shock troops. The LSE rushed out a statement saying that "the school has had a number of links with Libya in recent years. In view of the highly distressing news from Libya, the school has reconsidered those links as a matter of urgency". Too late!

The same "reconsidering" is presumably taking place within government, although the developments in Libya are infinitely less embarrassing for the Coalition than they would have been for the previous administration. It was Tony Blair who made it part of his foreign policy mission to chummy up to Muammar Gaddafi and it was Gordon Brown who ordered the SAS to train the Libyan dictator's special forces.

Two weeks ago, official papers were released which demonstrated that Labour, despite its furious denials, had, in the words of the Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell, "developed (a policy) that Her Majesty's Government should do all it could ... to facilitate an appeal by the Libyans to the Scottish government for Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi's release".

The freeing on "compassionate grounds" of the only man convicted for the Lockerbie bombing — the biggest mass murder ever to take place in this country — was just part of the wider effort to "normalise" relations between Britain and Libya.

I had written earlier that it was ludicrous to become steamed up about the release of Megrahi while continuing to treat Gaddafi as an old ally: "On the assumption — shared by both the Scottish and British governments — that Megrahi was rightfully convicted, then what of Colonel Gaddafi himself?"

"Is it seriously suggested that Megrahi, a long-serving officer in the Libyan intelligence service, had acted without orders from above?"

"If anyone can be accused of being the malevolent power behind the slaughter of so many innocents heading home for Christmas with their families, that man is Muammar Abu Minyar Al Gaddafi. Yet this is also the

man whose celebrations of 40 years of dictatorship are to be attended by prime ministers and presidents from across the globe."

Well, that is the way of the world. Once Gaddafi had foregone his previous policy of financing acts of terror internationally (including by the IRA) then all is forgiven — especially if the man in question is sitting on top of billions of barrels of easily extractable crude oil. The Americans have been critical of Britain's open praise of the "new" Gaddafi, and were understandably furious about the release of Megrahi, but their own policy since 2004 has been equally friendly, at least as far as military business is concerned: two years ago, for example, the US firm General Dynamics signed a \$165m contract to arm the Libyan Armed Forces' elite 2nd Brigade.

The unsurprising truth is that while Gaddafi's confrontational attitude towards the West may have changed — he was deeply impressed by president Bush's removal of Saddam Hussein and did not want to be next on the hit-list — his character and methods remained the same as far as his own people were concerned. It was entirely predictable that he would order annihilating force to be brought to bear against any internal opponents, even unarmed student demonstrators. Any shock expressed by the British Foreign Office is itself shocking. They know — have always known — that this is the nature of Gaddafi's regime. After all, it was not so long ago that an uprising of political prisoners in Tripoli's Abu Salim jail was quelled by the massacre of more than 1,200 inmates.

Doubtless the British wooing of Saif Gaddafi was based partly on the notion that he would be a moderating influence on his father. While the old man was, to put it at its very mildest, odd, of all his sons Saif seemed the most westernised and the most — well, like us.

He had a doctorate from the LSE; he mastered the language of international conferences; he could be invited to a country-house shoot and be relied upon to use a Purdey rather than a sub-machine gun; he was always to be seen wearing impeccable Savile Row suits — indeed he was thus attired when delivering his chilling address to the Libyan people on Sunday night.

It is a perennial weakness of British officials that they assume if a man has had a good education and wears the right sort of clothes it makes him somehow more trustworthy. They thought that about Robert Mugabe, finding it hard to imagine that a man educated by British missionaries and who insisted that his entire Cabinet abandon tribal costumes and wear British suits, could at the same time be capable of mass murder. But, of course, he could (and was awarded an honorary knighthood even after his troops had slaughtered up to 20,000 civilians in Matabeleland).

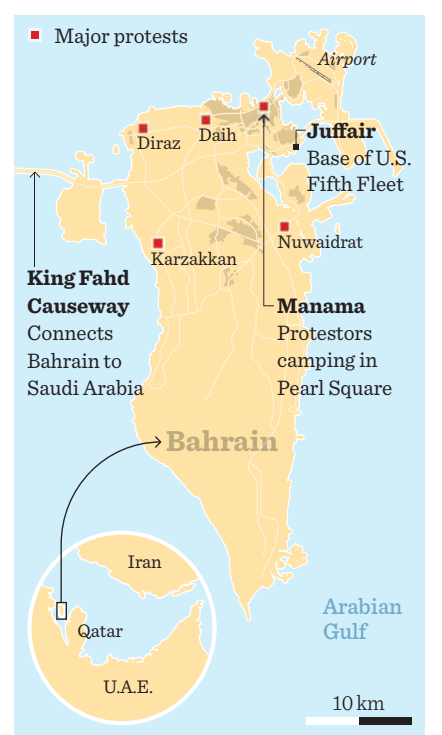
The behaviour of rulers such as Mugabe and Gaddafi can be explained, though not excused, by their fear of what might happen if they were to lose power. Completely ruthless themselves, they assume all their opponents (even, or especially, those professing to be democrats) would treat them as savagely if they ever got the chance; and, of course, the more people they have murdered, the more their suspicions are justified.

This would apply as much to the apparently civilised Saif Gaddafi as it does to his demented father. He is encouraging the regime's mercenary troops and remaining supporters in acts of extreme violence because he knows that should they fail to suppress the opposition he, along with his father, is likely to be slaughtered — assuming they don't escape to a foreign bolthole first.

According to one of last weekend's property supplements, Saif Gaddafi is offering his London home (complete with cinema and suede-lined walls) for rent at £9,500 a week. Say goodbye to it, Saif. — *The Independent*

Bahrain protests gather pace

Protests demanding sweeping political reforms are creating unprecedented pressure in one of Washington's most strategic allies in the Gulf.



■ Demands of protestors

- Resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa — king's uncle, in power since end of British rule in 1971
- Release of political prisoners
- New constitution
- End to civil rights abuses

Source: Graphic News

Graphics

NANO EDIT

Now for a purposeful JPC

With the central government at long last conceding the demand for a probe by a joint parliamentary committee into the irregularities in 2G spectrum allocation, no further time should be lost in getting to the bottom of the biggest scam in the history of independent India. The task now is to explore what went wrong at the policy level as well as in implementation, to fix responsibility wherever it belongs, and to present to parliament and the people the whole truth about how government policy relating to a highly lucrative new sector was hijacked by a nexus among corrupt politicians, conniving or pliable officials, and big business. In addition to the breakthrough report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, it can make use of the abundant factual details gathered by the Shivraj Patil committee, which uncovered serious lapses in the procedures followed by the Department of Telecommunications in issuance of licences and allocation of spectrum. — *The Hindu*

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Taking cruel steps against people voicing their democratic demands will only exacerbate the spiral of violence and threaten the country's (Libya) unity.”

Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister, Turkey

OPINION POLL

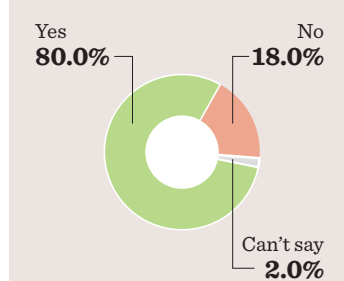


With fresh violence erupting in Libya are the days of Muammar Gaddafi in power numbered?

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YESTERDAY'S POLL RESULT

Is the Bombay High Court's endorsement of the death sentence of Kasab justified and historic?



“Doubtless the British wooing of Saif Gaddafi was based partly on the notion that he would be a moderating influence on his father. While the old man was, to put it at its very mildest, odd, of all his sons Saif seemed the most westernised and the most — well, like us. He had a doctorate from the LSE yet delivering his chilling address to the Libyan people

Make everybody hurt ...

DAVID BROOKS



OVER the past few weeks we've begun to see the new contours of American politics. The budget cutters have taken control of the agenda, while government's defenders are waging tactical retreats. Given the scope of the fiscal problems, it could be like this for the next 10 or 20 years.

No place is hotter than Wisconsin. The leaders there have done everything possible to maximise conflict. Governor Scott Walker, a Republican, demanded cuts only from people in the other party. The public sector unions and their allies immediately flew into a rage, comparing Walker to Hitler, Mussolini and Mubarak.

Walker's critics are amusingly Orwellian. They liken the crowd in Madison to the ones in Tunisia and claim to be fighting for democracy. Whatever you might say about Walker, he and the Republican majorities in Wisconsin were elected, and they are doing exactly what they told voters they would do. It's the Democratic minority that is thwarting the majority will by fleeing to Illinois. It's the left that has suddenly embraced extralegal obstructionism.

Still, let's try to put aside the hyperventilation. Everybody now seems to agree that Governor Walker was right to ask state workers to pay more for their benefits. Even if he gets everything he asks for, Wisconsin state workers would still be contributing less to their benefits than the average state worker nationwide and would be contributing far, far less than private sector workers.

The more difficult question is whether Walker was right to try to water down Wisconsin's collective bargaining agreements. Even if you acknowledge the importance of unions in repre-

senting middle-class interests, there are strong arguments on Walker's side. In Wisconsin and elsewhere, state-union relations are structurally out of whack.

That's because public sector unions and private sector unions are very different creatures. Private sector unions push against the interests of shareholders and management; public sector unions push against the interests of taxpayers. Private sector union members know that their employers could go out of business, so they have an incentive to mitigate their demands; public sector union members work for state monopolies and have no such interest.

Private sector unions confront managers who have an incentive to push back against their demands. Public sector unions face managers who have an incentive to give into them for the sake of their own survival. Most important, public sector unions help choose those they negotiate with. Through gigantic campaign contributions and overall clout, they have enormous influence over who gets elected to bargain with them, especially in state and local races.

As a result of these imbalanced incentive structures, states with public sector unions tend to run into fiscal crises. They tend to have workplaces where personnel decisions are made on the basis of seniority, not merit. There is little relationship between excellence and reward, which leads to resentment among taxpayers who don't have that luxury.

Yet I think Governor Walker made a strategic error in setting up this confrontation as he did. The debt problems before us are huge. Even in Wisconsin they cannot be addressed simply by taking on the public sector unions. Studies done in North Carolina and elsewhere suggest that collective bargaining only increases state

worker salaries by about 5 per cent or 6 per cent. That's not nearly enough to explain current deficits. There are many states without collective bargaining that still face gigantic debt crises.

Getting state and federal budgets under control will take decades. It will require varied, multi-pronged approaches, supported by broad and shifting coalitions. It's really important that we establish an unwritten austerity constitution: a set of practices that will help us cut effectively now and in the future.

The foundation of this unwritten constitution has to be this principle: make everybody hurt. The cuts have to be spread more or less equitably among as many groups as possible. There will never be public acceptance if large sectors of society are excluded. Governor Walker's programme fails that test. It spares traditional Republican groups (even cops and fire-fighters). It is thus as unsustainable as the current tide of red ink.

Moreover, the constitution must emphasise transparent evaluation. Over the past weeks, Governor Walker increased expenditures to pump up small business job creation and cut them on teacher benefits. That might be the right choice, but if voters are going to go along with choices such as these, there is going to have to be a credible evaluation process to explain why some things are cut and some things aren't.

So I'd invite Governor Walker and the debt fighters everywhere to think of themselves as founding fathers of austerity. They are not only balancing budgets, they are setting precedent for a process that will last decades. By their example, they have to create habits that diverse majorities can respect and embrace. The process has to be balanced. It has to make everybody hurt. — *The New York Times News Service*

FROM OUR ARCHIVES



FEBRUARY 1996

BOOK ON MINISTRY'S ACHIEVEMENTS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has published a book on the ministry's achievements between 1970 and 1995 to mark the Sultanate's 25th National Day celebrations. In a statement published in *Al Watan*, Hamoud bin Abdullah Al Harthy, minister of justice, awqaf and Islamic affairs, said that the ministry's aim was to serve the Omani citizen and help him play an active role in his country's community development programme. He noted that the ministry's responsibilities embraced two fields which were closed linked to human life, conduct, values and interactive relationships. The book reviews each of the ministry's units, departments and offices and describes their functions and achievements. It also contains details of the main projects carried out by the ministry within the framework of its development plans.

“As a result of imbalanced incentive structures, states with public sector unions tend to run into fiscal crises

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He who employs the above shall bear legal consequences. The absconding has the right to report inaccuracy of this statement to any of the Ministry of Manpower Offices within 15 days of this notice.

This is to inform all that **Mr. Niranjan Borse**, holder of Indian passport No.: E 2065157 was employed with Teejan Trading and Contg. Co. LLC as Assistant Manager (HR) from 25/07/2009 and is no longer in the service of Teejan Group. He has perpetrated various malpractices and maladjustments in the company business which adversely impacted.

So, he is not authorized to represent Teejan or any of our group companies on any matters whatsoever. Anybody dealing with him will do so at their own risk.

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This is to inform all that **Mr. Mohammed Basheer**, holder of Indian passport No. F-7857068 (Resident Card No: 62245993) whose photograph appears alongside is no longer working with us from 15th November 2010 and he is not authorized to represent or act on behalf of our company. Anybody dealing with him will do so in his own risk and we shall not be responsible for such dealing if any after this date.

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COLD STARE: A supporter of Tehreek-e-Insaf holds a placard as she takes part in a protest rally against Raymond Davis in Peshawar, yesterday. -Reuters.

Anger over 'CIA links' of Davis

The opposition and relatives of the dead men say it was time for government to come clean with what it knows of Davis and address suspicions that he also worked for a US security firm

MUSCAT: New revelations about a CIA contractor in custody for shooting dead two men heaped pressure on the country's fragile government yesterday and exposed burning public mistrust of Washington. Officials in Washington cited by the US media reports confirmed the account of a Pakistani intelligence official, who told AFP that

Raymond Davis, the American being held in a prison in Lahore city, was working undercover for the CIA. Washington is pushing hard for Pakistan's authorities to free Davis, arguing that he has diplomatic immunity and backing his claim to have acted in self-defence when he shot the men in a busy city street nearly four weeks ago.

The foreign ministry has so far refused to define Davis's diplomatic status and a Lahore court last week gave the government another three weeks to do so.

The opposition and relatives of the dead men said it was time for the government to come clean with what it knows of Davis and to address suspicions that he also worked for Xe, a US security firm formerly known as Blackwater.

"Davis deserves no pardon... We knew from day one that he was working for the CIA and Blackwater," said Mohammad Waseem, the brother of the deceased Mohammad Faheem. "People like Davis have a role in terrorist activities in Pakistan. He should be tried and given the death sentence."

The *New York Times* on Monday reported that Davis was part of a CIA operation tracking extremists in eastern Pakistan such as Lashkar-e-Taiba. The newspaper said he "worked for years as a CIA contractor, including time at Blackwater Worldwide". It noted that the company has long been seen by Pakistanis as symbolising a culture of American gun-slinging overseas.

"Whether he is a Blackwater or CIA agent the facts should be exposed by the federal government because it is their responsibility," said Pervez Rashid, spokesman for the opposition-controlled Punjab government. *The Wall Street Journal* quoted US officials as denying that Davis was directly involved in CIA espionage or drone operations, which have killed hundreds of alleged militants in Pakistan's northwest on the Afghan border.

Meanwhile, Pakistan insisted yesterday that the courts would decide the fate of Davis, even after it was revealed he was a CIA contractor whom Washington says enjoys diplomatic immunity.

"The President has already stated that the matter is in the court and we will wait for the court decision in this case," Farhatullah Babar, a spokesman for President Asif Ali Zardari said. "Regardless of whether he now turns out to be a CIA employee, the matter will be decided by the court." -Agencies

BRIEFS

Rocket attack kills four civilians

ISLAMABAD: Rockets aimed by militants at an army checkpoint in northwestern region hit civilian houses yesterday, killing two women and two children, police said. "Militants fired six rockets from an undisclosed location in the tribal region of Kurram targeting an army checkpoint of the neighbouring town of Hangu, which struck civilian houses," local police official said. In addition to the two women and two children killed, he said seven other people were wounded when the rockets hit the two houses in Targhundai, Peshawar.

One killed in Quetta bomb blast

ISLAMABAD: A truck driver was killed while another was injured in a bomb blast that took place in a roadside hotel in Hazar Ganji area, an outskirts of Quetta, yesterday. A senior police officer said that unidentified men planted explosives in a washroom of the hotel which exploded with a big bang killing a truck driver while injuring the owner of the hotel.

No more support to govt: Nawaz

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Mohammad Nawaz Sharif has said that the PML-N would not support the incompetent PPP-led government anymore, as the party workers have also rejected government's behaviour vis-à-vis implementation of PML-N's 10-point agenda.

Extension of judges dismissed

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Committee (PC) on the appointment of judges in higher courts yesterday dismissed the extension of two judges in Sindh High Court (SHC), while other four judges have been granted extension for one year. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) had sent the proposal to Parliamentary Committee for the service extensions of six additional judges in SHC. -Ariq Ali and Agencies

WARNINGS

Nation is at continued risk of disasters, warns UN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must spend millions of dollars now on rebuilding areas devastated by last summer's floods to avoid massive future loss of life and jobs, a top United Nations disaster official said yesterday.

Catastrophic monsoon rains that swept through the country in July and August killed thousands, affected 20 million people, destroyed 1.7 million homes and damaged 5.4 million acres of arable land, experts have said.

The floods hit five years after a 7.6-magnitude earthquake in northern Pakistan killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million homeless.

Officials have previously accused the much-maligned government of failing to properly manage cash funds, hampering relief efforts for flood victims.

The country is at continued risk of natural and man-made disasters and must spend and work now to prevent future damage, Margareta



Pakistan cannot afford to risk its lives of its people by being ill-prepared

Margareta Wahlstrom
UN Special envoy

Wahlstrom, UN Special envoy for disaster risk reduction, told journalists in Islamabad.

"Pakistan cannot afford to risk its future and lives of its people by being ill-prepared," said Wahlstrom, during a five-day visit to Pakistan

hosted by international aid agency Oxfam. Political will is needed to halt the disaster spiral, she added.

The UN said that despite some government help, flood victims were relying mostly on their families and communities for help.

"Ultimately, however, it is government's responsibility to protect its people. Government leadership is needed to implement disaster risk reduction strategies and the role of the international community is to support it," a UN statement said. Last month the UN said the country was still in emergency mode six months after the floods and that \$1 billion was still needed -- nearly half of a flood relief appeal launched in September -- mostly to help farmers recover.

The UN put the cost of flood damage at about one third of the government's budget -- up to \$10.85 billion -- and said \$27 million in spending on disaster risk reduction was needed to reduce losses in future. -Reuters

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EUROPE/AMERICAS



UK vows to end defence plan delays

Major British defence projects have been plagued for years by cost overruns and delays while a government drive to cut the budget deficit has squeezed defence spending

LONDON: Britain's Defence Secretary Liam Fox said yesterday that lax spending would no longer be tolerated at the defence ministry and its top programmes would be regularly assessed to stop over-spending and delays.

Fox also said there would be

stricter rules for approving defence equipment projects, while existing projects would be examined to ensure they remained affordable.

"The so-called conspiracy of optimism, through which the risks and costs in new projects are under-estimated, only to find mushrooming costs later, needs to end," Fox said in a speech at the Civitas thinktank in London.

Major British defence projects have been plagued for years by cost overruns and delays while a government drive to cut the budget deficit has squeezed defence spending.

"Future programmes should not be included unless there is a clear budgetary line for development, procurement and deployment. We must end the lack of real-time cost control with tight budgetary discipline," Fox said.

Fox said the Ministry of Defence (MoD) needed to "rebalance" its relationship with industry to get maximum value for money and a review looking at changes to contract arrangements would begin in the summer. -Reuters

IMPACT

'Insurgents trying to rip Russia apart'

MOSCOW: President Dmitry Medvedev conjured the spectre of decades of strife and headline rule in the Arab world yesterday to warn that insurgents were trying to rip Russia apart.

In his first major comments on the unrest that has shaken authoritarian rulers across North Africa and the Middle East, Medvedev said that some countries could fall apart and this could affect Russia, home to some 20 million Muslims.

"All that is happening there will have a direct impact on our situation... This is a large, complex problem which requires serious effort over a very long time," Medvedev told officials from the national an-

ti-terror committee in Vladikavkaz in the restive North Caucasus.

Growing insurgency

Russia is fighting a growing insurgency in Caucasus along its southern flank, underpinned by two separatist wars with Chechnya since 1994, where rebels want to carve out a separate state. "These (Arab) states are not simple and it is quite likely that complicated developments may occur, including the rise of fanatics to power -- this would mean decades of flames and the spread of extremism, let's look the truth in the eye," Medvedev said in comments posted on the official site Kremlin.ru. -Reuters

PUBLIC NOTICE



This is to inform Mr. Saji Sadasivan holder of Indian Passport No. F 6583305 working in M/s Oman Modern Electronics Co. is no more employed by us. We advise you not to deal with him in any matters. Should there be any pending matters the same should be referred to the company within 7 days of this notice.

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MOCKERY

Chavez fans wave meat at hunger strikers

CARACAS: Supporters of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez waved raw meat at hunger-strikers yesterday in mockery of a protest against alleged human rights abuses.

More than 50 students had been on hunger-strikes around Venezuela. Some said they hoped to sow the seed for a movement against Chavez like those sweeping the Arab world. Yet with Chavez still commanding support among many Venezuelans, analysts say any talk of ending the 12-year rule may be wishful thinking. -Reuters

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Sultan Qaboos University
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SQU STUDENTS SUMMER EDUCATIONAL VISIT - 2011

Sultan Qaboos University hereby inform all Local Travel and Tourism companies that a joint meeting will be held on Monday, 28th February 2011 at 10:00 A.M. at Lecture Theatre #11 at the New Building (Block G) to discuss the requirements and other program schedule for the upcoming SQU Students Summer Educational Visit 2011 to China and Japan, funded by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

All local companies related to the tourism sector are most welcome to participate in the said meeting.

For any further queries/information, please contact the Procurement Department Tel.: 24141270 / 24141023 and 24141047 or contact Mr. Abdulhameed Al Riyami 95721637



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'Darkest day' claims 65 lives in NZ

7.0 magnitude quake struck at lunchtime, when streets and shops thronged with people and offices were still occupied. **It was New Zealand's most deadly natural disaster in 80 years**

CHRISTCHURCH: Rescuers searched through the night for survivors after a powerful quake killed at least 65 people in New Zealand's second city Christchurch yesterday, crushing buildings and vehicles.

"We may be witnessing New Zealand's darkest day," Prime Minister John Key said after the 6.3-magnitude quake pummeled the city, six months after buildings were weakened by a 7.0 quake that miraculously claimed no victims.

"This is a community that is absolutely in agony," Key said, warning that the toll was likely to rise.

New Zealand's deadliest tremor in 80 years struck as streets were



IN A SHAMBLES: Rescue workers search for survivors at the collapsed CTV building that housed the King's Education School in Madras Street in Christchurch, yesterday. - Reuters

packed with lunchtime shoppers, and turned central Christchurch into a rubble-strewn disaster zone littered with dazed and bleeding residents.

The city's cathedral lost its spire while the six-storey Canterbury TV building was reduced to a smoking

ruin. Rescue helicopters plucked survivors to safety from the rooftops of buildings where staircases had collapsed and emergency workers used giant cranes to pull office workers out of ruined buildings.

Media reports quoted Christchurch's mayor Bob Parker as saying

that up to 200 people may still be trapped inside ruined buildings.

Among those unaccounted for were 11 students and teachers from a language school in the Japanese city of Toyama. Japan's Jiji Press news agency reported.

Police drafted in urban search and

rescue teams in an attempt to locate survivors, while Japan, Australia and the United States were among countries sending rescuers to help.

Miranda Newbury was on the third floor of another city building when the quake hit, forcing her to make her way down through a dark-

ened, crumbling staircase. "I really thought my time was up. When I finally got outside, there was dust everywhere -- it looked like a war zone," she said.

Other churches were partly destroyed in the tremor and the local newspaper's offices were badly hit. Reports said survivors there were frantically texting relatives as they took shelter under their desks.

Devastated

"The centre of the city bore the brunt (in September) but nothing like this time, where it's been absolutely devastated," Key said, adding that the air force was mobilising Hercules transporter planes for the relief effort.

"What was a vibrant city a few hours ago now has been brought to its knees." Local station TV3 said dead bodies had been pulled from a hostel and a bookshop, and that a tourist was crushed to death in a van. All flights in the country were briefly suspended after a Christchurch control tower was damaged.

Power was cut to thousands of residents, mobile phone networks were disrupted and road and rail transport was badly hit.

Water mains also burst, unleashing a torrent of water that joined with heavy rains to inundate the suburb of Bexley.

Video footage showed a landslide crushing a small building. Several strong aftershocks pummeled the stricken city. - AFP

CLAMPDOWN

China dodges questions on Middle East-style unrest

BEIJING: China yesterday dodged questions about a weekend clampdown that saw a security show of force and detentions in response to a web campaign for Middle East-style protests, instead insisting stability was key.

China yesterday expressed concern about unrest in Libya but held back from joining other nations in condemning Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi for the bloody unrest in the oil-exporting nation.

"China is extremely concerned about the developments in Libya and hopes Libya will quickly restore social stability and normality," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxun said.

Ma refused direct comment when asked at a regular briefing about the weekend call for a "Jasmine Revolution" and the dozens of activists who have been detained or have disappeared in recent days.

He instead highlighted the "com-

China has heavily censored or blocked media reports and Internet searches about the unrest

mon will of the Chinese people to focus on construction and development".

"It is the common aspiration of the Chinese people to promote social and political stability, promote social harmony and safeguard the livelihoods of the people," Ma said. "No force can sway our resolve." A domino effect of political up-

heaval that began in Tunisia has spread across the Middle East and North Africa, toppling presidents in Tunisia and Egypt.

China has heavily censored or blocked media reports and Internet searches about the unrest, and comments from officials and state media hint at growing official concern about the possibility of widespread unrest in China.

On Sunday, only a handful of protesters turned out amid a heavy security presence in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other cities.

That same day, the country's powerful security czar, Zhou Yongkang, said authorities needed to "make efforts to nip in the bud social contradictions and disputes" and work to improve the "healthy development" of the Internet.

China has a huge Internet censorship system that blocks content deemed objectionable by the ruling Communist Party. - Agencies

SMOTHER LOVE

Parents more likely to allow sons to return home than daughters

LONDON: Parents are three times more likely to allow their adult sons to return to the family home than daughters, revealed a survey published this week.

The "Flying the Nest" study showed that returning sons or "boomerang boys" are considered more obliging house guests than their sisters and that they easily wrap their mothers around their little fingers.

Sons are more likely to pay rent, lend a hand with the housework and accept parental advice on careers and love, compared with daughters who are regarded as lazier and less likely to contribute to the household, the survey discovered.

More than half the mothers interviewed for the study were glad their sons had returned home, and only 18 per cent acknowledged their boys had overstayed their welcome.

The survey showed that 58 per cent of mums admitted spoiling their sons, but only 35 per cent gave their daughters the same treatment.

Mums are more inclined to cook dinner for their sons, wash and iron their clothes and provide a taxi service. Sons also tend to be more frequent recipients of cash handouts.

Four out of 10 parents admitted doling out money to their sons, averaging 624.18 pounds during a

The survey showed that 58% of mums admitted spoiling their sons but only 35% gave their daughters the same treatment

stay. However, although boys request cash more frequently, girls borrow more in total, averaging at about 689.61 pounds.

"It's not surprising how much boys seem to get away with compared to girls when it comes to their parents," psychiatrist Avie Luthra said in a statement with the survey's results.

The survey of 3,000 people over the age of 18 who are living at home and 1,500 parents hosting adult offspring was commissioned by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment to mark the DVD release of the film *Cyrus*.

Despite the apparent willingness of mums to coddle their sons, the survey also revealed that parents were concerned about them becoming too dependent and never moving out again. - Reuters


BRIEFS

Six killed during attempt to rescue US hostages


MOGADISHU: Four Americans and two Somali pirates were killed yesterday during an attempt to free the US hostages from their yacht seized on the Indian Ocean, the US military said. US forces, which have been closely monitoring the S/V Quest since it was known to be pirated three days ago, approached the vessel after hearing gunfire, the US Central Command said. After boarding the yacht, "the forces discovered all four hostages had been shot by their captors."

Australian ship had 'predatory' sex culture

SYDNEY: A report released yesterday found that a "predatory" sex culture existed among Australian sailors on the naval supply ship HMAS Success in which misconduct was covered by silence and fear. The report by retired judge Roger Gyles said it was not possible to confirm media reports that a sex ledger existed which placed dollar values on the sexual conquest of designated female sailors. But he said, "there was evidence of predatory sexual behaviour" among the crew. "The existence of competitions to have sex with nominated females, as organised in the engine room, had been part of the folklore on Success." - Agencies



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Oman all set to play Tajikistan

As part of the London Olympics 2012 qualifiers, Sultanate will face Tajikistan today at the Seeb Sports Stadium



WE ARE READY: Oman Olympic team coach Hamad Al Azzani and skipper Mansoor Al Naimi. - Times Photo / Talib Al Wahabi

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is all set to play Tajikistan for the 2012 London Olympic Games qualifiers at the Seeb Sports Stadium today.

Around 12 national team players are in this Olympic squad but coach Hamad Al Azzani does not want to take chances against a little-known Central Asian side. "We have to be really cautious even if we have some of the best players from the national team," warned Azzani during a press conference at the Seeb Sports Stadium yesterday.

"We want to make the best out of these home matches because the wind will blow in our favour," said Azzani. Tajikistan will host the return leg of the first round qualifiers on March 9.

Azzani who had earlier assisted former Oman national coach Claude Le Roy, said he is upbeat about the new assignment.

"I am delighted in coaching these youngsters because you got to spread the message to the young-

sters about the game a lot and I am more than happy to do that in this capacity," Azzani said. "You know young players in Oman are the future of this game but we have to nurture them carefully," he said.

Speaking about the preparations for the qualifiers, Azzani admitted he was short of time.

"I have had a very short time to prepare the boys for the qualifiers," he said.

High spirits

"The players are very much aware of their responsibilities and at the same time they are confident ahead of the match. The spirit is very much high," he pointed out.

"Our boys haven't had much practice, but they played four games," Azzani said.

Oman played a warm-up in Qatar while they had a training camp in Turkey. "We have no idea about their football because they are a little-known side" he admitted.

"However, we will play at our best and that is what we are told to do," he added. Speaking to reporters about his team's chances ahead of the clash today, Tajikistan coach Nazarov revealed that he did not study Oman football much.

"We have no idea about their game but we are sure of playing against them confidently. Football is all about tactics and you need not generally study your opposition. If you can play according to your strategies, you can beat any team, however, superior that side is," he noted.

Tajikistan is already without the services of their key players who have learnt to be recuperating from injuries back home. "We have few players who can stand up to their boots so let see what happens," he added.

The winner of the double leg encounter between Oman and Tajikistan will advance to the second round of the qualifiers.

DUBAI OPEN

Djokovic makes fine start

DUBAI: Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic began his bid for a third successive Dubai title with a comfortable 6-3 6-3 win over France's Michael Llodra yesterday.

Back on court for the first time since he thrashed Andy Murray in Melbourne three weeks ago, the second seeded Serbian was barely troubled by an opponent who beat him on their previous meeting at the Paris Masters in November. Choos-

ing to serve and volley at every opportunity, Llodra provided an easy target for Djokovic to pass, and he also missed a number of balls at the net.

After holding a break point in the opening game he broke to lead 3-2 when Llodra made a backhand error, and he closed out the set with a second break at 5-3. "I didn't know how I'm going to start after three weeks of not playing an official match,"

Djokovic told reporters. Seventh seeded Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis lasted only 23 minutes against Kazak Andrey Golubev, losing the first four games before retiring with illness, and Serbian sixth seed Troicki was beaten 6-1 7-6 by Kohlschreiber of Germany. Nikolay Davydenko has been struggling of late, but the Russian took just 57 minutes to overwhelm Guillermo Garcia-Lopez of Spain 6-2 6-0. - Reuters

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SPORTS

Samsung backs Oman basketball

Samsung to be title sponsor for **Basketball League; OBA has plans to organise tournament for expatriate teams**

NISHAD ANWAR
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MUSCAT: Oman Basketball Association (OBA) which is going through financial difficulties got a sigh of relief after international electronics giant Samsung signed a one-year sponsorship contract with OBA for the upcoming Basketball League at the Grand Hyatt Hotel yesterday.

Samsung will be the title sponsor for the League. While the sponsorship is first of its kind in the history of the association, Habib Macki, chairman of OBA said more doors will open in the coming years so that the sport will become popular among the Omani youngsters.

"The first door is opened," said Macki speaking to reporters after signing the deal with Samsung Gulf Electronics President Young Soo Kim.

"And this deal will help us in solving certain problems but I am sure in the coming years we will have more options to clear our problems," he said.

When asked how he tried to rope in a giant like Samsung, Habib Macki who is fresh from successfully guiding the Sultanate in hosting the 2nd Asian Beach Games in Musannah where the South Korean giant was the main sponsor said to



NEW STEP: Habib Macki and Young Soo Kim signing the sponsorship agreement yesterday. - Times Photo / Jun Estrada

popularise a game like basketball, there needs to be a major supporter in the country.

"You need a bigger support when it comes to this game and we tried to contact some of the top local corporate companies but in vain," Macki revealed.

"We have been keeping a good rapport with Samsung for the last couple of years so when we contacted them they didn't have any second thoughts," said Macki.

Apart from the Asian Beach Games, Samsung had previously sponsored the Olympic Torch Relay Event in 2008 while they were also the sponsors of the just concluded Asian Cup football in Qatar.

This involvement and contribution from Samsung, Macki said would successfully impact the basketball league this year and bring more support to the region.

"Certainly this is a giant leap for us and it is a lesson for other sporting associations as well. Once you get start with it I am sure the others will follow," he said.

"We are proud to continue our

commitment to sports in Oman and this sponsorship is another step forward in our efforts to support sports in the region," said Young Soo Kim speaking at the signing ceremony.

The Samsung Basketball League will have six teams this year. Although the preliminaries to the League have already started early this month, it is expected to conclude on March 16.

The golden quadruple matches will begin from March 21.

There will be 33 matches played in the league (15 preliminaries and 18 golden quadruple) at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Baushar.

Meanwhile, Macki informed OBA's plans to organise a tournament for the expatriate teams titled 'Spirit of Nation 2011' on May.

"This is just a beginning and we will have some more plans in the coming months. When I we started the Asian Beach Games, I told these people to wait till we finish that. It's my duty to take basketball to a different level and I am just doing that," Macki added.

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HORSE RACE

Sixth race at Al Felaj track



CHIEF GUEST: Talib Al Hosni.

MUSCAT: The Royal Horse Racing Club of Royal Court Affairs will organize the sixth race of the current racing season at Al Felaj Camels and Horse Racetrack in the Wilayat of Barka today.

According to a press note, the event under the auspices of Dr. Talib bin Hilal Al Hosni, general secretary of Diwan of Royal Court.

This race is likely to witness hard competition from some of the best known jockeys and horses in the country.

CRICKET

Tennis ball cricket tourney on Friday

MUSCAT: Bazme Falah Kokan sponsored Tennis Ball Cricket tournament will be held on Friday at the Sidab Hockey ground, according to the organisers.

"This is a tournament with a difference and you have to be there to witness that," said an organiser soon after the draw that was held at the Bombay Sweet and Bakery in Makah Center.

Oasis Darsait XI, Al Sada United, ISC Bhojpuri Wing, Kokan Express, Strike Force and Suhail Bahwan Automotive Group are in Group A while United XI, Knight Riders,

MHD XI, Rajasthan XI, Janjeera XI and OTE Service Ghala is in Group B. Mohammed Irshad, Mujhaid Surve, Muzaffar and Ahmed Logde are the organisers of the event. The match is expected to start at 6:30am.

The supporting sponsor for the tournament are Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan, Dhofar Insurance Company, Nassar Khamis, Al Hashar, Abeer Co LLC, OTE Ghala, Sea Shell Restaurant, Bombay Sweet and Baker and Zukait Auto. For more information contact 98936632/98782131/99567272.

ROYAL CAVALRY'S DURAR WINS GOLD

Royal Cavalry's Durar won the gold medal in the seven year and above category in the Qatar International Arabian Horse Beauty Championship. Meanwhile, Royal Cavalry's horses continued their winning form after stallion Abar won the third position in the four and three years category.



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LEGAL ACTION

New regulation to hike penalty against begging

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MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with the begging combating team, is planning to introduce new regulations that will heavily penalise those caught begging.

The recent Royal Decree (4\2011) has allocated one full chapter in the Oman Penal Law to this issue and also proposed increasing penalty against begging. The penalty includes imprisonment for not less than two months and up to one year, along with a fine of RO50 to RO100. Immediate action will be taken against persons found begging in public places, streets, shops and other places, the order said.

Incidentally, until now Article 312 of the law did not consider begging as a criminal act but the beggar was put behind bars for only 48 hours and fined RO5.

Several groups of officials will carry out checks within the Muscat Governorate and other wilayats during mornings and evenings.

If an Omani is caught begging, the case will be referred to the Public Prosecution. If the Public Prosecution finds that the person is in genuine need for help, the

PUNISHMENT

- Beggars would face upto one year prison term and a fine of RO50 to RO100
- If an expatriate is caught begging, he will be deported to his country of origin after legal action

Social Department will re-examine his/her financial and health status and try to provide help.

If an expatriate is caught begging, the case will be referred to the Public Prosecution for legal action. He will also be deported to his country of origin.

The team for combating begging has urged all residents and citizens to fight the menace of begging by calling 24794949, 99833055, and 99873334 or inform the Royal Oman Police and the Directorates General for Social Development throughout the Sultanate's governorates and regions.

Husain, son to partner in calligraphy show

Besides the exhibition of 24 personally-signed paintings by the father-son duo, **M. F. Husain would also perform a 'live painting' demonstration**



ART DATE: Owais Husain, centre, and other dignitaries at the press conference to announce the exhibition. - Shameer Mohammed/TIMES OF OMAN

MRUDUNAİK
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MUSCAT: A two-day exhibition of world renowned artist M. F. Husain's latest paintings on calligraphy will be held at the Indian embassy lawns in Muscat on March 11 and March 12.

The exhibition 'Between Two Lines' will also feature his son, Owais Husain, who is a painter and a multimedia artist with a growing repute of his own.

Twelve of Owais Husain's creations will be showcased. Announcing the event at a press

conference, Ambassador Anil Wadhwa said, "It is going to be a unique show and the Indian embassy is happy to host it in conjunction with Omani Society for Fine Arts."

This 'by invitation' only exclusive event is brought together by UAE-based Blue Mosaic, Trinity Investment Partners and NPA Events.

Thanking the organisers Maryam Al Zadjali, director, Omani Society for Fine Arts said, "It is an honour for Omani artists to get an opportunity to interact with an artist of M. F. Husain's repute."

Owais Husain, along with Sunitha Menon, who has floated Blue Mosaic, a company that will promote art said, "Culture is the backbone of nationhood. There is an extremely pounding headline we are trying to tap."

Mahesh Verma of Trinity Investment Partners said, "It is a privilege to host the father-son duo. We are sure that it will be a grand success."

Ashok Suvarna, executive director, NPA Events said, "Hosting them will be a great honour. As an event management company it will be another feather in our cap after having

hosted the Rembrandt event." Besides the exhibition of these 24 personally signed paintings by the father-son duo, M. F. Husain would also perform a 'live painting' demonstration in front of a select group of art aficionados. "This painting will subsequently be auctioned and part of the proceeds from the auction will be donated towards the new building of the Indian School in Jalan," Anil Wadhwa informed.

A forum 'On Calligraphy and More: The Line Written, Once Drawn', an engaging panel discussion with the participants comprising erudite authorities on the subject, will also be held as part of the two-day event.

The participants include M. F. Husain, Dr Ahmed Moustafa, London-based Egyptian calligraphy artist and scholar, Farbod Dowlatshahi, patron and art collector, Rashad Mohammed Bhukhash, director of Architectural Heritage, Dubai Municipality, UAE, Benedict Carter, specialist, Islamic art, Sotheby's Art Auction House and Maryam Al Zadjali.

This panel discussion will be followed by a workshop conducted by M. F. Husain and Dr Ahmed Moustafa for students and the local Omani artists at the Omani Society for Fine Arts.

The lucky students who will be participating in this interactive workshop will be selected by Maryam Al Zadjali.

THREE NOT TO MISS

OMAN-PAK TIES

1 Pakistan and the Sultanate have agreed to extend cooperation in science, technology, oceanography and human resources. This was decided in a meeting between Pakistan's minister for Science and Technology Mir Changez Khan Jamali and Ambassador of the Sultanate Mohammed Said Al Rawati, in Islamabad. >B2

BIDRI ARTWARE



ESO RESEARCH

2 The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has completed its first year of research which ensures the sustainability of frankincense trees. The research would be complete by 2014. The first phase of the project is supported by HSBC. ESO is also studying the potential impact of climate change on the growth. >B2

3 Walk into the stand-alone stall of S.R.A. Quadri and you would stumble upon some of the finely-crafted Bidriwares that are neatly displayed on the table. From small boxes and mirrors to well-designed vases and attractive bangles, Quadri's counter showcases the everlasting appeal of black artefacts. >B3

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BRIEFS

Finance Ministry okays seven agreements

MUSCAT: The Finance Ministry okayed seven agreements worth RO122,016,000 for service and development projects implemented by the Sultanate's government at the different sectors. The agreements include, the Jibreen-Ibri dual carriage-way project (RO35,297,000) with 790-day implementation period, construction of warehouses for the Public Authority for Electricity and Water in Southern Al Ma'abela (RO1,682,000) with 330-days implementation period, the expansion of the water desalination plant in Lima area in Musandam Governorate (RO803,000) with 13-month implementation period, provision of the consultancy services for the construction of Sinaw new hospital (RO530,000), design and construction of the aerial control at Muscat International Airport, as well as, a number of other buildings (RO56,577,000) with 1,539-day implementation period, the construction of a civil aviation building in Muscat International Airport (RO25,728,000) with 751-day implementation period and the construction of a sanitary drainage water treatment plant in the Wilayat of A' Duqum (RO1,399,000) with 425-day implementation period.

16th Muscat International Book Fair opens at OIEC

MUSCAT: Sayyid Saud bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi, interior minister, patronised over the opening ceremony of the 16th Muscat International Book Fair at Oman International Exhibition Centre (OIEC), yesterday. At the opening ceremony Sayyid Al Busaidi launched the book *Jami'e abi al hassan al bisaiwi*, published by the Heritage and Culture Ministry. The minister said that the book fair is a starting point of the cultural season in the Sultanate. In all, 500 publishing houses from 30 Arab and foreign countries are participating in the 10-day fair. He added that this cultural event is a golden opportunity for knowledge lovers, educated people and students to know the latest trends in literature. On the sidelines of the fair, seven cultural events will also be organised. The fair will be open for visitors from 10am to 10 pm.

'Students in quake-hit New Zealand city safe'

MUSCAT: The Honorary Consul of the Sultanate to New Zealand said that Omani students in the earthquake-hit New Zealand city are safe. No casualties have so far been reported he said. At least 65 people have been killed after a powerful 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Christchurch city in South Island. According to unconfirmed reports, still 100 people are missing and believed buried. Christchurch has many historic stone buildings, and is popular with English-language students and also with tourists as a springboard for tours of the scenic South Island.

Funds allocated for seven new fisheries ports

MUSCAT: Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali Al Qatabi, fisheries minister, said that the ministry has initiated fresh plans to increase and protect the fisheries wealth of the Sultanate. Sheikh Al Qatabi said that the government has allocated subsidies of RO128 million in the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) to establish seven new fisheries ports in Mahout, Al Musna'h, Rakhyut, Sadah, Barka, Al Showimiyah and A'Duqum. "Approval for the project of developing the delivery locations across the coastal sites, in addition to promoting the existing ports in Diba, Quriyat, Al Ashkharah, Masirah, Dhalkut, Mirbat and Lima has been done," he added. Sheikh Al Qatabi said that a programme was designed for quality control, decreasing the loss ratio, developing the current fishing fleet and establishing coastal fishing fleet through fishermen and the private sector, adding that the decision of fishing ban in the deep cliff for the deep-water fish will be activated at the middle of May this year.

'Internet should be used for educational purposes'

MUSCAT: Ministry of Social Development represented by the Development and Family Consolidation Department in the Directorate General of Family Development in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University yesterday organised a workshop under the theme "Positive Utilisation of Internet". The workshop was held under the auspices of Shakour bint Mohammed Al Ghamariyah, State Council Member, in the presence of Yahya bin Badr Al Ma'awali, undersecretary of the Social Development Ministry. Al Ma'awali stressed that the Internet is considered one of the main sources of information for all categories of society. It also becomes one of educational sources for youth so it becomes a matter of urgency to utilise this service in the education process, spread of values and social behaviours in order to enable this technology to have positive contribution. -ONA

LONG WAIT

Boys at a camel show (Rakdh Al Ardha) at Al Falaj Camel Race Track in the Wilayat of Barka, yesterday. - ONA



Pakistan, Oman to extend cooperation in science

FOSTERING TIES

- Both sides agreed to exchange information on science and technology organisations in the respective countries for identification of areas of cooperation
- The two sides also agreed to undertake joint studies on oceanography in future

The two countries will cooperate in the fields of **science and technology, oceanography and enhancement of human resources development**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Sultanate have agreed to extend cooperation between the two countries in the fields of science and technology, oceanography and enhancement of human resources development, which would help to

strengthen trade relations between the two countries.

This was decided in a meeting between Pakistan's Federal Minister for Science and Technology Mir Changez Khan Jamali and Ambassador of the Sultanate Mohammed Said Al Rawati, who called on the minister.

Both leaders discussed bilateral and trade relations between the two countries, specifically in the field of science and technology.

Both sides agreed to exchange in-

formation on science and technology organisations in the respective countries for identification of areas of cooperation.

It has been included as agenda item at the forum of Pak-Oman Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) being coordinated by Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan, the main focus of which is economic and trade relations between the two countries.

Both the countries are also in close cooperation in the field of science and technology at the forum

of Comstech.

A proposal of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the fields of standardisation and quality assessments between Pakistan Standard Quality Control Authority and Directorate General for Specification and Measurement of Oman also came under discussion in the meeting which was earlier discussed and exchanged at the forum of JMC in March 2010.

The draft was under process for completion of respective codal formalities before signing, which would further expand the bilateral and trade relations between the two countries.

Pakistan also offered Oman for enhancement of human resource development for placing its students for studies at National University of Science & Technology and Comsats Institute of Information Technology.

The two sides also agreed to undertake joint studies on oceanography in future. - Internews

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

ESO completes first phase of frankincense research

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has completed its first year of research which ensures the sustainability of frankincense trees. It hopes to have concrete research findings by 2014.

The first phase of the four-year research project is supported by HSBC Oman.

Thanking HSBC Oman for their support, Lamees Daar, executive director of ESO, said: There has been close monitoring of the growth pattern of frankincense in the past few years and researchers noticed that the cutting of the trees to collect frankincense has been harsh often leading to the degeneration of the tree beyond repair.

ESO's research aims at determining the right frequency of cutting to retrieve a good yield with-



Frankincense flowers.

out harming the trees and for this information to be disseminated to the farmers, the relevant authorities and the local communities.

In addition, ESO is studying the potential impacts of climate change on the growth pattern of frankincense trees. Commenting on the bank's partnership with ESO in promoting environmental

awareness, Ewan Stirling, HSBC Oman CEO, said: "Environmental conservation and protection are fundamental pillars of our heritage and business. We believe that the key to protecting the environment requires collective action involving governments, non-profit organisations, the public and the business community."

HEALTH CARE

Ministry opens new health centre in Mudhaibi

MUSCAT: The Health Ministry opened Al Ayoon Health Centre in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi under the auspices of Sheikh Meadhah bin Mohammed Al Yaqoobi, wali of Al Mudhaibi, yesterday.

The centre was built at a cost of RO950,000.

During the inaugural speech, the wali said that the Al Ayoon Health Centre will be a blessing for the people in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

The centre includes outpatient clinics, special child, dental and chronic diseases units. An advanced diagnostic laboratory is also set up in the new health centre. The centre can meet the needs of 70 patients per day. The centre will serve the villages of Barzaman, Bu Eid, Al Musala, Al Haweed, Al Qawe'aa and Bu Saleeb. - ONA

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MUSCAT FESTIVAL

Bidriware attracts all at festival

Quadri, who is upbeat at the response he has got during the festival, said that Bidri art is unique in its own right. **'Rulers in India were great patrons of this art. The basic material of Bidriware is an alloy of zinc and copper,' informed the artisan**



ART DELIGHT: The stall of S. R. A. Quadri has some of the best finely-crafted Bidriware artefacts created in the Bidar region of Karnataka, India. - A. R. Rajkumar/TIMES OF OMAN

SWATI DASGUPTA
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MUSCAT: If it's black and beautiful, it must be Bidri. This ancient art, that's popularly known as Bidriware, originated in Bidar area of Karnataka, India, and has been at-

tracting several onlookers at the International Heritage Village at Qurum Natural Park.

Walk into the stand-alone stall of S. R. A. Quadri and you would stumble upon some of the finely-crafted

Bidriwares that are neatly displayed on the table. From small boxes and mirrors to well-designed vases and attractive bangles, Quadri's counter showcases the everlasting appeal of black artefacts.

While talking to Quadri you figure out that it has been a long journey for this master craftsman whose love for this art is so immense that our slightest inclination to know about his art brings a big smile on

his overworked face.

"I was delighted on being invited to attend this festival, said Quadri, who has received several awards in India.

"This is not my first foreign visit," said Quadri, who has also been to places like Bahrain, Boston, Singapore, Spain and Rome to hold a live demonstration of Bidri work.

Proud to represent his country at the festival, Quadri, who runs his own workshop, Novel Bidri Craft in Karnataka, said that Bidriware is his family tradition.

Elucidating on this craft, Quadri, who was quite upbeat at the response he got during the festival, said that Bidri art is unique in its own right.

"Rulers in India were great patrons of this art. The basic material of Bidriware is an alloy of zinc and copper," said the artisan.

Cast separately

Talking about the artware, he said that each Bidri piece is cast separately from ordinary soil that is made malleable with castor oil and resin.

Later, a mould is formed and the molten metal alloy is then poured into it. Since the surface of the newly cast piece is rough, it is made smooth with files and scrapers.

"To get the black coating for the artist to engrave the design, copper sulphate is rubbed on it,"

added Quadri.

The designs are made by hand with a sharp metal stylus and later silver wires are hammered in the form of fine wire.

"The pieces are treated with chemicals and special soil to obtain the black colour," he said.

Silver designs

Later, another chemical treatment is also given so that the silver designs stand out against the black.

Keeping in mind the hard labour that goes into making each piece of this craft, Quadri raises a serious concern on the problems that Bidri artisans face while being associated with this traditional Indian art.

"The price of silver, copper and bronze have increased considerably. Also there are problems in getting the special soil, making the whole process a bit more difficult for the artisans," informed Quadri.

One must note that the soil used for this is not an ordinary one. It is taken from underneath of old buildings which have not been exposed to rain and sunlight.

But despite all the hindrances Quadri remains so passionate about this art that he has no qualms in admitting that nothing satisfies him more than hitting metals with chisel and hammer. Certainly, this man of immense dedication and invincible spirit deserves our salute!

EXTREME SAILING

Racing heats up as stadium sailing starts

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The third day at the Extreme Sailing Series witnessed a tussle between the top eight of the eleven boats. The Wave, Muscat maintained their place on the podium and within striking distance of the leading French team, Groupe Edmond de Rothschild in front of thousands of spectators yesterday.

The day saw a shift to the 'stadium style' racing which provided an extra challenge for the boats, who had to manoeuvre within the confines of the tight race courses. With two days of racing left, the pressure is building.

Khamis Al Anbouri, bowman on The Wave, Muscat commented, "Tomorrow is important for us, the points are really close, and with two days left to play it could all change. You can't guess now who will be on the podium, a lot of teams are really strong, but we will continue to work hard, sail well and aim to stay on the podium at the end of the event."

It was also the first public day of the event, and the crowds flocked to the race village to watch the stadium style racing, close to the shore. With six races lasting less than 15 minutes each, spectators were treated to a real show, with the dramatic finish of each race metres from the shore making for some spectacular viewing.

Nasser Al Mashari, bowman on board Oman Air, spoke about how it feels to compete in front of his home crowd. "It is great to see all the public here supporting us from the shore. It makes both me and Khamis want to perform well for them — seeing the crowds and families and hearing them cheer for us from the water makes me so proud."

A host of exhibitors in the public village, including the official event charity 'The Environmental Society of Oman' kept the crowds entertained between races. 'The Environmental Society of Oman' aims to educate people about conservation and raise environmental awareness. Lamees Daar, executive director of ESO said, "ESO is excited to be part of a globally recognised international sports competition that has brought people together from all over the world to appreciate Oman's natural environment".

Amongst the activities taking place this week are 'Try Sailing' sessions. Students from Muscat In-

ternational School joined the Oman Sail teams before racing and were treated to a guided tour of the boats and got to ask their questions from Oman's own Khamis Al Anbouri. Khamis commented, "It is great to be able to offer this opportunity to the schools and young Omanis and to see them enjoying being on the sea is just great."

Muscat treated the sailors to another day of great weather conditions, which seemed to suit the teams from Luna Rossa and Team New Zealand, both posting their first win of the event, which has caused a shake up in the overall leader board. The teams from Oman didn't have the day they had hoped for, but as we saw yesterday, that could all change in the next two days.

Nasser commented, "We struggled today and didn't have the results we would have hoped for. We are still learning and every day we learn something new about the boats. It is still close and we are only a few points behind Team New Zealand and Luna Rossa. Tomorrow everything could change."

For the final race of the day, the shift was made to a match racing format, where two boats are pitted against each other. The Wave, Muscat lined up for the first match race against Artemis Racing, skippered by Terry Hutchinson, but after a poor start could not do enough to take the win. Torvar Mirsky, skipper of The Wave, Muscat who made his mark on the World Match Circuit before joining Oman Sail explained, "Artemis were really on fire. They are experienced match racers so my experience didn't give us any edge. I haven't match raced these boats before so it was new for me and interesting to see how they handle. I thought we had them at the start but lost it at the last minute".

The team of Oman Air lined up against Luna Rossa in their match race, with Paul Campbell-James, last year's skipper of The Wave, Muscat on the helm. Paul held on to his unbeaten record for match racing in this circuit, took the point from Oman Air. Oman Air struggled to make it into the top half of the fleet yesterday, slipping down the leader board to eighth place, but just one point off joint sixth placed Luna Rossa and Team New Zealand.

The winner of the Extreme Sailing Series Muscat will be decided today.



TEST OF SKILLS: A shift to the 'stadium style' racing yesterday posed an extra challenge to the sailors, who had to manoeuvre their boats within the confines of tight racecourses. Below, a host of exhibitors in the public village, kept the crowds entertained between races.

CONDOLENCES

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Civil Engineer: Graduate with minimum 5 years experience, construction estimation in the same field and on concrete structure work. Good knowledge of computers,

Mechanical Engineer: With minimum 5 years experience in the same field and capable to handle the fabrication division and also experience on manufacturing the road lighting poles and new set up of new machinery related to the line of road light poles conical and octagonal. Good knowledge of computers.

Candidates holding Original Degree Certificates and With valid Omani Driving License or GCC countries may send in their CVs to Fax # 24600217 or email on: starmail@omantel.net.om

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- Must be holder of GCC Driving license.
- Good communication skills essential & willing to work hard, be self driven.

Interested candidates may forward their CV within 10 days of this add with effective from today, to hr.muscatndt@gmail.com

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- Experience with oil service companies
- Relation with a western company

People interested in this position and with the right experience can submit their resumes to cbrinez@pcm.eu

SITUATION VACANT

A leading Group of companies in UAE, India & Saudi Arabia with 30 years of proven track record in the field of Aluminium, Glazing, ACP Cladding, Scaffolding Contracting and Leasing & Turn key Interior Fit Outs, branching out its operations in Oman and seeks following personnel for their new operations in Oman.

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- Office Secretary having good experience in the relevant field (preferably Oman national).

Send CV to : cornishoman@gmail.com

KCA DEUTAG

HR Manager

KCA DEUTAG, one of the world's leading onshore and offshore drilling and engineering contractors, is looking for an HR Manager for their Oman operations, based in the Muscat Office. Basic duties associated with the role are as follows:

- Provides leadership to the HR Department;
- Functions as a key member of the Oman leadership team, providing input to overall company strategy and is responsible for implementing, the strategy from an HR perspective.
- Builds and maintain relationships with key stakeholders to understand issues and ensure collaboration;
- Responsible for the overall talent management strategy including workforce planning; recruiting; hiring; training and development; performance planning, management, and improvement; and succession planning.

The ideal candidate will have the following attributes:

- Omani National
- 10 years HR experience with at least 5 years in a managerial role.
- Related university degree is required and an MBA preferred.

An attractive salary and benefits package will be offered to the successful candidate.

If you are interested in this role please send a full CV to steve.taylor@omsae.com
Please note that interviews will be held for this position on 5th & 6th March so candidates should only apply if they can be available on these dates.



VACANCY

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OMAN

ROSSO SUPPORT

Help pours in for mishap-hit family

REJIMON K.
reji@timesofoman.com

IMPACT

MUSCAT: A cultural organisation has taken up the responsibility to help a road accident victim's family in Muscat, after reading the story in *Times of Oman*.

Muscat-based Viswamakarma Educational and Cultural Organisation handed over a cheque of RO850 (Rs100,000) to the family of Venunathan Achari (58), who died in a road accident along with his friend Anil Kumar (40), when their car collided with a trailer near Sumail late on January 23. Venunathan's son, Praveen Kumar (25), who was travelling along with them, is still battling for life in Khoula Hospital.

Times of Oman published the story On January 24.

"We came to know about the tragic accident after reading the *Times of Oman* report last month," said Ravi P. K., vice-president of the social organisation.

Road tragedy

Venunathan and Praveen had come along with Anil Kumar to Muscat from Samad to meet the Indian embassy officials to seek legal advice for initiating proceedings against Praveen's sponsor for violating labour laws as Praveen's sponsor was not paying him his agreed salary. While travelling back to Samad after meeting the embassy officials the tragedy took place. Later, it was learnt that the Omani driver succumbed to the injuries.

"After seeing the report in *Times of Oman* we were able to do the needful," organisation officials P. Murali and B. Radhakrishnan told *Times of Oman*.

The organisation has also raised money to meet other expenses to send the dead bodies back to their home state, Kerala.

TOP HONOUR

Mare 'Durar' of the Royal Cavalry won the first position and received gold medal for mares in the seven-years-and-above category at the Qatar International Arabian Horse Beauty Championship, held in Doha. The Royal Cavalry's stallion, Abar, won the third position in the 4-6 years category. The championship witnessed tough competition from world champion horses.



Khonji urges EU to push for signing of FTA with Oman

AFTAB H. KOLA
aftab@timesofoman.com

The discussions which were initiated in 1987 for the FTA between the GCC countries and European Union have not moved forward in recent years. The two sides feel the **FTA would help create more favourable business conditions**

MUSCAT: Khalil Abdullah Al Khonji, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (OCCI) called upon the European Parliament delegation for enhancing ties with the Arab peninsula. The delegation is currently on a visit to Oman to take up the issue of free-trade agreement between Oman and the European Union.

It may be recalled that the discussions which were initiated in 1987 for the FTA between the GCC countries and European Union have not moved forward in recent years. The OCCI has asked the visiting delegation to urge the key policy makers in their region to push for the signing of FTA between Oman and European countries.

At a meeting held yesterday

between the members of the delegation and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries at the OCCI head-office, the two sides interacted upon a wide range of issues. The two sides agreed that the FTA if affected would help create more favourable business conditions to improve the level of trade between Oman and 27 European countries.

Initiating the discussion Khonji said that unlike other countries Oman has only one chamber of commerce and industry with 10 branches scattered across the Sultanate.

He said all the chambers of commerce in the GCC countries have come together under one umbrella and formed Federation of GCC Chambers.

He told the delegation that Oman is a free market and there is no need for a local partner to establish business entity in Oman. Khonji added

that the development of three free trade zones across Oman has been the centrepiece of the Sultanate's plans to diversify the national economy beyond the oil sector by spurring the growth of value-added, export-based industries.

Participating in the discussion, Angelika Nielber, chairperson of the delegation, underscored the importance of entrepreneurs who can play a critical role to help the world achieve sustainable development. Khonji said Oman has already committed itself to a path of sustainable development.

While stating that entrepreneurship has played a dominant role in Omani society, Pankaj Khimji said, "What is more important is the development of skills after graduation which will empower the candidates to become employable."

Another participant from the

European Parliament delegation stressed the need for incorporating entrepreneurship programmes in academic curriculum.

Angelika Nielber called upon the Omani side to organise regular interaction visits between small-enterprise entities of Oman and European countries.

Khonji further said, "We have challenges and food security is one such domain. This concern is applicable to all the GCC countries. The other concern is creating jobs for employing the new generation. We are trying our best to address these issues."

The European Parliament's delegation included Angelika Niebler, Paul Rubig, Jutta Steinruck, Holger Kraemer, Jacek Wlosowicz among others. The delegation came to Oman on February 19 and will depart today.

WASTEWATER

50% of Seeb project completed

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Philip Wayne, project director of Seeb Wastewater Project, under construction by Galfar Engineering & Contracting SAOG, said that the company has so far completed 50 per cent of the project, which is located 30 kilometres east of Muscat International Airport.

The project would serve 7700 houses in the Wilayat of Seeb, he said, adding that work was progressing as planned.

He said that the constraints the company faces in execution of the project included the random planning of houses and old sections at the project's area. Most houses are linked to each other with no spacious lanes for installation of main pipes. Nor can the pipes be installed as part of the wastewater network between the houses through ventilation vents, he added.

To do so, some entrances and roads leading to the house are to be constructed and some interlock has to be removed in addition to cutting of parts of the road and internal roads, he said.

This may result in difference in levelling upon restoration of the roads, particularly in the presence of technical problems related to design in some areas. Restoration of such roads may also take time.

"We were speeding with completion of the project works as scheduled," he said, adding that they sometimes work at night in more than one site. In particular, if such night works are carried out in densely populated areas, dwellers may find relatively slow -pace in completion of the works as inconvenient.

The director added, "Sometimes we are required to work upon specific technical specifications at areas where there are high areas, low-lying areas or bends at the short lanes for installation of pipes at the ventilation vents linked to the main wastewater network.

"Most wastewater main lines are installed at internal roads, open areas or wadis and we have tried our level best to instal them at the roadside and not at the middle of roads so dwellers may easily access to and from their houses," he concluded.

PAINTING EXHIBITION

Vibrant Oman shows Sultanate's true colours

RAHIMA AL BALUSHI
rahima@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: A unique, striking and colourful art exhibition showcasing Omani landscapes by well-known expatriate Indian artist, Mohammed Nazir, was inaugurated at the Omani Society for Fine Arts on Monday.

The five-day solo exhibition held at the Fine Arts Society and titled *Vibrant Oman* was inaugurated by Abdullah Shaban Al Farsi, head of administrative and financial affairs at the Diwan of Royal Court.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Mohammed Nazir said the exhibition features 47 paintings showcasing Omani landscapes and historical sites. "My paintings reflect the beautiful landscapes of my second country 'Oman' and also represent a number of popular tourist attractions in the country," he said.

"Most of the paintings have been created recently. Oman has very unique landscapes. That is why I decided to highlight this through my paintings," Nazir said.

Fascinated by landscapes, especially those which have water background, Nazir combines different

colours and create a unique combination of colours. "White colour is certainly my favourite," he stressed.

Nazir's a professional accountant. However, he gave up his profession in 1991 and decided to follow his passion, which is 'art'. "I am a born artist, I have not learnt art," he noted.

"Art gives me real happiness. Receiving appreciation from the public pushes me to give more to art. I do get financial benefit from my paintings, but what is more important is the appreciation I receive on the works I have created," he said.

Reactions from the public on *Vibrant Oman* have been encouraging. "Some people told me that they have never seen an exhibition of paintings of this quality. I am very happy to hear this," he claimed.

It is worth noting that Nazir has sold around 3,700 paintings in over nearly three decades. Nazir is known for his contribution to the art scene in Oman and adopts realism in his paintings. He uses knife as an essential tool in designing his paintings. He, in fact, has a great ability to use a knife as a soft brush in his drawings.

Vibrant Oman exhibition concludes tomorrow.



SCENIC OMAN: Mohammed Nazir's exhibition features 47 paintings showcasing Omani landscapes and historical sites. - Shammer Mohammed/TIMES OF OMAN

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Daihatsu Terios: The family car

One can utilise **three rows of seats to comfortably accommodate seven adults**

MUSCAT: "Daihatsu Terios's long wheel base is perfect for my family," remarked Aflah Al Jamei, adding, "the 7-seater configuration is very comfortable, the split ac and the solid feel of the body – and good enough engine power ... I like it all!"

The 1.5 litre, 4 cylinder DOHC petrol engine of the Terios 7-seater long wheel base has more than enough power to deliver a spirited, satisfying ride. It delivers a peppy 103 HP/6000rpm. Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) with DVVT ensure performance, fuel economy and reduced exhaust emission – thereby helping the environment.

In addition, the engine supplies ample torque at an impressive 14.3kgm/4400rpm. This provides smooth, responsive acceleration at high rpm. The Terios 7-seater suspension was developed through repeated test-driving on a variety of road surfaces. The result is a suspension system that

minimises fatigue on long distance drives and also improves both the comfort of the ride and the driving stability.

One can choose three rows of seats to accommodate 7 adults in comfort, or go with two rows of seats for great luggage space. On the safety front, dual air bags in the front deploy in the event of a strong front impact to minimise injury to both, driver and passenger. To protect occupants in an accident, the cabin has been made extra rigid.

Terios 7-seater Long Wheel Base takes crash safety design a step further with a structure that disperses the impact energy from a collision throughout the body frame 'crushable' structures have been used in the body's front and rear sections to absorb impact. The Terios delivers a safe braking performance thanks to ABS.

Daihatsu Terios is also available with a 5-seater variant – aptly called the Fun Wheel Drive as it offers 4 Wheel Drive functionalities with the sportiness and ease of handling of a city car – all at the price of a sedan car.

Besides the Terios, Daihatsu's impressive range consists of the Sirion, a compact car that has been appreciated by buyers all over the globe. Available in 1.3 and 1.5 litre variants, the Sirion clearly stands out as the most affordable Japanese car in its class. In Oman, Saud Bahwan Group is the sole distributor of Daihatsu vehicles.



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OMAN

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Sohar University and Vale host business leaders dinner

SOHAR: Sohar University is hosting its seventh annual business leaders dinner in collaboration with Vale, the world's largest producer of iron ore pellets on Saturday.

With a successful track-record in more than 30 countries, Vale aims to create a sustainable and visionary project in the Sultanate by building a solid industrial platform. By partnering with leading business organ-

isations, Vale remains committed to the development of the local supply chain. The \$1.35 billion project will cater to growing demands in the Middle East, North Africa and India as well as supporting a constantly growing steel cluster in Sohar.

The dinner provides decision makers with an opportunity to meet and discuss areas of mutual interest and to help promote further col-

laboration in the Batinah Region of Oman.

"We strongly believe that Vale's vision for a sustainable legacy can only be accomplished through strategic partnerships with the private and public sectors, local communities and wider stakeholders," stated Sergio Leite, Vale country manager.

He added, "Sohar University's business leaders dinner has proven

year after year to be a significant platform for discussing common interests that aim to further enhance the Sultanate's fast-growing diversified economy.

"We are confident that the event this year will further pave the path for more success, more development and ultimately more prosperity for the country and its people."

Sohar University has been organ-

ising this event for the past 7 years and recognises the value of such occasions as a way of bringing together people from the growing industrial sector in the North Batinah Region.

Dr Abood Al Sawafi, vice-chancellor of Sohar University commented, "I am pleased that Sohar University continues to organise this event. It gives the university an opportunity to engage with

the industry and the public sector about important issues affecting the economy, education and training, and the environment.

"Sohar University recognises Vale's growing contribution to the region, and thanks them for sponsoring this year's event. We are all looking forward to another successful business leaders dinner this year too."

CRICKET FEVER

World Cup promotional offer at Spicy Village

MUSCAT: World Cup cricket fever has hit the world from February 19. And the Spicy Village restaurants has geared up with a new plan to match it.

Spicy Village has undergone a facelift with World Cup décor, so you can live cricket, feel cricket – even eat cricket! Every outlet will wear the World Cup colours with pride. Large screens will be put up, so customers can really feel the excitement and almost be part of it.

As the pace mounts, Spicy Village has got what it takes to tantalise taste buds, too ... a sixer of a buffet all the way, at all Spicy Village outlets, in Muscat, Nizwa, Sohar and Sur. A spread that offers the best of Indian, Chinese, Thai and Continental cuisine. From breads to biryani, from starters and soups to salads and desserts. Over twenty delicious items on the menu, every day.

The fabulous lunch buffet is available right through the World Cup for 49 days, all for just RO2,900. And also a fabulous offer 'Pay for 4, and get the 5th free.' So spread the word, and share the excitement with your family and friends. This World Cup, be at Spicy Village, cheer your favourite team and get ready to score! For more information, or to make your reservations, call Dayaparan on 99224718.

EID-E-MILAD

Pakistan School Nizwa celebrates Prophet's birthday

NIZWA: Eid-e-Milad un Nabi is celebrated on 12th Rabi ul Awal every year by Muslims with great devotion and reverence throughout the world. Pakistan School Nizwa celebrated Eid-e-Milad un Nabi on February 16 with great reverence and respect.

The function started with recitation of the Holy verses from the Holy Quran. Ayesha Syed, student of class VIII, Razia, teacher, and Suhail Afzal Khan, senior teacher presented na'ats in their melodious voices. Mohammed Qasim, teacher, delivered a scholarly speech in which he presented a detailed account of birth, life and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Professor Irshad Ahmed, principal of the school, spoke in accordance on the occasion. He emphasised to follow the teachings of the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) in commemoration of whom we have all gathered here.

The programme ended with the dua offered by Mohammed Qasim.



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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



BEST BUY

Best Buy reported for the first time this year that it had started to lose market share. Sales of televisions, computers and video game software were weaker than expected. >C4



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THREE NOT TO MISS



RIYADH MEET

1 Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al Naimi said yesterday that Opec is prepared to meet any shortage of supplies due to unrest in the Middle East. >C2

BUYING ASSETS

2 BHP Billiton agreed to buy Chesapeake Energy's Arkansas shale gas assets for \$4.75 billion in cash, more than doubling its United States oil and gas reserves. >C3

CORPORATE

3 One of the most telling images from the frenzied media coverage of India's scandals was telecoms tycoon Anil Ambani emerging from the police headquarters. >C5

Shadeed Iron to invest \$400m for expansion

Shadeed Iron and Steel **will start work on a steel melting shop for billets and round products with an installed capacity of 1.5 MTPA** at its Sohar complex

A. E. JAMES
businesseditor@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: Shadeed Iron and Steel Company, which recently started commercial production at its plant in Sohar, will start work on a massive expansion next month, with an envisaged investment of \$400 million.

The company is building a steel melting shop for producing billets and round products with an installed capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per annum at its large complex in Sohar. The melt shop, part of the project's Phase II development, is a key component of Shadeed's ambition to create an integrated steel plant with a range of products.

"We are in the process of finalising the technology within four to five days. We are building furnace, casting and associated facilities," D. K. Saraogi, executive president of Shadeed Iron and Steel, told *Times of Oman* in a telephone conversation from Sohar.

As much as \$200 million will be invested for steel melting shop, but the total investment is \$400 million, which includes long product rolling mill. "We are envisaging long finished products (rolling mills)," Saraogi added that the second phase of expansion will be ready by December 2013.

Indian steel-making giant Jindal Steel and Power, which acquired Shadeed Iron and Steel for \$464 million in May last year, is committed to the project's development into a world-class plant.

Third phase expansion

Saraogi, a veteran of the Jindal Group in overseeing the development of several large-scale steel projects, said the company has assigned Atkins to conduct a detailed market survey to find out the demand for the company's products for the next ten years in the Gulf and larger Middle East and North African (Mena) region.

The consultant is expected to submit the report in March,

which will help the management to get more clarity on additional investment required for creating production facilities as well as the right mix of products. "Based on the findings of Atkins, the company will decide on long products."

In fact, the third phase expansion will depend on the demand forecast by the consultants.

"We can go for either long or flat products, which will ultimately depend on the findings," M. P. Charyulu, technical advisor of the company, said the company exports bulk of its hot briquetted iron (HBI) to Gulf Cooperation Council states. "Presently, we have only one customer in Oman," he noted. The company is operating at 70 per cent capacity utilisation at the 1.5 million direct reduction plant. "We are expecting to reach 100 per cent capacity after installing fourth briquetting machine within eight to nine months." Since domestic demand for HBI is not much, most of the products are exported. "We are making all efforts to export HBI to main consumers, initially to GCC and Mena."

The company is now exploring overseas markets like Europe, China, Mexico, and South East Asia for its exporting its products. In the third phase, the company has plans to expand capacity of steel plant to 3.6 million tonnes per annum, in which there will be DRI unit and rolling mills of long and flat products. However, this will depend on the market survey.

Clarification

The column titled 'Wake up, OIFC' published on February 22, 2011 by *Times of Oman* is from our archives and does not have any relevance to the company's current state of affairs. The 'Viewpoint' column, which was originally published on May 21, 2000, was reprinted as part of our editorial practice. An interview of Shabir M. Al Yousef, chief executive officer of Oman Investment and Finance (OIFC), will be published on February 26 to clear any misunderstanding that might have been caused to OIFC stakeholders, including clients, investors, and the readers.

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MARKET

Opec 'ready to meet any shortage'

Producers and users ink charter to limit volatility



ENSURING STABILITY: Ali Al Naimi in his welcome address at the ministerial meeting yesterday in Riyadh said the charter aims to create a 'global energy market characterised by transparency and stability'. - AFP

RIYADH: Energy producer and consumer states signed a charter in Riyadh yesterday aimed at limiting price volatility and stabilising the market, even as turmoil in Middle East countries propelled prices to two-year highs.

The non-binding charter was signed by 87 countries, representing 90 per cent of global oil production and consumption, said Saudi Arabia's deputy oil minister, Prince Abdul Aziz bin Salman.

"We are here to formally and officially confirm the approval of the IEF (International Energy Forum) charter," Prince Abdul Aziz said at the opening meeting of the IEF extraordinary ministerial meeting. The host country's oil minister, Ali Al Naimi, said the charter aims to create a 'global energy market characterised by transparency and stability' and to 'strengthen cooperation for the benefit of future generations'.

On the eve of the forum, Prince Abdul Aziz had said the one-day meeting would also tackle the key issues of short-term price volatility and long-term demand and supply of crude oil and gas.

IEF's secretary general, Noe van Hulst, has said the group's ministers agreed that sharp fluctuations in the market were harmful.

The meeting comes as political turmoil in the Middle East have driven oil prices back to levels last seen before the 2008 global financial crisis with Brent crude soaring above \$105 a barrel.

At its previous meeting in Mexico in March 2010, the IEF agreed to step up dialogue with the aim of improving transparency on the energy markets so as to reduce price volatility.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for March delivery, surged \$7.20 to \$93.40 per barrel. - AFP

Saudi Arabia, Opec's largest producer, is pumping around 8.4 million barrels per day, but Naimi said the country still has a spare capacity of another four million bpd

RIYADH: Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al Naimi said yesterday that Opec is prepared to meet any shortage of supplies due to unrest in the Middle East and that its members have sufficient spare capacity to do so.

"There is absolutely no shortage of supply now... Opec is ready to meet any shortage in supply when it happens," Naimi told a press conference at the end of a consumer-producer meeting that signed a cooperation charter.

"There is concern and fear but there is no shortage," the minister reiterated in a bid to assure consumer countries that crude oil supplies are guaranteed despite sweeping unrest in the Middle East and North Africa.

Saudi Arabia, Opec's largest producer, is pumping around 8.4 million barrels per day, but Naimi said the kingdom still has a spare capacity of another four million bpd.

Speaking after unrest in the Middle East caused oil prices to jump yesterday to \$108 a barrel, the minister said the market volatility was only short-term and would not result in any shortages.

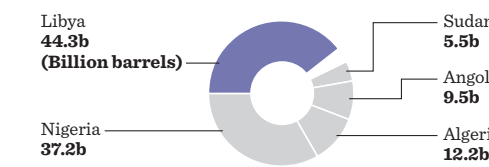
"Opec and particularly Saudi Arabia will compensate any shortage because we did that successfully in the past... I want this transmitted to the market so the people can sleep well tonight," Naimi said.

Naimi said the current oil market

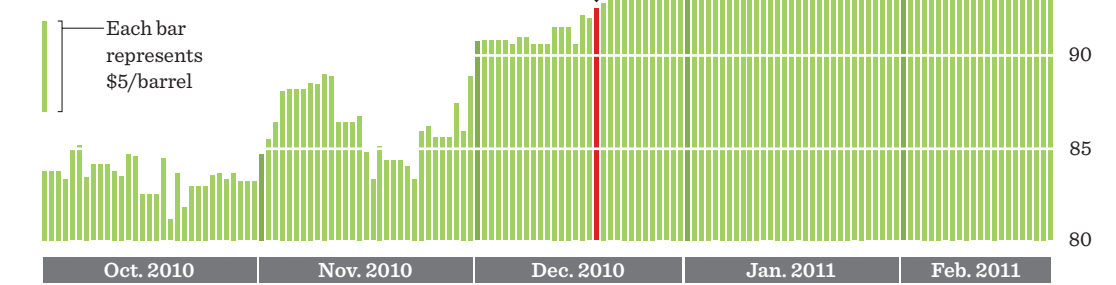
Protests and oil price

During the protests in North Africa and Middle East, price of crude oil increasing.

Libya has the largest oil reserves in Africa



Last months' Brent oil price



Oil prices reached \$108 on Tuesday, as a consequence of protests in Libya

Source: Oilenergy, Graphic News

Graphics

Brent soars above \$108

LONDON: Oil spiked above \$108 yesterday as bloody violence in key North African exporter Libya sparked fresh concerns about stability across the Middle East.

Brent North Sea crude for delivery in April jumped to \$108.57 per barrel in morning trade, the highest level since early September 2008. It later pulled back to \$105.98, up 24 cents from Monday's closing level.

New York's light sweet crude for March delivery jumped \$4.69 to \$90.89 in the first day of physical trading on the New

York Mercantile Exchange since violence escalated in Opec member Libya over the weekend.

"The market remains very jittery, trading on sentiment and rumour, while fears for Libya are added by concerns of unrest spreading to other states like Algeria and even Saudi Arabia — although this is unlikely," said VTB Capital oil analyst Andrey Kryuchenkov.

"Until tensions calm down in the Middle East and North Africa, we are likely to remain well underpinned," he further added. - AFP

Opec members, also said on Tuesday that the organisation was closely watching developments and was prepared to act when necessary.

Oil prices shot up eight percent to \$93.36 a barrel in New York opening trade Tuesday as worries about un-

rest in Libya hit the market. Prices jumped \$7.16 a barrel for the WTI crude contract in the first day of trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange since violence escalated in key North African oil exporter Libya over the weekend. - AFP

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OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY (S.A.O.G)

Oman Telecommunications Company (S.A.O.G), P.O. Box 789, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman hereby gives notice of the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Participation Charges (RO)	Bid Submission Date
23/2011	Geographic Information System (GIS) Enhancement	Contractors Registered in Tender Board/Omantel and Specialized in Similar Works	Nil	6th March 2011

The Tender Documents shall be downloaded from Omania E-Commerce website (www.tejari.com) directly.

Tenderer shall send its willingness in participating in this Tender through Tejari Transact Sourcing Online discussions at the earliest.

A Bid Bond for 1% of the Tender value shall be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman in the form set out in the Tender Documents, valid for a period of 90 (ninety) days in favour of and payable to Omantel, shall be submitted along with the hard submissions. Omantel's Standard Terms & Conditions for Telecom Contracts Agreement shall be applicable.

Tenderers are requested to deposit wax-sealed bids in hard copies in the tender box at the main entrance in Omantel headquarters building, ground floor, addressed in the name of Chief Executive Officer, Omantel, P.O. Box 789, Postal Code 112, Ruwi. Tenderers are also requested to submit their offers online through Tejari Transact Sourcing. All offers shall be submitted no later than 10:00am on 6th March 2011.

www.omantel.om

BRIEFS

Oman Cement proposes 37% cash dividend
MUSCAT: The board of Oman Cement Company (OCC) yesterday proposed a dividend of 37 per cent, which is subject to the approval of the shareholders, the Sultanate's second largest cement producer said in a statement. The company's net profit for last year edged up to RO25.03 million, from RO24.23 million for 2009, thanks to a phenomenal RO7.34 million government compensation for keeping cement prices low in the last two years.

French agrifood exports to ME increase by 45%
PARIS: French agrifood exports to the Middle East, including Egypt, increased significantly in 2010, with a €1.525 billion turnover and a 45 per cent rise compare to 2009. The three major markets in the region for French food and beverage exports are Egypt with 36 per cent, Saudi Arabia (25 per cent) and the United Arab Emirates (13 per cent). In the GCC, Saudi and the UAE comprise the main markets with 59 per cent of the market. They have respectively imported for €374 million and €197 million in 2010. - Agencies

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MARKET



OCIPED SEMINAR

Maqbool and UK trade minister to address seminar on Thursday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani Centre for Investment Promotion and Export Development (Ociped) is organising a business seminar and networking lunch for the visiting business delegation accompanying Lord Stephen Green, United Kingdom trade and investment minister on February 24.

At the seminar, Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, minister of commerce and industry, who is also the chairman of Ociped and Lord Green will be addressing the seminar.



Maqbool bin Ali Sultan

There will also be panel discussion on ports in Oman, infrastructure developments and business opportunities in the UK for the Omani companies.

The UK business delegation will include chairman/chief executive officers from over 20 leading UK companies representing various sectors including education, finance, oil & gas and professional services to name a few. Leading businessmen and women from Oman will be participating in the event.

Commenting on the seminar,

Nisreen Ahmed Jaffer, director general of Investment Promotion at Ociped said that the event will create an opportunity for the Omani business community to discuss and interact with leading corporates from the UK and enhance business relationship.

"The UK is one of our target markets for attracting investment and since last year, Investment Forum event in London wherein more than 40 Omani businessmen participated, we have been receiving many delegations from the UK and more are due to come," she said.

BRIEFS

Shell may lose \$600m in revenue in Gulf of Mexico

LONDON: Royal Dutch Shell, Europe's largest oil company, may lose about \$600 million in revenue this year on drilling delays in the Gulf of Mexico after the largest United States oil spill, Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. said. Shell earnings will decline 10 per cent to \$8.51 per American depositary receipt, or 266 pence a share, according to Oswald Clint, a London-based analyst at Bernstein.



Higher project start-up costs in Canada and Qatar will also hurt profit along with lower margins in refining and marketing. The Hague-based Shell postponed about \$700 million of investments in the Gulf and lost \$260 million because of idled rigs in the region last year, chief financial officer Simon Henry said.

Johnson & Johnson finishes friendly takeover of Crucell



NEW JERSEY: Pharmaceutical and health care giant Johnson & Johnson announced yesterday the successful completion of a friendly takeover of Dutch vaccine maker Crucell, for about 1.75 billion euros (\$2.37 billion). "Johnson & Johnson and Crucell yesterday announced that Johnson & Johnson has completed the tender offer for Crucell,"

the companies said in a joint statement. Johnson & Johnson, which employs 114,000 people, has said it intends to retain Crucell's management and staff and to keep the headquarters at Leiden in the western Netherlands. Johnson & Johnson, which now owns more than 95 per cent of Crucell's capital announced a supplementary offer period from today until March 8.

Honda Motor cuts number of directors from 20 to 12

TOKYO: Honda Motor, Japan's third-largest carmaker, said it will cut the number of company directors to speed up decision-making. The number will be reduced to 12 from 20 at the end of June, Honda said yesterday in a statement to the Tokyo Stock Exchange. The company is also adding the title of 'operating officer' to directors who have business execution roles and will clarify those roles and responsibilities, it said. Honda's management reorganisation echoes changes at larger rival Toyota, which also plans to cut its board to 17 or fewer members from 27 currently, according to two people familiar with the company's plan.



Rolls-Royce aims to boost car sales at least 10% this year



SINGAPORE: Bayerische Motoren Werke's Rolls-Royce motor cars aims to increase sales at least 10 per cent this year as the maker of luxury vehicles boosts deliveries in China and seeks to attract younger buyers.

"We will see for China this year quite strong growth," the division's chief executive Torsten Mueller-Oetvoes said in an interview with Bloomberg Television. Young Asian entrepreneurs will help the Goodwood, England-based company increase sales by "at least a two-digit figure" in percentage terms, he said. The carmaker, which competes with Daimler's Maybach and Volkswagen's Bentley divisions, almost tripled sales to a record last year. Rolls Royce said full-year sales in 2010 rose to 2,711 cars, led by growth in Asia, the US and the Middle East. - Agencies

BHP is buying shale gas assets from Chesapeake

The world's biggest mining company will add more than 10tr cubic feet of gas resources through the purchase, J.

Michael Yeager, CEO of BHP's petroleum division said



NEW BUSINESS: The BHP Billiton headquarters in Melbourne, Australia. The Chesapeake transaction helps the company become a 'very, very powerful petroleum' producer, with natural gas assets in western Australia and stakes in US Gulf of Mexico oil projects. - Bloomberg News

SYDNEY: BHP Billiton, the world's biggest mining company, agreed to buy Chesapeake Energy's Arkansas shale gas assets for \$4.75 billion in cash, more than doubling its United States oil and gas reserves.

BHP will add more than 10 trillion cubic feet of gas resources through the purchase, J. Michael Yeager, chief executive of BHP's petroleum division, said on a call with reporters yesterday. The Fayetteville deal marks BHP's first foray into United States shale gas.

"It's a bet on long-term US gas prices going higher," said Prasad Patkar, who helps manage about \$1.8 billion including mining stocks at Platypus Asset Management Ltd. in Sydney.

"They've entered a new business but have met the criteria that they have articulated for acquisitions, that is, tier-one, low-cost, long-life and expandable assets."

Strong cash flow

Chief executive Marius Kloppers will expand oil and gas reserves by 45 per cent with the purchase, BHP's largest since it bought WMC Resources for \$7.6 billion in 2005. There have been 135 oil and gas deals worth a combined \$41 billion announced globally this year, according to data.

The \$285.3 billion of transactions last year was the second highest on record, after 2007.

BHP declined 0.5 per cent to 2,363 pence in London trading, the lowest since January 31.

The stock rose 1.6 per cent to A\$46.58 in Sydney, while the benchmark S&P/ASX 200 Index dropped 0.9 per cent. BHP also completed a \$5 billion off-market share buyback yesterday as part of a \$10 billion programme it revealed on February 16.

The Chesapeake transaction helps the company become a "very, very powerful petroleum" producer, with natural gas assets in Western Australia and stakes in US Gulf of Mexico oil projects, Yeager said.

Investor and regulatory concerns sank three investments worth more than \$100 billion proposed by Klop-

pers, 48, in the past four years, including last year's offer for Potash of Saskatchewan.

The failed deals, combined with record first-half profit, left BHP with \$16.1 billion of cash on hand.

The company's "credit profile can accommodate the proposed acquisition and buyback, given the group's strong cash flow generation and conservative financial profile," Standard & Poor's analysts May Zhong and Brenda Wardlaw wrote yesterday in a report.

BHP's credit rating of 'A+' isn't immediately affected by the acquisition, it said.

BHP's reserves

Chesapeake agreed to sell all of its interests in about 487,000 net acres of properties in central Arkansas, the company said. Shale formations consist of dense rock that can

be broken apart to release oil and gas. The transaction is expected to close in the first half of this year, Chesapeake said.

Fayetteville holds about 2.4 trillion cubic feet of gas, equivalent to 456 million barrels of oil, compared to BHP's total proved US reserves of 288 million barrels in its 2010 annual petroleum review.

BHP, Australia's largest oil and gas company, paid about \$1.98 for each thousand cubic feet of estimated proven reserves, said Michael Bodino, an analyst at Global Hunter Securities in Fort Worth, Texas. In December, Exxon Mobil paid \$1.92 per MCF of reserves when it acquired property in the Fayetteville Shale from Petrohawk Energy.

Announced deal premiums this year have been at an average of 24 per cent, compared to 19 per cent last year. - Bloomberg News

OIL EXPLORATION

BP alters strategy in \$7b deal

LONDON: Robert Dudley's second \$7 billion deal this year signals a shift for BP toward the world's fastest-growing economies as exploration drilling remains closed in the United States after the Macondo oil spill.

Dudley, the first American chief executive of the London-based company, has agreed to pay Reliance Industries \$7.2 billion to help explore deepwater fields in India.

That follows an \$8 billion share swap with Rosneft to expand into Russia's Arctic Sea in January. Last year, BP signed a deal to explore off Brazil and sealed a partnership with Cnooc for offshore licenses in the South China Sea.

The deals are putting BP's exploration unit closer to regions that the company predicts will generate the majority of energy demand growth for the next 20 years. Dudley is also

reducing BP's dependence on the Gulf of Mexico, where it has yet to resume drilling following the worst US spill. "The Reliance deal represents another step in reshaping BP's portfolio," said Theepan Jothilingam, an analyst at Morgan Stanley. "The strategy earmarked post-Macondo is clear - a genuine focus on exploration and a shift toward resource and consumer markets." - Bloomberg News

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FEATURE



FEELS THE PRESSURE OF RIVALS ON THE WEB

At a time when the United States' brick-and-mortar **electronics retailers are increasingly feeling the squeeze from online sellers and discounters**, the scene at the Best Buy store exemplified what the company hoped would keep customers pushing through its glass doors: the service support, the personal touch of its sales staff and the products on display that allow shoppers to see, touch and try.

CHRISTINE HAUSER

At barely 10 a.m., holiday shopping was in full swing at a Best Buy on the Upper West Side. A harried father searched for a new Xbox for his children. A personal assistant picked up video game accessories for her boss's twins. One young woman fiddled with a coffeemaker, while another paid for a DVD player. Outside, parked along the curb, a Best Buy van displayed the slogan "to serve, install and repair." Inside, one of Best Buy's frontline salesmen, known as blue shirts for their uniforms, shouted to no one in particular across the vast showroom: "Anybody have any questions?" And moments later, to a couple trying out some laptops, he said: "You guys OK?"



At a time when the United States' brick-and-mortar electronics retailers are increasingly feeling the squeeze from online sellers and discounters, the scene at the Best Buy store exemplified what the company hoped would keep customers pushing through its glass doors: the service support, the personal touch of its sales staff and the products on display that allow shoppers to see, touch and try. Its strategy, however, has not worked as well as envisioned in a recovering economy. The challenges faced by electronics stores were highlighted this week when Best Buy, the world's largest consumer electronics retailer in revenue, reported that third-quarter net income fell 4.4 per cent, to \$217 million, and sales fell 1.1 per cent, to \$11.9 billion.

Sales at stores open for more than a year declined five per cent. The third-quarter results were below analysts' forecasts and affected other stocks. Shares of Best Buy fell 18 per cent after the results were announced. That was the biggest decline since August 2002, and other retailers like Hhgregg and RadioShack followed suit. For the week, Best Buy shares lost 18 per cent, Hhgregg fell 14 per cent, and RadioShack five per cent.

"The market, which is already weak, is dramatically shifting away from stores and toward online," said Colin A. McGranahan, a senior analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein & Company. "The online share of the market is now a critical mass, and the discount stores are also fierce competitors and willing to sell the product at very low prices to get that customer through the door."

"You are also seeing another factor where people are going into Best Buy, getting advice on the product and then using smart phones to scan the Web for better deals," he said.

With the shift toward online destinations, electronics retailers need to adapt to the changing landscape, analysts say, even as they continue to open storefronts. Online sales in the United States are forecast to account for 20 per cent of total consumer electronics sales of \$250 billion by the end of this year. "Online has now gotten big enough to encroach on Best Buy," McGranahan said.

Best Buy reported for the first time this year that it had started to lose market share. Sales of televisions, computers and video game software were weaker than expected, Brian J. Dunn, Best Buy's chief executive, said this week.

Separately, in an e-mail he added that the company offered customers "a place where they can talk to knowledgeable, unbiased and engaged salespeople who demonstrate the art of what's possible" and help them make choices.

Even so, new technology, like 3-D televisions that often need specialists to answer the questions of consumers, was not moving as briskly as hoped. Analysts said the company did not promote lower-tier products as aggressively as it should have. In general, sales were going to Amazon, Wal-Mart, Target, Costco and Sears.

"The results certainly signify how much competition consumer electronic retailers are facing from mass merchants and larger online retailers," said R.J. Hottovy, director of consumer research at Morningstar. "It is tough to see what the company is going to do," he said. "I think that a lot of the worries lingering out there were exacerbated by the results." Morningstar said it was reducing its fair value estimate for the stock, raising questions about Best Buy's ability to defend market share from mass merchants, especially while major suppliers like Apple expand their own outlets. "These factors support the viewpoint that Best Buy lacks an economic moat, in our view," said the research note.

Analysts downgraded their expectations for the fiscal year. "We whacked a billion in revenue out of our forecast, down to \$50.2 billion in global sales," McGranahan said,

“The market, which is already weak, is dramatically shifting away from stores and toward online. The online share of the market is now a critical mass, and the discount stores are also fierce competitors and willing to sell the product at very low prices to get that customer through the door.**”**

Colin A. McGranahan
Senior analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein

adding: "It was a pretty bad quarter. Sales declined more than we thought, and the outlook for the fourth is not great." And Best Buy said in its third-quarter earnings news release that it was lowering its per-share outlook for the year. Even so, electronics and appliances retailers are still pressing ahead with new storefronts. Best Buy plans to open 50 stores by the end of February. Hhgregg expects to open a store early next year in Pensacola, Fla., and up to 45 more in fiscal 2012. Company officials declined to be interviewed before the end of the current quarter on December 31.

Analysts still question how the surviving electronics retailers can adapt in an industry that has already seen its share of bankruptcies, like Circuit City's. While Best Buy is testing new products, like fitness equipment and electronic scooters, it might have to shift to smaller stores, Hottovy said. "They have got to change their business model," he said. "They are throwing anything against the wall to see if it will work." A spokeswoman for Best Buy, Susan Busch, said the company planned to accelerate the use of its "ro-bust" online offerings. "Best Buy's online channel had more than 40 million site visits from Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday," she said in an e-mail.

Analysts note that the company and other stand-alone retailers are banking on what they see as the competitive advantage of in-store expertise. But some fear customers will go to a store to get advice about a product, only to buy it online or at a better price with discounters. McGranahan said he suspected there was still a market for the personal touch. "I don't think 100 per cent of consumer electronics are going to be sold online," he said. "There are still a lot of people who want to see it, touch it, feel it, take it home today." On a recent morning, Gregory D. Shufro went to a RadioShack on Manhattan's Upper West Side to inspect a coaxial cable before buying it. "That is something you can't do online," he said. — The New York Times News Service



EUROPEAN UNION

Google competitor files EU anti-trust complaint over ads

BRUSSELS: Google, the world's leading search engine, blocks smaller competitors from generating advertising revenue, a competitor said in a complaint to European Union (EU) regulators.

1PlusV sent a complaint to the European Commission yesterday claiming Google refused to allow so-called vertical search sites to use its advertising service, the French web publisher said.

"1PlusV accuses Google of pursuing a strategy of foreclosure against vertical search engines," the company said in a statement. Vertical search engines limit their answers to one category, such as travel information. Google, Microsoft's Bing and others offer horizontal search engines that comb all categories for information.

Google also appears to give preferential treatment to its Google Books pages in searches and includes some websites in its search results without their consent, 1PlusV said in a statement. The EU is already investigating Google over claims it discriminated against other services in its search results and stopped some websites from accepting rival ads. Microsoft's Ciao from Bing was among those that made that complaint.

Google will "continue to work cooperatively with the European Commission, explaining many aspects of our business," Al Verney, a spokesman for Google in Brussels, said in an e-mailed statement. There's always "room for improvement and so we'll be working with the commission to address any concerns."

'Careful analysis'

The EU's anti-trust probe of Google required "careful analysis" to make "a thorough assessment of the allegations" against the company, Joaquin Almunia, the EU's competition commissioner, said earlier this month.

1PlusV's complaint follows one it made a year ago to EU regulators for its legal search site ejustice.fr, which it said was "blacklisted" from Google's search results three times. That had a "catastrophic" effect on the site's traffic and it was never able to recapture its initial popularity even after making changes that Google recommended, the company said.



1PlusV's music search site e-musicpro.fr and cultural guide eguides.fr were also removed from search rankings in a similar way, the company said. Some pages from those sites were relisted since the company filed its first complaint, it says.

Search terms

Google is "an inescapable intermediary" for all Internet sites that plan to cover their costs by generating advertising revenue, the company said. Having your site appear high up in Google's search results is "an essential pre-condition" for a site's viability, 1PlusV said.

Google sells advertising linked to search terms. Ads accounted for 96 per cent of the Mountain View, California-based company's revenue in 2010, or about \$28.2 billion.

Google's AdSense "is the only really effective way of obtaining targeted advertising on a search engine," the French firm said. Google's policy compelled it to use Google's custom search engine instead, it said.

The complaint also said Google violates web guidelines and disregards some websites' warnings not to list their content in search results, including pages from the French senate website, France's competition authority and the EU-backed online library Europeana. This gives Google's search results an unfair advantage over rivals, 1PlusV said. By showing Google Books pages in its search results, the company may be violating the search engine's own anti-spam rules, 1PlusV said.

Amadeu Altafaj, a spokesman for the European Commission, declined to immediately comment. — Bloomberg News

India's billionaire 'heroes' get humbled

The reputation of the country's titans of industry has taken a beating over a rash of graft cases, and with it has come the risk of a backlash over their murky links to politicians

NEW DELHI: One of the most telling images from the frenzied media coverage of India's corruption scandals in recent months was billionaire telecom tycoon Anil Ambani emerging from the federal police headquarters after questioning.

The reputation of the country's titans of industry has taken a beating over a rash of graft cases, and with it has come the risk of a backlash over their murky links to politicians.

Once seen as invincible, even heroes, big businessmen were lauded for freeing India from the bureaucratic shackles of a planned economy into a globalised world and they were often feted in Bollywood as good guys battling corrupt officials.

That is changing. "The interrogation of Ambani would never have happened five or 10 years ago," said Siddharth Varadarajan, strategic affairs editor at the Hindu newspaper, who has written on the scandals. "Society at large had grown to admire these people. People are now associating business with corruption as never in the past." The scandals, which include the alleged sale of some telecom licenses for kickbacks, come after two decades of reform that opened up the economy and spawned dramatic corporate growth.

In a country where more than 450 million people live in poverty, around 50 billionaires account for 20 per cent of India's GDP and 80 per cent of stock market capitalisation, according to a 2009 Asian Development Bank report, which warned that an excessive concentra-

tion of power could hinder growth and reforms. In 2010, there were six Indian industrialists on Forbes.com's list of the world's top 50 billionaires.



FACING A TOUGH TIME: Anil Ambani, chairman of Reliance Power. One of the most telling images from the frenzied media coverage of India's corruption scandals in recent months was billionaire telecom tycoon Anil Ambani emerging from the federal police headquarters after questioning. — Bloomberg News

tion of power could hinder growth and reforms. In 2010, there were six Indian industrialists on Forbes.com's list of the world's top 50 billionaires.

Greater scrutiny

The risks now for companies are greater judicial and media scrutiny and stricter enforcement of regulations: the upside for foreign investors may be greater transparency.

"What industrialist has gone to jail in the last 10 years? Until now the big industrialists, and politicians, the bad ones, could get away with what they wanted," said billionaire Rahul Bajaj, chairman of Bajaj Auto and an Indian lawmaker.

"In terms of corruption... this will continue for many years but we have reached the bottom of the pit," Bajaj told Reuters. "I am not saying they are saints but willy nilly they are being forced to put their house in order." Ambani, owner of No. 2 mobile carrier Reliance Communications, denies wrongdoing in the telecom case. Ambani's grilling was part of a growing probe in which one telecom executive was arrested and others,

including billionaire Prashant Ruia, chief executive of the Essar Group business house, were questioned. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his government have come under unprecedented attack and his former telecom minister has been arrested. One of the clearest signals of change came earlier this month when, in an unprecedented statement, the Supreme Court told the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI): "We have a large number of people who think themselves to be above the law. You must catch all of them. Merely because a person is in the Forbes list of millionaires and billionaires does not matter."

A reputation tainted?

Indian entrepreneurs are widely respected for innovation and business acumen. The rise of a globalised, corporate India with the likes of software leader Infosys have helped spur growth rates to near double digits over the last few years.

Most companies are not tainted by corruption, and Indian executives have long enjoyed the image of being more innovative than the

“

The interrogation of Ambani would never have happened five or 10 years ago. Society at large had grown to admire these people. People are now associating business with corruption as never in the past

Siddharth Varadarajan
Strategic Affairs Editor, Hindu

bureaucrats-cum-businessmen in rival China. Other wealthy businessmen are also lawmakers, including airline baron Vijay Mallya and Naveen Jindal, managing director of Jindal Steel and Power.

But a Who's Who of corporate India has now been mired in controversy in the past year.

Even the icon of India, Ratan Tata, went to court to stop the release of leaked taped conversations of lobbyist Nira Radia and top industrialists, politicians and journalists, with talk of swinging deals, granting favours and ministers taking bribes.

The tapes published in local media showed Radia, whose lobby company represents Tata and Mukesh Ambani, speaking to politicians to ensure Andimuthu Raja was appointed telecom minister.

Raja is now under arrest over the graft case. The founder of Satyam Computer was arrested in an accounting fraud — software services had previously been seen as one of India's cleanest sectors — and the head of India's \$4 billion cricket premier league was fired over alleged irregularities. — Reuters

PRODUCTION HURDLES

Apple's next-generation iPad may be delayed until June: Broker's note



SLEEK: The New York Times website is displayed on an Apple iPad tablet computer in New York. Apple's shipments of a new version of its iPad tablet computer may be delayed to June from April because of "production bottlenecks" at manufacturer Hon Hai Precision Industry, Yuanta Securities said.

The delay arose after Cupertino, California-based Apple made design changes before the Lunar New Year, according to a report by Vincent Chen and Alison Chen, analysts at Yuanta.

Jill Tan, an Apple spokeswoman in Hong Kong, declined to comment on the report. Edmund Ding, a spokesman for Hon Hai, didn't answer calls to his Taiwan and China mobile phones.

"Our checks suggest new issues are being encountered with the new production and it is taking time to resolve them," said Chen in the report.

"As a number of Android 3.0 tablets are being launched in April and May, the delay in iPad 2 shipments may give the Android camp a brief

window of opportunity," he further added in the note.

Hon Hai, the Taipei-based contract manufacturer for Apple, dropped 2.2 per cent to NT\$111.50 at the close of Taipei trading, the lowest level since December 2.

Two-month delay

A two-month delay in introducing the iPad could lower the tablet computer's shipments to 23 million units this year, as compared with the brokerage's current forecast of 30.6 million, according to the report. The iPad, introduced in April, accounted for 17 per cent of sales last quarter. The company has sold more than 15 million iPads so far, Vice-President Eddy Cue said on February 2. The iPhone is Apple's top-selling product, accounting for 39 per cent of revenue last fiscal year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Apple started producing an updated version of the iPad, the *Wall Street Journal* reported earlier this

month citing unidentified people familiar with the matter.

Faster chips

The new version is thinner, lighter, has more memory and uses faster chips than its predecessor, the newspaper said. It also has a front-facing camera that would enable videoconferencing, the *Journal* said.

Samsung Electronics, HTC and Hewlett-Packard are also offering tablets to compete with Apple. Global shipments of tablet devices will more than double this year, led by Apple and Google's Android-based models, according to researcher IDC. The iPad faces intensifying competition from Android tablets made by Samsung, Motorola Mobility Holdings and Acer. The Apple product accounted for 75 per cent of global tablet shipments last quarter, according to research firm Strategy Analytics.

Android tablets captured 22 per cent of the market. — Bloomberg News

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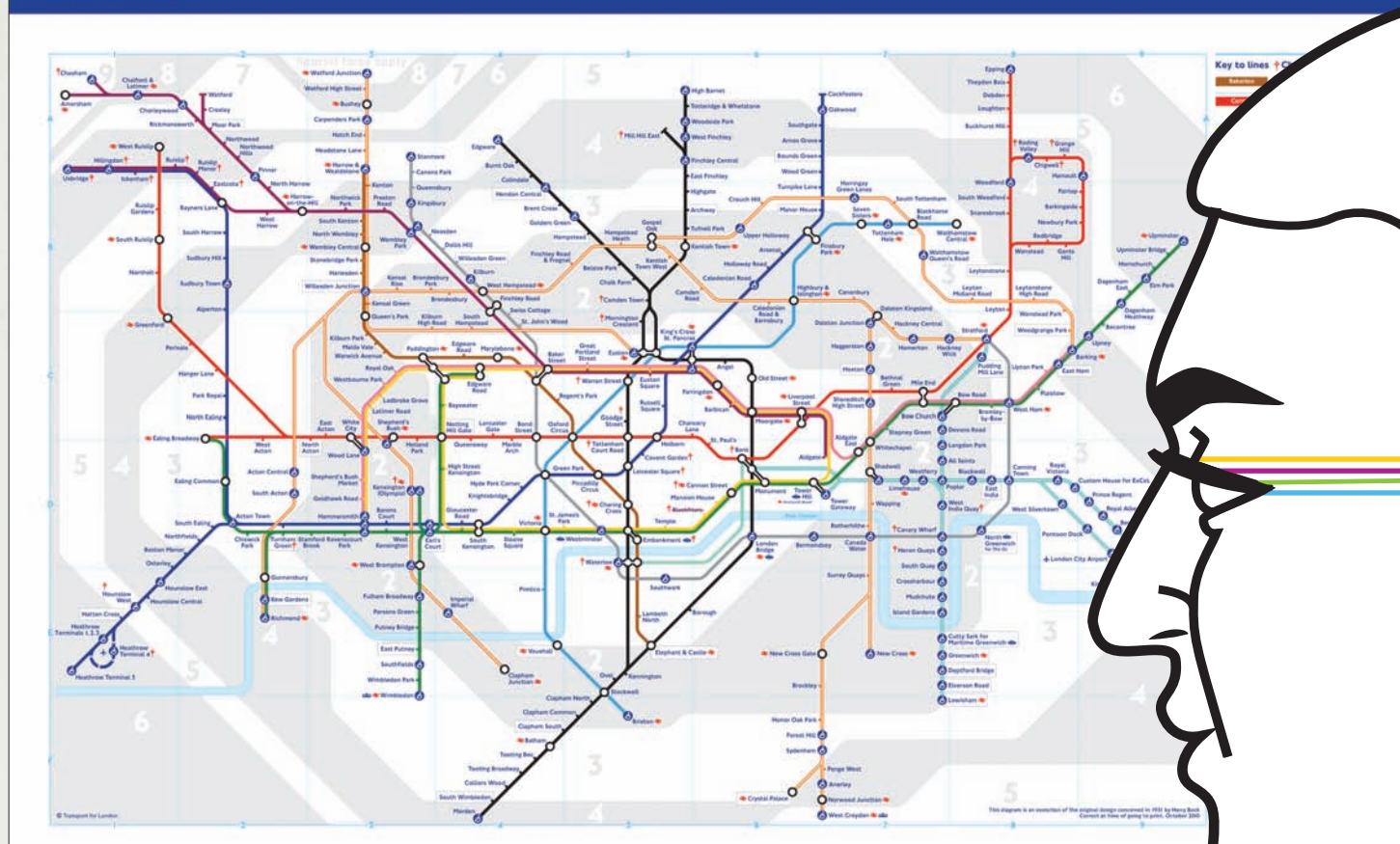
BALD TRUTH

Mouse researchers conducting stress hormone tests have stumbled onto a surprising new discovery – a potential treatment for hair loss. >C10

INFORMATION IS BEAUTIFUL

At the end of 2010, the financial glossy *Bloomberg Businessweek*, like many other magazines and newspapers, published a special “review of the year” issue. Dispensing with words to describe the events of the financial year, it used 289 pictures and 61 charts for this gargantuan task. Even the index consisted of charts. That’s quite a radical departure for a text-based magazine. Or so you might think, until you look at what else is going on in journalism. Every week, *GOOD*, an online American magazine specialising in bite-size news, features a “transparency” – a richly detailed, heavily researched topic (the conflict in Afghanistan, say, or a who’s who in the Mexican drug wars) that it presents in picture format. *GOOD* isn’t even the first publication to do this.

Tube map



The trend for interpreting the world around us in charts and graphics, making statistics suddenly accessible and arresting, also arrived in Britain. At the beginning of the year, David McCandless, the (British) author of *Information is Beautiful* – a thick book of facts and figures, presented in artistic graphic form – was invited onto *Newsnight* to talk about his trade. McCandless found himself defending his use of pictures, rather than words, to disseminate information. He explained that it made information accessible. The opposition (Neville Brody, the graphic designer most associated with *The Face*), argued that this new phenomenon made attractive wallpaper, not journalism. Either way, we have entered the age of the infographic.

A month after the *Newsnight* experience, and in something of a more relaxed environment, McCandless, a print journalist for over 20 years, explains how he came to find himself at the vanguard of a graphic revolution. Three years ago, he explains, he started drawing his research, as a visual aid. “I remember looking at one of these sketches and thinking – I don’t need to write this article,” he says. Hundreds of infographics and one hardback compendium later, he is part of a movement that is slowly but surely coming above ground.

Visualisation

McCandless’s skill is in sifting through mounds of raw data, and presenting that information in a way that our minds can easily process – or, at least, that navigates the bulwarks of our prejudice. “Data can be boring and dry,” McCandless admits, “and often needs visualisation or warming up to human context.” And this goes way beyond pie charts. After he had his own epiphany, McCandless began – what else – Googling to see if anyone else was doing the same thing. “It was a little bit in the ghetto,” he says. “In the science world, visualisation looked horrendous. In the design world, it was beautiful but meaningless.” And so began the task to wed visual aesthetics to genuinely interesting information.

Potential

“There’s the potential to create perfect expression that you can’t do in other medium,” he says. McCandless estimates that 80 per cent of his effort goes into research, the rest on design. The point, he stresses, is to optimise information, not simplify it. And while detractors say that it

is McCandless who is distilling the information and, guided by his own prejudices, decides what’s important, McCandless counters that in fact he lists all his information sources; and, really, what’s the difference between that and a written news story?

The difference is that the average, time-pressed reader might be tempted not to plough through a written article about global expenditure. One look at an infographic gives you a pretty good idea of the biggest spends, and where they’re made. McCandless’s Billion-Dollar-O-Gram is a case in point. At a glance, his graphic made up of different-sized rectangles looks like a collection of swatches of paint for a smart home. Purple dominates. That’s because it’s the colour-code for “fighting”. That big purple rectangle, the biggest of all, is the estimated amount that will be spent on the Iraq war (\$3,000 billion). And that sliver of mauve, close by? Predicted cost of the war in 2003 (\$60 billion). It certainly looks small compared to the lovely lavender box which shows the actual spend, four years later (\$133 billion).

Infographics have been noticed by the political world, as well. At the end of last year, David Cameron hosted a delegation – that included David McCandless and other politically-active programmers – on a fact-finding trip about participatory democracy and technology in India. Data projects that used simple tools to communicate with – and solve issues for – the grassroots, featured strongly. One infographic the delegation saw was created by information designer Arun Ganesh, who was also a highly frustrated user of public transport. The official map for bus routes in Chennai is complex, to say the least: a degree in orienteering is handy if you’re one of the four million travellers needing to decipher the mish-mash of 5,000 separate buses and bus routes. Given that the government’s map has been “under construction” for six years, Ganesh took matters into his own hands. He used crowdsourcing to get travellers to map their local routes and upload the details onto an online application he created. Around 600 people took part, and within three days Ganesh had enough information to construct a clear graphic map that showed bus journeys, as well as – crucially – areas that weren’t serviced. The map is available online.

Uncharted territory

Back in the UK, the NHS, charities and local government are just some who have been interested

in employing McCandless’s approach. Perhaps the interest comes in the acknowledgement that most of us are never too far away from a computer screen and, as it’s on the screen that infographics really come to life, this is pretty much uncharted territory for advertisers. But even its most passionate proponent sounds a note of caution on the use of infographics for official purposes. “The danger is that infographics are quite powerful, and the quality of design gives a seal of authenticity and authority that people don’t question,” he says. This is why he always shares his data sources. “You can really lie with visualising statistics.”

Art and science are colliding – simultaneously, albeit in different forms – all over the world, and beneath the fun (or funny, or beautiful, or simple) exterior, it feels that something important is going on. There is a sea change in how we experience and use information. Morgan Clendaniel, deputy editor of *GOOD* magazine, is alive to this. He’s concerned that the explosion of the medium could dilute its effectiveness. “I’m worried that if people make bad infographics – us included – that it will zap the power of the medium.” He is aware, too, that the format could facilitate the dumbing down of information. The point is to distil knowledge into a shape, rather than obfuscate with a torrent of words – but with those boundaries, it’s never possible to show every detail.

“We’re working with finite space, and when we’re talking about something complicated, we can leave something out in a responsible way,” he says. “That’s why it’s the tip of the iceberg, and not the whole thing.” The infographic, in its best form, should invite a closer look. And that’s where the viewer picks up the responsibility.

– THE INDEPENDENT

ENTERTAINMENT

True Grit

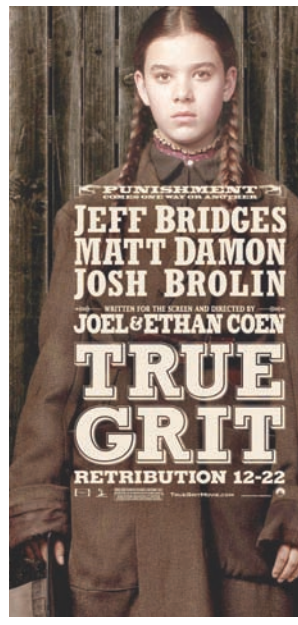
TRUE Grit is one of those movies that does everything so well, that you hardly notice that it is doing it. The best way to describe this film is to say that it is smooth. From start to finish there is a definite sense of purpose to every shot and every piece of dialogue, and things just click. The Coen Brothers are at their finest with True Grit, and they are helped by some of the best performances of the year by the stars and supporting cast. There is no fat on this film. Multiple characters are introduced - some for no

DIRECTOR: Joel and Ethan Coen
CAST: Jeff Bridges, Matt Damon, Josh Brolin, Nicholas Sadler, Bruce Green

more than a few minutes - and yet they are memorable and handled by talented actors who understand what the Coens are looking for, and they deliver. Many people have already criticised this film without seeing it, because the original 1969 John Wayne version is considered a classic. While purists may never be convinced that a remake was in order, this True Grit is not like

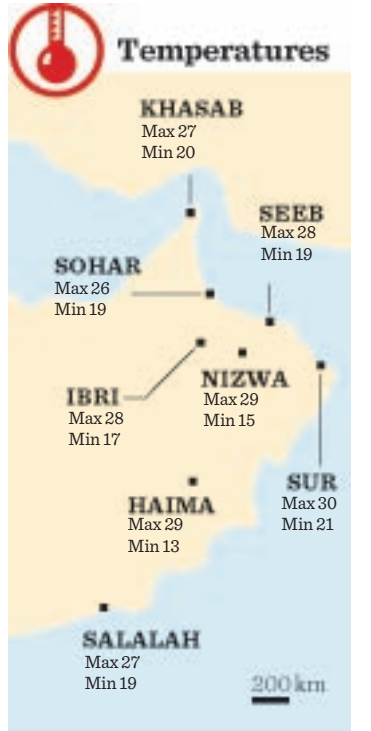
the original. In fact it is not like any other movie this year. It is arguably the best Western made in at least the last decade, and it stands among the best Westerns of all time - it is that good. The year is packed with Oscar contenders, and while True Grit may or may not win that honour, it certainly deserves a place in the discussion, as do the majority of those involved.

The Coens can be something of an acquired taste. They do not make movies that are meant for the popcorn crowd, and for as many fans as they win, they tend to alienate others. But of all the films Joel and Ethan Coen have made, True Grit may be the most complete. No Country For Old Men won them an Oscar in 2007, but True Grit may be their best film yet.



WEATHER

Mainly clear skies over most of the Sultanate. EXPECTED WINDS Along the coastal areas of Oman sea winds will be northeasterly light to moderate during day becoming variable light at night and over the rest of the Sultanate winds will be southerly to southeasterly light to moderate. SEA STATE Slight over all of Oman's coasts with maximum wave height of 1.25 metres. SURFACE VISIBILITY Good over most of the Sultanate.

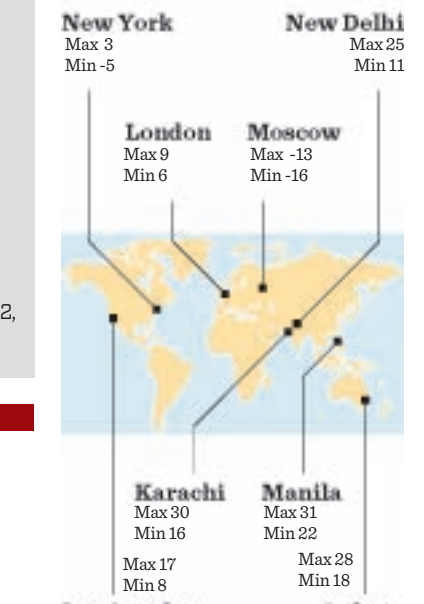


CINEMA SCHEDULE

CC CITY CINEMA advertisement with movie listings for Al Shatti, Ruwi, and Sohar locations. Includes titles like Gnomeo & Juliet 3D, Hello Cairo, and True Grit.

BAHJA CINEMA advertisement with movie listings for Unknown (Drama/Thriller) and Open Season 3 (Animation/Kids).

STARS CINEMA advertisement with movie listings for Stars Cinema 1 (Main), Stars Cinema 2, Stars Cinema 3, and Stars Cinema 4.



TV SCHEDULE

MOVIES section featuring 'Watching the Detectives' on Star Movies with a 2100hrs ON STAR MOVIES logo.

FACTUAL section with a grid of movie titles and times.

ANIMAL PLANET section with a grid of movie titles and times.

ENTERTAINMENT section with a grid of movie titles and times.

STAR MOVIES section with a grid of movie titles and times.

BBC ENT. section with a grid of movie titles and times.

STAR PLUS section with a grid of movie titles and times.

Room - Women Directors section featuring 'Choti Bahu' on Zee TV with a 1930 hrs ON ZEE TV logo.

DISCOVERY section with a grid of movie titles and times.

STAR PLUS section with a grid of movie titles and times.

CARTOON NETWORK section with a grid of movie titles and times.

DISNEY section with a grid of movie titles and times.

CODENAME: KIDS NEXT DOOR advertisement featuring cartoon characters and a 1525hrs ON CARTOON NETWORK logo.

Table with columns: FILM NO, ARRIVALS FROM, ETA, FILM NO, ARRIVALS FROM, ETA. Lists flight arrivals for Wednesday.

Table with columns: FILM NO, DEPARTURES TO, ETA, FILM NO, DEPARTURES TO, ETA. Lists flight departures for Wednesday.

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YOUR BIRTHDAY



Dakota Fanning
BORN today, you always have big ideas bouncing around in your head, and you are never more content than when you are trying to flesh out those ideas as fully as possible and see what may come of them as a result. Despite the fact that you can be rather strict and regimented in your behaviour, and that you prefer to do things by the book, you are also quite able to do things in a free and unplanned manner when circumstances require it of you – and when you do, you have a way of turning straw into gold. While some who enjoy an early start may burn out prematurely, you can count on a kind of longevity that will allow you to live and learn for a long time – and to enjoy almost every stage of success as you do so. You know how to make the best out of seemingly accidental developments.
Also born on this date are **Dakota Fanning, actress; Peter Fonda, actor; George Frideric Handel, composer; Michael Dell, computer mogul; Patricia Richardson, actress; William L. Shirer, historian; Majel Barrett-Roddenberry, actress.**

PISCES
[Feb. 19-March 20]

You're on the trail of something that will make a big difference to you when it comes to light. Be ready to make some quick decisions.

ARIES
[March 21-APRIL 19]

You are likely to value what you have to say more than others, but truly what you have to say will make a difference when the time is right.

T AURUS
[APRIL 20-MAY 20]

Something you think is lighthearted is not likely to be taken in the same way by those who are most affected by its evolution.

GEMINI
[MAY 21-JUNE 20]

It's your call, but the decision to do or not to do what seems a no-brainer isn't likely to be forgotten quickly. Use all necessary care.

CANCER
[JUNE 21-JULY 22]

Your advice will help someone close to you reach a personal goal. You'll be inspired to reach higher as a result.

LEO
[JULY 23-AUG. 22]

You may not even remember a minor mistake made long ago that comes back to affect you in ways both direct and indirect.

VIRGO
[AUG. 23-SEPT. 22]

You may feel as though someone is intentionally leaving you in the dark, but the truth is that he or she knows even less than you.

LIBRA
[SEPT. 23-OCT. 22]

Your usual hunger for certain activities is likely to be far more acute, and you'll want to satisfy it in the quickest possible way.

SCORPIO
[OCT. 23-NOV. 21]

The best way to tell someone what he or she doesn't want to hear is to say it quickly, simply and with respectful sensitivity.

SAGITTARIUS
[NOV. 22-DEC. 21]

Every now and then, it's good for you to do what doesn't come naturally – and this is one of those times. Make a real effort.

CAPRICORN
[DEC. 22-JAN 19]

You're likely to catch up with those who have been privy to certain pieces of key information for quite some time.

AQUARIUS
[JAN. 20-FEB. 18]

You can come on strong with those who have been overy aggressive. Confidence makes all the difference – and you have that in spades.

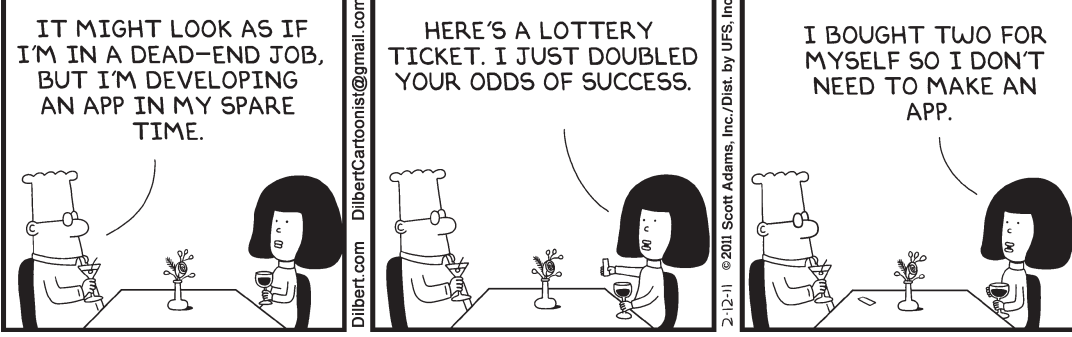
BORN LOSER



BIG NATE



DILBERT



TARZAN



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KIDSPOT



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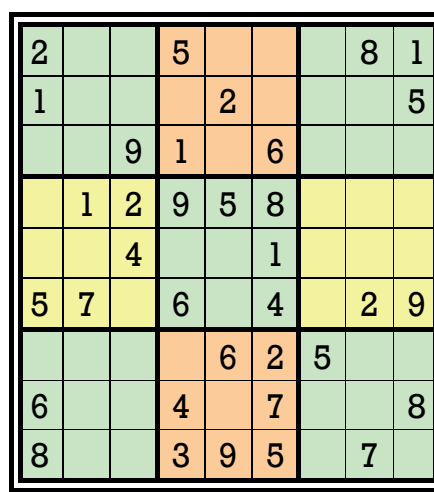


WITH LOVE



MUSEUM
Bait Al Baranda, Corniche (without app. Bhil marked). Open from Saturday to Thursday 8am to 1pm and 4 to 6pm.
Natural History Museum: Al Khuwair, Tel: 24600487. Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm; Thursday: 9am to 1pm.
Museum of Oman Heritage (former Oman Museum), Madinat Al Alam, Sat. Wed 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday - 9am to 1pm, Tel: 24600946
Armed Forces Museum: Bait Al Fajr, Tel: 24832801. Open from Saturday to Thursday: 8am to 1pm
Children's Science Museum: Bait Al Qurum, Tel: 24605388. Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm
Oman-French Museum: near Muscat Police Station, Tel: 24739613.
Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm.
Bait Al Zubair, Muscat: Tel: 24736688, baitalzubair@omnet.com
Open from Saturday to Thursday: 9:30am to 1pm and evenings from 4pm to 7pm.
National Museum Ruwi: Tel: 24701289.
Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm
Sahar Fort Museum: Tel: 26844758.
Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8 to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm

SUDOKU



HOW TO PLAY
Fill the empty cells with the numbers 1 to 9, so that each number appears once in each row, column and area.
— Seven Galaxies

Previous puzzle Solution

7	3	8	5	9	4	1	2	6
6	2	9	1	7	8	3	4	5
5	4	1	3	2	6	7	8	9
8	5	2	7	3	9	4	6	1
4	1	7	6	8	2	9	5	3
3	9	6	4	5	1	2	7	8
9	7	4	8	6	3	5	1	2
2	8	5	9	1	7	6	3	4
1	6	3	2	4	5	8	9	7

MIND GAMES

ACES ON BRIDGE

East's call spills the contract's beans

THOMAS Fuller, an English churchman, historian and author who died in 1661, said, "A gift, with a kind countenance, is a double present."
In this deal, East's double was a gift to his opponents.
How should South plan the play in four spades? West leads a low heart. East wins with his king, cashes the ace, and shifts to the diamond nine.
After North opened one club, East correctly made a takeout double (which was preferable to a one-heart overcall). Then South might have redoubled to show 10-plus points. But he decided to describe his hand with a one-spade response, which did not limit his hand to nine points. Now West should have competed with two hearts. If East had four hearts and a singleton club, they were going to win a lot of tricks in a heart contract. Note that five hearts would have gone down only two. When North raised spades, South made a game-try with three diamonds. North, with 14 points, two aces, four trumps, and nice clubs, had no hesitation in jumping to four spades.
Declarer, with two hearts and one club to concede, had to play the trump suit without loss. With nine trumps missing the queen, the a priori odds favour cashing the ace and king. However, that could not be right here.

02-18-11
North ♠ A 7 6 2
♥ 7 3
♦ A 4 3
♣ K Q J 10

West ♠ 10
♥ Q 9 8 5 2
♦ 7 2
♣ 9 8 6 5 3

East ♠ Q 9 3
♥ A K J 10
♦ 9 8 6 5
♣ A 4

South ♠ K J 8 5 4
♥ 6 4
♦ K Q J 10
♣ 7 2

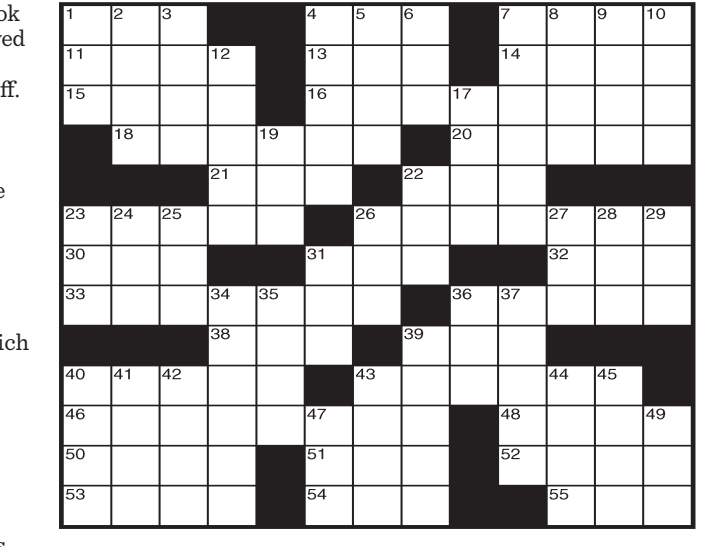
Dealer: North
Vulnerable: Both

South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ All pass

Opening lead: ♥ 5

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
1 Aardvark prey
4 Kernel holder
7 Rum-soaked cake
11 Scan
13 Web site
14 Fifty-fifty
15 Like a pittance
16 Did not veto
18 Kick back
20 Scrumptious
21 Leave speechless
22 Aunt or bro.
23 Upholstery choice
26 Sparkling
30 Byron work
31 Greet, as a dog
32 Billy the —
33 Paid attention
36 Pool member of yore
38 Kind of rack
39 Fitting
40 Aspirin targets
43 Fiesta decor
46 Strategy (2 wds.)
48 Mislaid
50 On a rampage
51 — it up (have some laughs)
52 Luxury resorts
53 Like an
- optimist's outlook
54 Ron who played Tarzan
55 Corporate suff.
- DOWN**
1 Upper limb
2 Not 'en once
3 Container weight
4 Radium discoverer
5 Aloud
6 Diner sandwich
7 Happen to
8 Car rental name
9 Borscht base
10 Warhol or Rooney
12 Dental woe
17 Piece of news
19 Athena's symbol
22 Gas-pump abbr.
23 Pludge
24 Spud st.
25 Butterfly catcher's need
26 Traipse about
27 DDE
28 Extended family
29 Tokyo, once
31 Freshly painted
34 Pert product
35 Briefcase closer



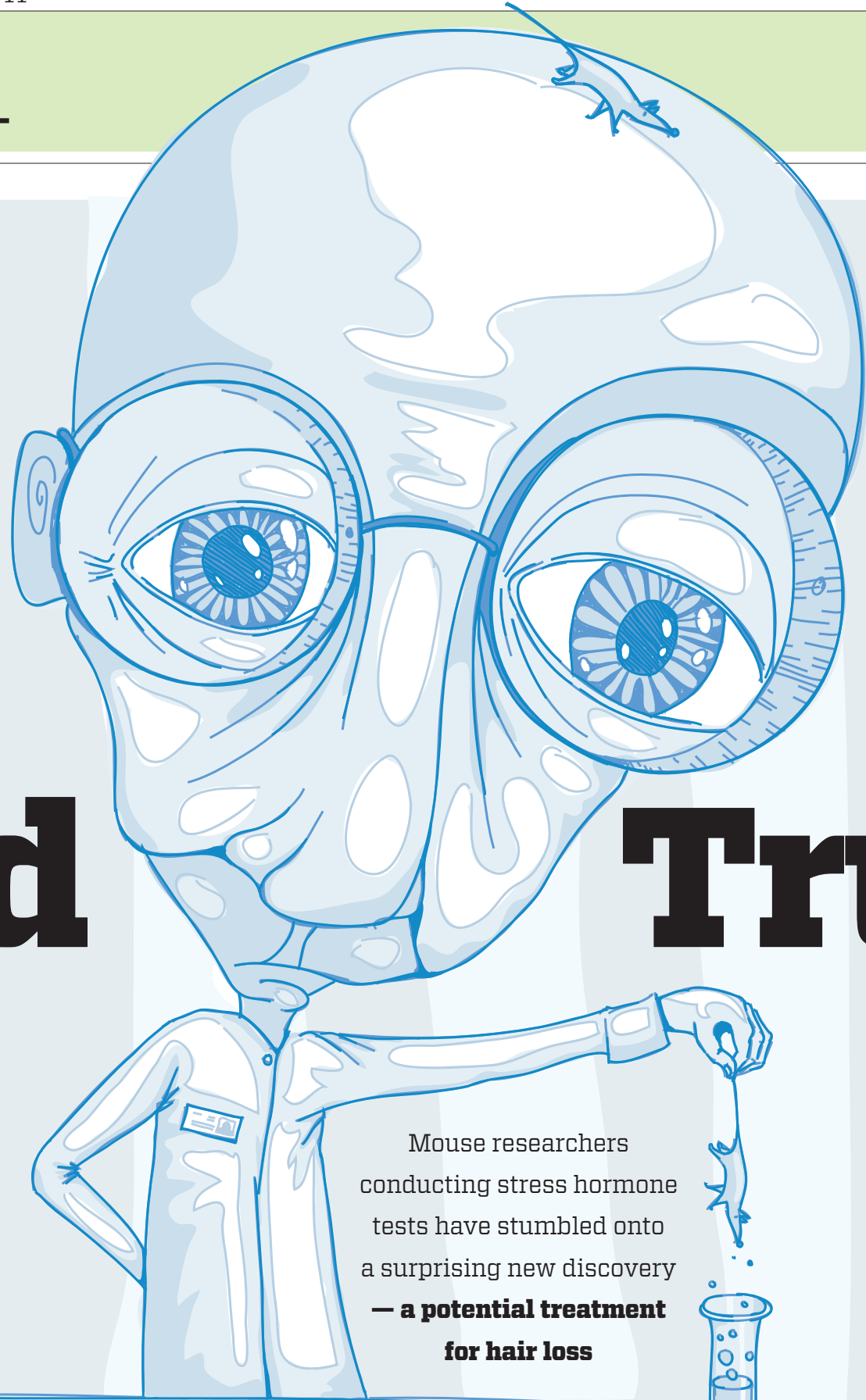
- 36 Bask at the beach
37 Mallard cousins
39 Small-time
40 Seaweed extract
41 Hunter's garb
42 RN employers
43 Newman or Simon
44 Oryx relative
45 Mighty — oak
47 Wood ash product
49 PC button

Answer to previous puzzle

COW	MHO	PUC	
AHSO	PEN	INST	
RICKS	HAS	CUTE	
GNASH	DEGAS		
OAR	ALETA	URE	
AFAR	FAIR		
VERITY	ANALOG		
JAIL	SPIN		
SUB	TALON	SKI	
BURRO	JOINS		
ROOT	SPHAGNUM		
ARNE	OPE	LETS	
MESS	NYE	EW	

EXTRA

Bald Truth



Mouse researchers conducting stress hormone tests have stumbled onto a surprising new discovery — a potential treatment for hair loss

Scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Veterans Administration were working with genetically altered mice that typically develop head-to-tail baldness as a result of overproducing a stress hormone.

The experiment wasn't focused on hair loss. Instead, it was designed to study a chemical compound that blocks the effects of stress on the gut. The researchers treated the bald mice for five days with the compound and then returned them to the cages, where they scampered about with several furry mice from a control group.

Three months later, the scientists went back to the cage to conduct additional experiments. They were surprised by what they saw inside — all of the mice had full heads and backs of hair. The once-bald mice, eventually identified through ear tags, were indistinguishable from their normal, furry cage mates.

Dr Million Mulugeta, co-director of the preclinical stress biology programme at UCLA, said he looked inside the cage and at first wondered why the bald mice weren't there. "I asked my colleague, 'How come these mice aren't distinguishable from the others?'" he said. "We went back to our data log, and we realised

all the mice had grown hair. It was a totally unexpected finding."

The serendipitous discovery was reported in the online medical journal PLoS One.

Already the research is drawing a mixed response from dermatologists and hair-loss researchers. Dr Melissa Piliang, a dermatologist at the Cleveland Clinic, cautioned that the findings of a mouse study may not be applicable to humans, but she said that the results may spur more study of the role stress might play in human hair loss.

"We've certainly seen patients whose hair worsened when they are under a lot of stress," Piliang said. "But what we don't know is whether some of this genetic hair loss is particularly affected by stress. I think it's hopeful for future research and treatment."

But Dr George Cotsarelis, dermatologist, said any treatment developed from the research would probably be useful only for hair loss related to stress, like that caused by one-time events, rather than as a treatment for genetic baldness. "It's difficult to say that it's going to lead to a new treatment," he said. Mulugeta said he is hopeful the findings will lead to new avenues of hair-loss research. The team decided to repeat the experiment several times. Each



We've seen patients whose hair worsened when they are under a lot of stress. But what we don't know is whether some of this genetic hair loss is particularly affected by stress. It's hopeful for future research

Dr Melissa Piliang
Dermatologist

time, bald mice treated with tiny doses of the compound for five days grew new hair in just a few weeks. In another series of experiments, the compound was injected into young mice before their hair fell out. Those mice never went bald, suggesting the compound not only has the potential

to grow hair but may also prevent age-related hair loss. The effect also appeared to persist after only one series of treatments. The scientists continued to observe the mice for four months — a long time in the two-year life span of a mouse. The new hair remained on the once-bald mice, and the mice that were treated to prevent hair loss never went bald.

The duration of the effect is important, because current hair-loss prevention remedies — including minoxidil (sold under the brand name Rogaine) and finasteride (sold as Propecia) — require regular use to maintain what is typically described as only a modest benefit.

Still, Cotsarelis cautioned that the hair growth cycles are very different in mice and humans, so one could draw only limited conclusions from the research. Mulugeta agreed that any treatment for humans is, at best, years away. "We are at the early stage of the work," he said. "We have a very strong observation, but we don't know whether this effect could be seen in humans. How does it act? All of these things have to be worked out, but we intend to follow through."

The mice used in the experiments

had been genetically altered to overproduce a stress hormone called corticotrophin-releasing factor, or CRF. To block the action of CRF, the researchers injected the mice with a peptide called astressin-B. The experiment was designed to measure how much the peptide would inhibit the effects of stress on the colon.

The mechanism by which the peptide triggered hair growth isn't known, Mulugeta said. The agent appears to be acting on stress hormone receptors in the skin and near, or within, the hair follicle. "The hair follicle in these mice is inactive," he said. "Something has turned on that cycle to put it back into an active phase, a hair-growing phase."

Mulugeta also noted that in addition to preventing hair loss, the agent affected the mice's skin pigment, suggesting the compound may have the potential to affect hair color, including gray hair.

"The evidence to show that hair loss is not a permanent loss is shown very strongly in this study, and that by itself is very important," he said. "The antagonist really triggers a mechanism that covers a lot of biological phenomena, including hair growth and hair colour. We certainly intend to continue the research." — Tara Parker Pope/THE NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

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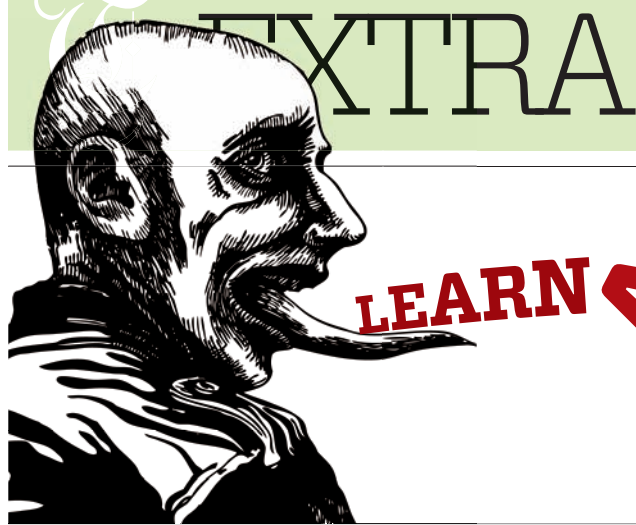
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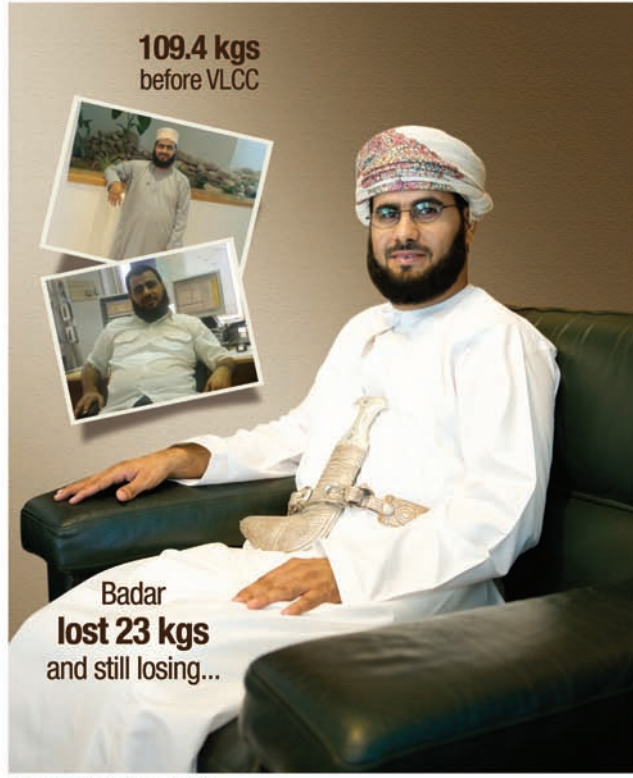


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Studies claim speaking two languages wards off Alzheimer's and helps to keep the brain young

Speaking a second language may slow the rate at which the brain declines with age, showing that bilingual people are better protected against Alzheimer's disease than people who use only one language.

Several studies have now demonstrated a clear link between using a second language and cognitive decline, which can be explained by the idea that bilingualism acts like a "mental gymnasium" that keeps the brain active in later life, scientists said.

The latest study, presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, found bilingual patients with probable Alzheimer's were more likely to have delayed symptoms compared to monolingual patients. In fact, the effect of speaking a second language produced a stronger effect on delaying the onset of Alzheimer's than any drug currently used to control

the disease, said Ellen Bialystok, professor of psychology at York University in Toronto, Canada.

"The finding of a four- to five-year delay in the onset of symptoms of Alzheimer's disease is dramatic. There are no pharmacologic interventions that have shown comparable effects." Our interpretation of the present findings is that bilingualism is a cognitively demanding condition that contributes to cognitive reserve in much the same way as do other stimulating intellectual and social activities."

The researchers believe the effect is directly connected with using a second language, rather than a side-effect of differences in occupation or education between bilingual and monolingual people. Experiments suggest it has something to do with the extra mental effort that goes into using a second language, Professor Bialystok said.

"Being bilingual has certain cognitive benefits and boosts the performance of the brain especially one of the most important areas known as the executive control system. We know that this system deteriorates with age but we have found at every stage of life it functions better in bilinguals. They perform at a higher level."

"It is rather like a reserve tank in a car. When you run out of fuel, you can keep going for longer because there is a bit more in the safety tank," she said.

Judith Kroll, professor of psychology at Penn State University in Pennsylvania, said recent studies have shown that juggling two or more languages helps to exercise the brain and keeps it fit in the elderly. The bottom line is that bilingualism is good for you.

Bilingual people engage in "code switching", mental negotiations between which language they are using.

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TEN'S TON



For the past six weeks I've struggled with the bat but I've worked really hard in the last two weeks and it was just one of those days. It is a really good deck and I picked up the ball pretty early and it was one of those days when everything came naturally

RYAN TEN DOESCHATE
MAN OF THE MATCH

RUNS
119

BALLS
110

SIXES
3

FOURS
9

2



FURIOUS PONTING
SMASHES TV
AFTER BEING
RUN OUT

3



ROOKIE JUNAID
READY TO
SEIZE THE
CHANCE

6



FULLY-FIT
KALLIS BLASTS
SOUTH AFRICA'S
CRITICS

2011 WORLD CUP



AUSSIES CONFIDENT OF CRACKING SPIN RIDDLE

Australia, who managed just 28 in the opening 10 overs on Monday, will need a brisk start from Watson and Brad Haddin against New Zealand who may also open the attack with a spinner, like Zimbabwe. Off-spinner McCullum did it in New Zealand's win over Kenya, giving away just 15 runs in his four overs



AHMEDABAD: Australia captain Ricky Ponting is optimistic his batsmen will solve the spin puzzle ahead of bigger matches in a quest for winning a fourth successive World Cup.

"I think the more we play and the more we get accustomed to these conditions the better our performance will be against spin," said Ponting, under whose captaincy Australia have not lost a match in the last two World Cups. Defending champions Australia opened their campaign with a 91-run victory over Zimbabwe in a day-night match in Ahmedabad on Monday, but their performance against spin left a lot to be desired.

In-form opener Shane Watson (79) and Michael Clarke (58 not out) hit impressive half-centuries to guide Australia to 262-6 but most of the batsmen struggled to score freely against Zimbabwe's slow bowlers.

Australia have been finding it difficult to dominate spin on low, slow pitches since they lost their opening warm-up game against India in Bangalore.

They face another spin test when they clash with trans-Tasman rivals New Zealand in their second match in Nagpur on Friday, with their opponents having quality spinners in Daniel Vettori and Nathan McCullum.

"We know that spin factor will be a big one in this tournament. We know these conditions and know how to play in India or Sri Lanka," Ponting said after Aus-

tralia's 24th successive win in the World Cup.

"We need to play better (against spin). We need to be at the top of our game as the tournament progresses and I think are not there quite yet."

Australia, who managed just 28 in the opening 10 overs on Monday, will need a brisk start from Watson and Brad Haddin against New Zealand who may also open the attack with a spinner, like Zimbabwe.

Off-spinner McCullum did it in New Zealand's crushing win over Kenya in Chennai on Sunday, giving away just 15 runs in his four overs.

"Hopefully, we can get off to a much better start next time and take pressure off the middle order," said Watson, named man of the match against Zimbabwe.

The Australian skipper, who described the victory over Zimbabwe as "solid" rather than "spectacular", had reasons to be satisfied with the performance of his pace trio of Mitchell Johnson, Shaun Tait and Brett Lee.

The pacemen bowled their hearts out to virtually reduce the match to a no-contest with their sharp performances as Zimbabwe were dismissed for 171. Johnson was the pick of the bowlers with 4-19 off 9.2 overs.

When asked what was the main feature of their pace attack, Ponting said: "The variations that we have in our attack. (Left-arm paceman) Johnson and Tait were more consistent."

"Tait, with his slinging action, swings the new ball and reverses the old one, and this was probably one of the best spells I have seen Johnson bowl in One-day cricket."

"I thought Johnson was outstanding and Tait's just working up to match fitness so to get eight or nine overs out of him was a real bonus. The attack has variations and the ability to break partnerships."

Tait, bowling in short spells, finished with 2-34 while Lee took one wicket. Both of them have recently returned to One-day side after recovering from injuries and their form augurs well for Australia. — AFP



We need to play better against spin and we need to be on top of our game

FURIOUS PONTING SMASHES TV AFTER BEING RUN OUT

AFURIOUS Ricky Ponting took out his frustration at being run out in Australia's opening World Cup match by smashing a television set with his bat in the team's dressing room.

The incident during the Group A match against Zimbabwe was reported to the sport's governing

body but an International Cricket Council source said yesterday "it was unlikely the matter would be taken any further".

On Monday, the Australian captain was found short of his crease at the non-striking end by a direct throw from the mid-wicket boundary by the lanky Chris Mpo-

fu while attempting a second run. Ponting was seen talking angrily to himself as he walked back to the pavilion and it appears his emotions spilled over once he was back in the dressing room, where he saw footage of his dismissal being replayed on TV.

"It's true. We have already in-

formed the ICC and the Australian cricket authorities about the incident," Gujarat Cricket Association secretary Rajesh Patel said before adding that the incident was a minor one. Australia beat Zimbabwe by 91 runs in their World Cup opener at the Sardar Patel Stadium. — Reuters

Sternier tests ahead for Australia

AFTER two successive defeats in the warm-up games, Australia would have been satisfied to get Zimbabwe out of their way. While they would have gone in as favourites anyway, the warm-up results could have led to some questions being asked of them and the relief would have been palpable. It was interesting to watch the openers bat in the manner they did. 65 runs in the first 20 overs reminded me of the times when the use of field restrictions had not been discovered by teams.

But the Aussies clearly had a plan based on the fact that Zimbabwe were to look to throw their best spinners upfront.

Once the likes of Prosper Utseyra

and Raymond Price were negotiated and a good, strong foundation was built, Australia could rely on Michael Clarke to hold his end up and the others to bat aggressively around that. Mitchell Johnson bowled one of his best spells in recent times then, to demolish any chance that Zimbabwe would have hoped for. There were sterner tests ahead but for now, Australia will take this win.

It was interesting to see that the think-tank resisted their temptation to tinker with their batting order till the very end.

One got the sense that the plan was to ensure that all the top-order batsmen were back to their best bat-

COMMENTARY



MARK WAUGH

ting forms before the real games begin. Australia's next game is against New Zealand, a side which has had its own form-issues. John Wright's appointment as their coach has allowed them a bit of a comeback, but where he could definitely help the side is with their preparation in India, a team he had coached for five years.

Fortunately for New Zealand, the batting is slowly beginning to turn the corner. Martin Guptill has had three good games ever since arriving in India while Jesse Ryder possesses the ability to explode against any kind of bowling on his day. Where New Zealand will look at more consistency is with the

batting of Brendon McCullum and Ross Taylor, both of who have had some ups interspersed with many more downs with the bat. The duo will be vital as far as the Kiwis are concerned. It was a surprise to see Australia leave out Doug Bollinger from the first game given that he has a fair knowledge of these conditions. I sense that Bollinger could play against New Zealand as the side will look to rotate the pace bowlers in these hot and humid conditions.

One of the pre-tournament favourites South Africa will take on West Indies, a team that has given them some hard moments in the World Cup. West Indies have won a couple of World Cup games against

South Africa and both were rather vital games — one in the quarter-final of 1996 and then first game of the 2003 World Cup, contributing in no small way in their ouster.

This time around though, the hype around South Africa is much lesser and that should help them no end — at least till we get to the knock-outs. The likes of Jacques Kallis and Hashim Amla are not only in the kind of patch that is usually described as purple but have also had the experience of playing in the sub-continent in recent times. That should put them on a firm pedestal to win this encounter. Unless, of course, Chris Gayle and Kieron Pollard have other ideas. — PMS

2011 WORLD CUP



ROOKIE JUNAID READY TO SEIZE THE CHANCE

BARELY a month ago rookie pacer Junaid Khan was planning to watch the World Cup on television but So-hail Tanveer's injury has given him the chance to play on the biggest stage. The 21-year-old is now aiming to step into the shoes of his friend and fellow new-ball bowler at Under-19 level Mohammed Amir, who is serving a five-year ban on charges of corruption.

"I wish I was given a chance with Amir," said the pacer from Sawabi, a small town in Pakistan's troubled North-West Frontier Province.

"But it's fate. I am happy to be part of the Pakistan team and want to do my best." "We started our careers almost at the same time and were part of Pakistan's junior team for the Under-19 World Cup in 2008 when we became good friends," said Junaid of Amir, a fellow left-arterner.

Amir modelled his action legendary left-arm pacer Wasim Akram, but Junaid learnt from another Pakistan great, pacer Imran Khan, by watching YouTube clips.

"When I started cricket I used to watch Imran's videos on YouTube and I was enamoured by his personality and his bowling and learnt a lot of things through the website as there were limited opportunities in my town," said Junaid.

Former chief selector Iqbal Qasim said it had been difficult to choose between Amir and Junaid. "When we were picking the national team in 2009, it was difficult to pick one of the two promising pacemen, both left-armers and with huge potential, but in the end Amir showed more spark and was selected," said Qasim.

But the selectors knew it would be only a matter of time before Junaid got his chance. His 167 wickets in just 35 first-class matches are ample proof of his qualities as a fast bowler. When Pakistan take the field at the Mahinda Rajapakse stadium in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, only Junaid will have an idea of what to expect from the pitch as he played there for Pakistan "A" last year.

He took nine wickets in the match in a lost cause against Sri Lanka "A" but that was enough to catch the eye of the selectors. Junaid may not get his chance in Pakistan's first match against Kenya today with Pakistan set to name a full-strength side but is aiming to seize his chance when he gets an opportunity. "I am happy to play in such a big event and whenever I am given a chance I will try to do something special," Junaid vowed. Pakistan coach Waqar Younis praised Junaid's energy levels. "Junaid has extraordinary energy levels and is bowling well. I am sure he will go places at international level," said Waqar Younis, another legendary Pakistan quick, who took 416 wickets in 262 ODIs. — AFP



THE AFRICAN FLAIR AND AMUSEMENT

Zimbabwe's Ray Price dances with teammate Chris Mpfu after Price dismissed Australia's David Hussey during their ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 Group A match in Ahmedabad. Zimbabwe would have lost the match to the defending champions but they relished every moment. This jig, a la Roger Milla of Cameroon, was intended for the spectators but unfortunately very few turned up for the match. Zimbabwe need to back their disciplined spin bowling with solid batting if they are to leave a mark at the World Cup, skipper Elton Chigumbura said after the match. The Zimbabwean batsmen failed to support their spinners as they could manage just 171. Big positive for Zimbabwe was their bowling as Left-arm spinner Price, off-spinner Utseya and leg-spinner Cremer conceded just 127 off their combined tally of 30 overs Zimbabwe coach Alan Butcher also said his team needed to put in a better batting performance in the remaining matches. — Reuters

Kiwis set to play on after quake disaster in Christchurch

NEW ZEALAND's cricketers at the World Cup were yesterday coming to terms with the devastating earthquake which rocked Christchurch and the tournament organisers planned an appropriate tribute.

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit New Zealand's second biggest city on Tuesday, killing at least 65 people and causing widespread damage.

The International Cricket Council (ICC), however, was confident that New Zealand would go ahead with their World Cup matches.

"It's very tragic really," an ICC spokesman said by phone.

"At this point of time, we can only

give our condolences to those affected. But we don't think it's going to have any impact on the cricket World Cup as of now."

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat said the earthquake badly damaged the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) office in Christchurch but the staff were not affected.

"We have already contacted the New Zealand Cricket's chief executive Justin Vaughan to express our concern for him, his staff and the people of Christchurch," Lorgat said in a statement.

"The news we have is that the NZC offices have been severely damaged but thankfully everyone

who works for NZC seems to have escaped without injury." "It's a helpless feeling but I will be discussing with the organisers of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 how we can most appropriately remember those who lost their lives or have been injured and affected when the Black Caps play their next match against Australia in Nagpur on Friday."

Pace bowler Hamish Bennett, who was born in Timaru, Brendon McCullum and coach John Wright have links to the area.

"The team was woken early in India to news of another Christchurch earthquake.

"Thoughts are with everyone and

hoping all are OK," NZC said in a Twitter post.

"Thoughts go out to the people of Christchurch today. Terrible thing to have happened again," batsman Martin Guptill posted on his page in the micro-blogging site.

"All immediate friends and family are (okay), but that doesn't detract from the fact that there have been fatalities," New Zealand media manager Ellery Tappin was quoted as saying by Cricinfo.

He was unavailable all day when Reuters attempted to contact him.

New Zealand beat Kenya by 10 wickets in their opening match on Sunday. — Reuters



At this point of time, we can only give our condolences. But we don't think it's going to have any impact on the World Cup

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2011 WORLD CUP

PAKISTAN

MATCH PREVIEW

BESIEGED PAKISTAN TAKE FRESH GUARD

KENYA



PAKISTAN coach Waqar Younis believes the recent spot-fixing scandal will not have a detrimental effect on their World Cup campaign which gets underway against Kenya here today.

Former Test captain Salman Butt and pacemen Mohammed Amir and Mohammed Asif were banned on charges of corruption relating to last year's Lord's Test against England. All three also face criminal prosecution. But Waqar said his team, who are in action for the first time since the bans were announced, are not worried about the past.

"Whatever happened last year is now history. This is a new place and an important tournament, so we want to be fully focused and start the event like India and New Zealand did," said Waqar.

Pakistan are also eager to put behind them their tragedy-hit 2007 tournament.

Four years ago, Pakistan suffered an embarrassing three-wicket defeat at the hands of outsiders Ireland in Kingston and crashed out in the first round. As if the humiliation was not enough, their English coach Bob Woolmer died the very next day, threatening the World Cup and putting the players under investigation by the Jamaican police who initially treated the death as murder.

Even after the death was declared as due to natural causes, Pakistani players came in for severe criticism from home fans who wanted them punished for their first round exit — their second in as many events.

Captain Shahid Afridi said his team will take all opponents here seriously.

"There have been so many upsets

in the World Cup in the past, like the one against Ireland four years ago, so we have that in mind and we will be on our toes in every match, be it Kenya or Sri Lanka," Afridi said.

The current Pakistan squad has only four survivors from that Irish defeat — Younis Khan, Umar Gul, Mohammed Hafeez and Kamran Akmal — but Afridi said no player has forgotten the shattering loss.

Not even Kenya's abject 10-wicket surrender to New Zealand in a Group A match in Chennai on Sunday, makes Afridi feel at ease.

"If they had a bad day then they can come hard on us. We will be geared up as our main aim is to win all our group matches," said Afridi of the first stage where Pakistan also face Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, Zimbabwe and Canada.

The top four teams qualify for the quarterfinals from each of the two groups. Pakistan opener Ahmed Shahzad and middle-order batsman Mishbah ul-Haq hit centuries in the first warm-up match against Bangladesh last week and senior batsman Younis Khan scored 80 in a lost cause against England. Younis and Misbah will be the key in providing a solid base for hard-hitters Afridi, Umar Akmal and Abdul Razaq, who can run riot in the final overs and in the batting powerplay. Kenya captain Jimmy Kamande vowed to have a different approach against Pakistan, after his team was shot out for a paltry 69 against New Zealand.

"Next game, it'll be different opposition and a different approach from us. I would be happy as long as we improve each and every game," said Kamande, whose team reached the semifinal in the 2003 World

Cup.

"We didn't express ourselves (in the first match) but we will show improvements," said Kamande, whose team has never met Pakistan in a World Cup match having been a regular feature in the World Cup since 1996. Pakistan have won all their five One-day Internationals against Kenya.

Squads:
Pakistan: Shahid Afridi (capt), Mishbah ul-Haq, Mohammed Hafeez, Kamran Akmal, Younis Khan, Asad Shafiq, Umar Akmal, Abdul Razaq, Abdur Rehman, Saeed Ajmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz, Junaid Khan, Ahmed Shahzad. Coach: Waqar Younis

Kenya: Jimmy Kamande (capt), Seren Waters, Alex Obanda, David Obuya, Collins Obuya, Steve Tikolo, Tammy Mishra, Rakep Patel, Morris Ouma, Thomas Oduyo, Nehemiah Odhiambo, Elijah Otieno, Peter Ongondo, Shem Ngoche, James Ngoche. Coach: Eldine Baptiste (WIS)

Pitch condition: The second pitch in the stadium, the first was used for the Sri Lanka-Canada clash on Sunday, is likely to have bounce and pace with a tinge of grass. Spinners will also play a role as the match progresses.

Umpires: Nigel Llong (ENG) and Tony Hill (NZL)

TV umpire: Daryl Harper (AUS)

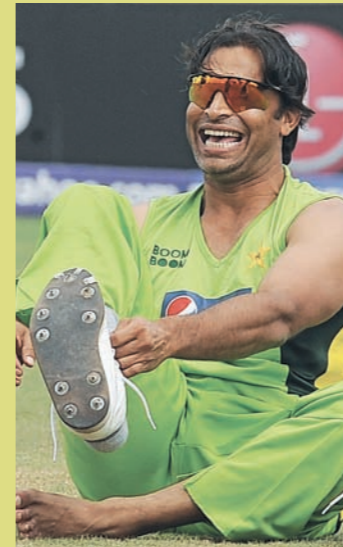
Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)

-AFP

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Pakistan lead 5-0
The two teams have never played in the sub-continent or in the World Cups

- Although Pakistan have won each time they have played, it has more often been the Kenyan batting that has let them down. Their highest score against Pakistan in the five innings they have had is 179, and the last time they met, Kenya were shot out for a paltry 94.
- Pakistan cricket has seen some trying times since their successful World Cup campaign in 1992, but none so more acute than the current period. Unable to play at home, tainted by spot-fixing and other scandals, combined with a fusion over team and captaincy selections, and recent performances (LWWL) where they have lost more (10) than they have won (eight) in the last 12 months, could possibly distract them from the job at hand. Their performances against New Zealand and the convincing win over Bangladesh in the warm-up would help them although they did lose their last warm-up to England, capitulating to another five-wicket haul from Stuart Broad. However, with Pakistan, one never knows and they tend to come up with their best performance when



- least expected.
- Kenya will be smarting from their loss in the opening match against New Zealand in somewhat humiliating circumstances where the entire match lasted just over 30 overs. Their recent form (LWLWL) and their morale will be severely tested by Pakistan, especially the bowling attack, if Kenya end up batting first.
- Hambantota has hosted only

one match where the hosts, Sri Lanka, crushed Canada and one cannot look too much into how the pitch played either batting first or under the lights. However, given the history between Pakistan and Kenya, the team winning the toss may elect to field and try to expose the relative batting frailties of either side.

- Misbah-ul-Haq is the man in form for Pakistan with a couple of fifties against New Zealand and a century in the warm-up match against Bangladesh. He has donned the role of the finisher for Pakistan for a few years now, but if Pakistan were to chase, then it would be worrying for them if he did get a chance to finish.
- It is a reflection of the unfulfilled promise of the team when the grand old man of Kenyan cricket, the 39-year-old Steve Tikolo, is still the player around whom the batting and bowling tends to revolve. There have not been enough youngsters to challenge or ease his role in the team and, despite the poor showing against New Zealand, Tikolo has had good form in the warm-up games.



Veteran Kenyan vows to bounce back



Afridi promises World Cup for Pakistan

VETERAN batsman Steve Tikolo vowed yesterday that Kenya would lift themselves for their second World Cup match against Pakistan after their mauling at the hands of New Zealand.

Kenya were skittled out for just 69 — their lowest World Cup score and the fifth worst in tournament history — in Nagpur on Sunday in a match that was over in just 31.5 overs. Tikolo said professionals should know how to lift themselves after a big disappointment.

"As a top professional, for me if you are down it's the way you pick yourself up, and obviously we can pick ourselves up for the game on

Wednesday," said Tikolo, dismissed for just two during a miserable batting display.

"We lost the game. It wasn't a good day for us but the good thing that came out in the changing room was that the boys were very disappointed and that shows the mark of good professionals," he said.

Tikolo, who made his ODI debut in 1996, said the current team needed time to settle.

"We are a good side, a mixture of experience and youth, some of whom have never been to the World Cup before, so this set of players have been together for a short while," he said.

Not far off his 40th birthday, Tikolo is the second oldest player at the tournament behind 40-year-old Canadian John Davison.

"If you look at the past World Cups, the teams that we had in those tournaments had played together since 1996 up to 2003, so they were teams that had gelled well, but this team is new," said Tikolo.

He said internal problems in Kenyan cricket had affected the team, which upset the West Indies at the 1996 World Cup and went all the way to the semifinals in 2003.

"We did well in 2003, but we had our own internal problems. Obviously things could have been

handled better management-wise but right now I don't really want to dwell on that, I just want to look at this World Cup and move on," said Tikolo. Tikolo, who said captain Jimmy Kamande was fine after being hit in the nets, said the Kenyan team could improve with more opportunities.

"If you give the example of Sri Lanka, they were not a top side in the world but once they got opportunities, we see what cricket they are playing right now, so we too need more opportunities," said Tikolo. But he admitted Pakistan would be tough to beat in Hambantota, Sri Lanka.

"We know Pakistan are here to play good cricket and will be competitive and it's good to hear that the opposing captain has respect for us. I will pass that message to the boys so obviously the guys will be pumped up," said Tikolo.

The Kenyan said his team were not focused on the possibility of missing out on the next World Cup, after international cricket chiefs opted to trim the event to just ten nations from the current 14.

"We have put that on the back burner. We don't want to dwell on that right now, and think about Wednesday's (today's) game only," said Tikolo. —AFP

PAKISTAN captain Shahid Afridi vowed yesterday to win the World Cup for millions of weary fans back home who lost out on the showpiece when their country became a no-go zone.

International cricket has been suspended in Pakistan ever since the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore two years ago which left eight people dead and injured seven visiting players and their assistant coach.

Pakistan was among the four co-hosts of the 2011 World Cup but the International Cricket Council was forced to move the matches in the wake of attacks. "Not playing in our country is on our minds," Afridi said, ahead of his team's first match against Kenya today. "We feel for our nation, our people who are missing the World Cup.

"I think this is the main thing for us, so definitely we will try our level best to win, which is very important for us, and if we do that I hope some

cricket returns to our country sooner than later."

Besides the suspension of international cricket, Pakistan has also been hit by the spot-fixing scandal, which ended in lengthy bans on Salman Butt, Mohammed Asif and Mohammed Amir, and other disciplinary problems. Afridi admitted it was hard to keep the team in the right frame of mind against a background of such problems.

"It was difficult to keep the team settled in the beginning when we had all those issues," said Afridi, himself banned for two matches on charges of ball-tampering during a One-day match in Australia in 2010.

"We had to rebuild the team again but now a situation has come that our team is settled. We now have such a combination that people have hopes that this team can do something," said Afridi, who took over as captain in July last year.

The Pakistan Cricket Board delayed in retaining him for the World

Cup until he won his first One-day series in New Zealand earlier this month.

"It's difficult to be the captain in India or Pakistan with all that's happening, you have to make sacrifices. But my effort is always that I do well as captain or as player," said Afridi, who made his ODI debut against Kenya in 1996. In only his second One-day match, he hit a world record 37-ball hundred which still stands against Sri Lanka in Nairobi.

"I love Kenya and Kenyans," said Afridi, when asked about his team's opponents.

"I don't think we will be relaxed when we face them and I would like to be playing at our full strength."

That meant express paceman Shoaib Akhtar will share the new ball with Umar Gul or Abdul Razaq, with Wahab Riaz as fourth seamer. Afridi and Mohammed Hafeez will lead the spin department. —AFP

2011 WORLD CUP



FULLY-FIT KALLIS BLASTS SOUTH AFRICA'S CRITICS

JACQUES KALLIS injured his ribs during the recent Test series against India at home and did not bowl in South Africa's two World Cup warm-up games

JACQUES Kallis yesterday said he was fully fit for the opening World Cup clash against the West Indies and blasted critics for hanging the "chokers" tag around South African necks.

"Everything has gone according to plan," said Kallis ahead of tomorrow's match.

"I am 100 per cent fit for the match. In fact, all the guys in the team are fit. All 15 are available for selection."

Kallis, 35, injured his ribs during the recent Test series against India at home and did not bowl in South Africa's two World Cup warm-up games against Australia and Zimbabwe.

Kallis, the number one all-rounder in One-day cricket with 11,002 runs and 259 wickets from 307 matches, said it was unfair to suggest that South Africans crumbled under pressure.

"A lot is made in the media about the choker thing. We don't even think about it. I think the media uses this tag far too often, in fact every time the team loses a match," he said.

"They should go and look up the meaning of chokers in the dictionary first. This tag does not haunt us. Eleven of our 15 players will be playing their first World Cup so it's not something we are even thinking about." South Africa have yet to win One-day cricket's top prize despite making it to the semifinals three times.

Kallis said his team will be on top of their game against the West Indies. "They are a dangerous side," he said. "They have a few players

who can change the game on their day. We have been on top of them recently and played some good cricket.

"And that's what we will look to do again. Play well and put the pressure back on them."

Kallis also defended packing their World Cup side with three specialist spinners.

"We know that the wickets are going to help the spinners. Having three specialists gives us an advantage and a variety to choose from."

"We have not had a leg-spinner in our squad for a long time, the last time we had one was Paul Adams. A leg-spinner brings something different with him. We also have an off-spinner and a left-arm spinner."

"So we have a good variety which can be used differently according to the conditions. We have covered all bases and we just need to deliver the goods now."

Kallis dismissed suggestions that his side may be rusty after having to wait for nearly two-and-a-half weeks in India before playing their first game.

"Our preparation has been very good. In fact, we have never been as well prepared before at any World Cup. The guys are relaxed and raring to have a go. We are used to the conditions."

"We have been gelling as a unit. Each guy knows his role in the team. When you don't know where you fit, you tend to be nervous."

"As a senior player in the squad, I am telling the youngsters to enjoy every minute of it." — AFP



A lot is made in the media about the choker thing.

We don't even think about it.

I think the media uses this tag far too often



No pressure, no problem for South Africa: Botha

SOUTH Africa spinner Johan Botha believes seeing India being burdened with the tag of World Cup favourites can work in the Proteas' favour after years of enduring similar expectations.

South Africa were widely tipped to clinch the trophy on home ground in 2003, before a calamitous misinterpretation of the rain rule saw them fall to defeat against Sri Lanka in the first round.

In the Caribbean four years later, it was old enemy Australia who comfortably prevailed in the semifinals.

"I think in 2003 and 2007 we were favourites. This time there are not a lot of expectations from people back home," said Botha, according to the Press Trust of India. But within the team we believe we can go all the way in the tournament. So that's nice. We need to get into the knock-out round and if we have a few good games we can end up with the trophy.

"Lots of teams are favourites — India, Australia and Sri Lanka are a quality team. We can do our business."

Botha will have a key role to play in the tournament where spin is likely to have more penetration than his feared fast-bowling teammates Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel.

"In South Africa, seamers take all the wickets and spinners just control the game," said Botha, who was buoyed by a 3-2 win over India in South Africa in the One-day series in January.

"We will take a bit of confidence from that series. We played against world-class batsmen and spinners and it was a great preparation. Personally, it was really good to play and see where my game was."

"But we want to be bit more attacking and pick up wickets in the World Cup." South Africa can afford to field all three frontline spinners in some of the World Cup matches because they can deftly handle bowling powerplays, off-spinner Johan Botha said on Monday.

From a team that has not cared enough about spin bowling in the past, South Africa look determined to win their first World Cup as they arrived with three slow bowlers in Botha, left-arm spinner Robin Peterson and Pakistan-born leg-spinner Imran Tahir.

"It is very exciting for the guys," Botha told reporters after the team's training session on Monday. "I am looking forward to all three frontline spinners playing in some of the matches." — AFP

SMILE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

South African cricket captain Graeme Smith, centre, and teammates Wayne Parnell and Johan Botha pose with Indian HIV affected people during an ICC UNAIDS/ThinkWise partnership event at the Ferozshah Kotla stadium in New Delhi yesterday. South Africa takes on the West Indies in Match 7 of the Cricket World Cup on Thursday. — AFP



2011 WORLD CUP



BANGLADESH TIGERS REGROUP

BANGLADESH will take on Ireland in their next World Cup match on Friday with renewed confidence despite the opening defeat against India, under-fire batsman Tamim Iqbal (in picture) has said. The flamboyant Tamim, one of the keys to Bangladesh's success in the tournament, said the 87-run loss at India's hands last Saturday had not dented his team's psyche.

"We are not thinking about the India match at all," the opening batsman said. "We still have five matches left, and we are looking ahead. We are all very relaxed."

"We are now totally focused on the Ireland match."

Tamim top-scored with 70 as Bangladesh, chasing India's massive 370-4, replied with a spirited 283-9 in the day-night match at the Sher-e-Bangla stadium.

Tamim brushed aside criticism in the Bangladesh media

for playing an unusually dour innings with just three fours and a six when the team's need was for quick runs.

"I was not timing the ball well," he said. "Somehow the ball was not coming on to the bat that well. So I thought it better not to throw my wicket and just hang in there."

"One thing I believe is that even if I play 20-30 balls more, I can always recover my strike-rate later."

"The target of 371 was a huge one to chase. I thought if we could have got them around the 300-310 mark, we could have made a match out of it."

Tamim said his side was confident of doing well against Ireland, despite losing to them in 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean and the 2009 World Twenty20 in England.

"We have plans for each and every player in their side," he said. "We have played quite a few matches against them, and its the

same set of players they have got.

"We know their strengths and weaknesses. If we can execute our plans we will definitely win."

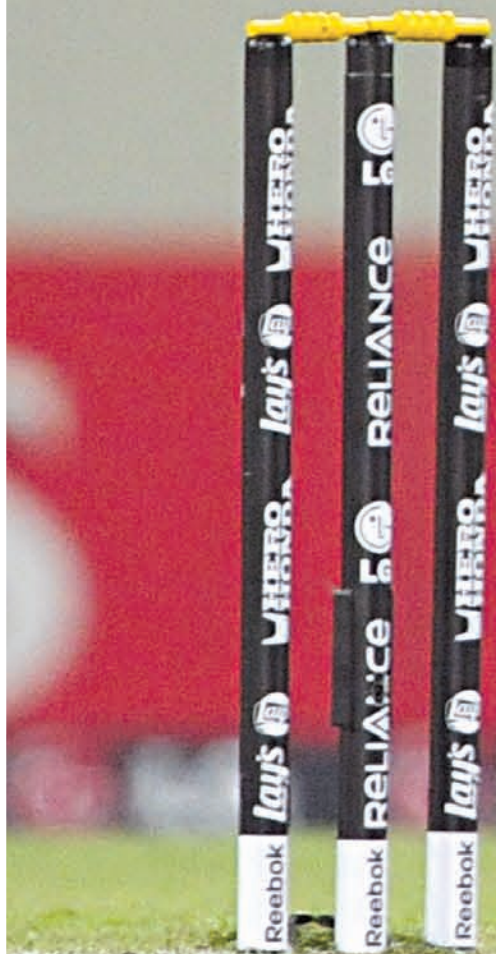
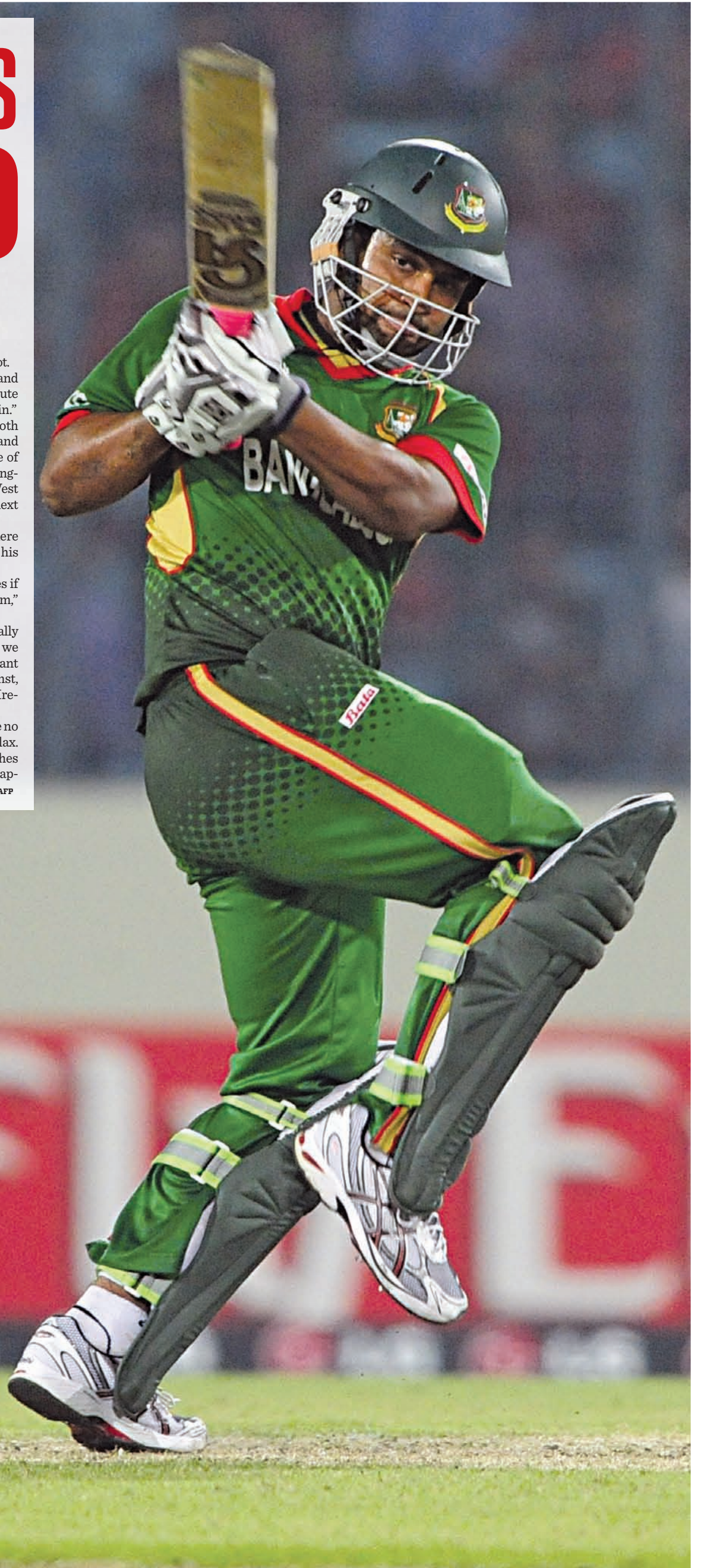
Bangladesh must beat both the non-Test nations, Ireland and the Netherlands, and one of the established sides from England, South Africa and the West Indies, to progress to the next round.

Tamim, however, said there was no pressure on him or his team.

"There are a lot of pressures if you keep thinking about them," he said.

"But the boys are mentally tough and ready. We know we have to play our best if we want to beat any team we play against, whether it's South Africa or Ireland."

"In the World Cup there are no easy matches. You cannot relax. We will approach all the matches the same way, just the way we approached the India match." — AFP



JOYCE FEARS IRELAND'S TEST BID IS IN JEOPARDY

DHAKA: Ireland's leading player Ed Joyce fears the International Cricket Council's plan to restrict the next edition of the World Cup to 10 teams will hit their hopes of joining the Test-playing nations.

"It's a setback for us as a country," Joyce said yesterday as he relaxed before their opening match against Bangladesh in Dhaka on Friday.

The governing body, the ICC, last week in Dhaka confirmed a plan to pare down the 50-over World Cup from 14 to 10 teams from 2015.

Ireland have already applied for Test status to the ICC and Joyce feared the World Cup slimdown plan could jeopardise their chances.

"We need to play in these global tournaments to push our case and obviously if we can't play the next World Cup that will be a bit of a blow."

In the 2007 World Cup played in the Caribbean, Ireland made a

In the 2007 World Cup played in the Caribbean, Ireland made a huge impact with wins over Bangladesh and Pakistan, the latter result memorably putting out the 1992 champions

huge impact with wins over Bangladesh and Pakistan, the latter result memorably putting out the 1992 champions.

"We made great strides after the 2007 World Cup where the boys

performed so well in the West Indies," said Joyce.

In that event he played for England as he chased test qualification before returning to play for his countrymen last year.

"Obviously we (the Irish) beat Pakistan, Bangladesh, tied with Zimbabwe and got through to the Super Eights and performed well in the Twenty20 World Cup."

"So we believe as a country, as a cricketing nation, we are on our way and obviously it will be a blow not to be able to be involved in future World Cups," Joyce continued.

"It's hard to see how cricket would benefit in our country from that because we would not be exposed to the top teams," he said.

"We have some young players coming through and we have got a good side at the moment. So we are hoping it doesn't come to that."

"It could be the case if we don't get into the future World Cups perhaps the guys will have to go back to do what they did before."

"It's only the last year that contracts have come to Irish cricket anyway. So we just hope it doesn't get that bad," he said. — AFP



CAN WE PLAY TESTS? Leading Irish player is worried.

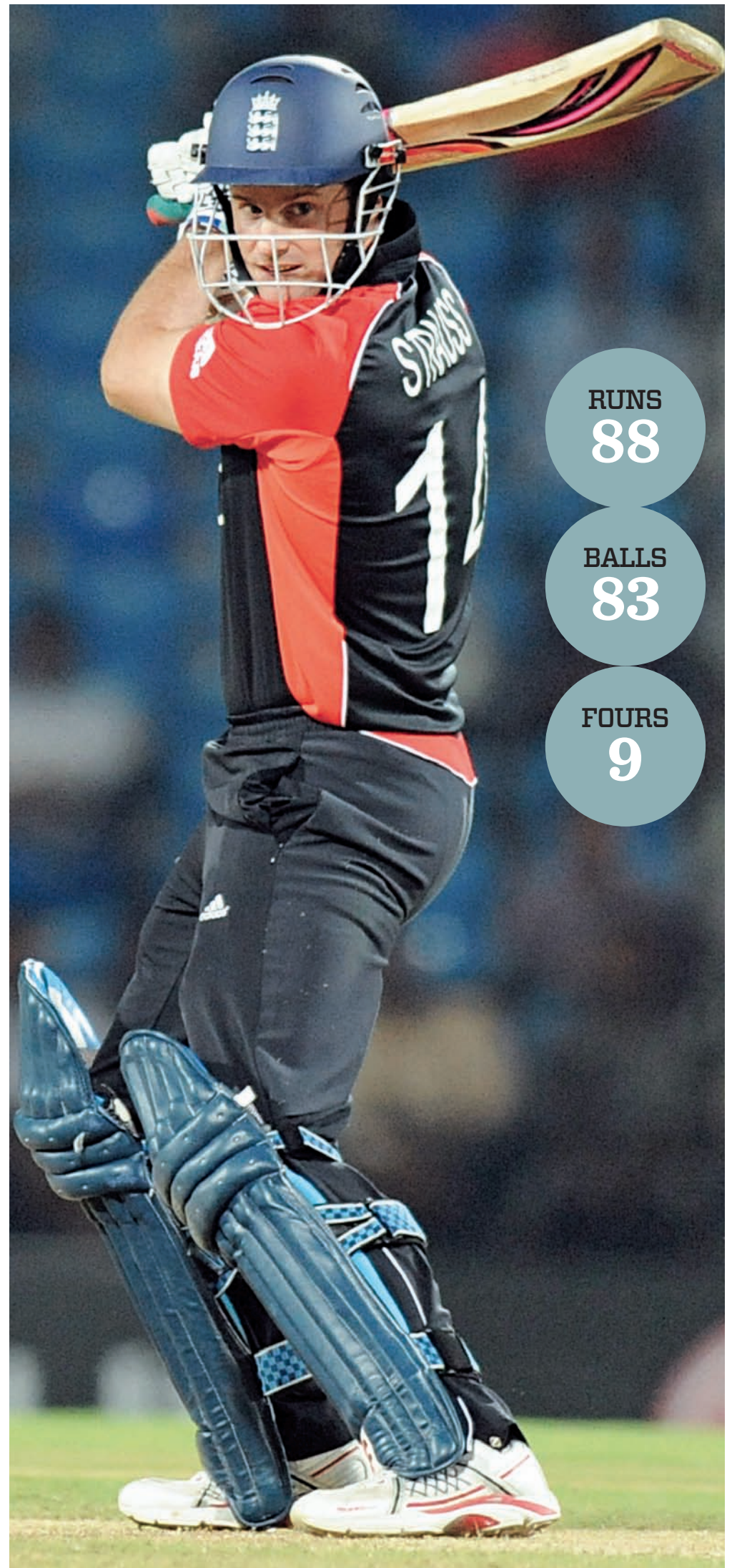
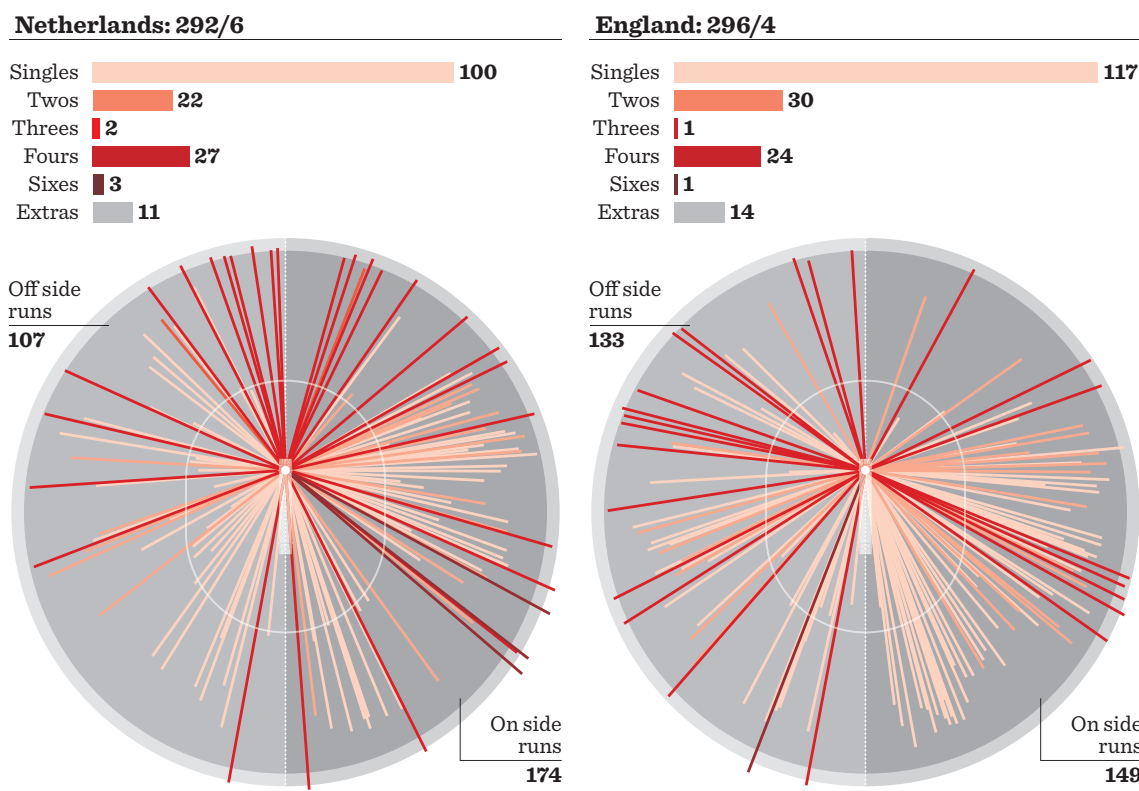
2011 WORLD CUP



DUTCH MAKE ENGLAND SWEAT

ENGLAND laboured to a thrilling six-wicket victory completed with eight balls to spare over the Netherlands in a Group B match to avert what would have been the first upset of the World Cup yesterday.

Wagon wheel



RUNS
88

BALLS
83

FOURS
9

THE NETHERLANDS batsmen, especially the South Africa-born Ryan ten Doeschate (119), thrived on England's shoddy bowling and sloppy fielding to power the team to 292-6, a target that seemed quite a test for their opponents' tweaked batting order.

At least England could console themselves with the third highest successful run chase at a World Cup after the Dutch posted the best score by an associate member against a test-playing nation.

Skipper Andrew Strauss was less than impressed, however. "We got a lot of things wrong with our bowling and we let them off the hook three or four times in the field as well. So it was a very poor first 50 overs," he said.

"We've got take that on the chin, learn from it very quickly because we can't afford to do that too often. We were very disappointed with ourselves on the field and thankfully the batters got us out of jail."

"We knew if we kept wickets in hand, we'd have a good chance of chasing it down. It was a little bit nervy there at the end, maybe a little more nervy than we would have liked."

England's chase got off to a re-sounding start with Strauss (88) and Kevin Pieteresen (39) providing a rollicking 105-run stand before they lost four wickets to find themselves in a spot of bother. Paul Collingwood's (30) experience and Ravi Bopara's (30) improvisation came in handy as England survived some torrid times before completing the tricky chase in the penultimate over.

More mischief

Having stunned England in the 2009 Twenty20 World Cup, the Dutch upstarts seemed up to more mischief at the Vidarbha Cricket Association where they batted as if to salvage the reputation of the associate teams which, the game's governing body believes, have no business being in the World Cup. Ten Doeschate clobbered three sixes and nine fours in his 110-ball knock and starred in three 50-plus partnerships to provide the cornerstone of the Netherlands's innings.

He added 78 runs with Tom Cooper (47), 64 with Tom de Grooth (28) and 61 with skipper Peter Borren (35 not out) to set a stiff target for Strauss and his men. After Borren had opted to set a target rather than chasing one, openers Alexei Kervezee (16) and

Wesley Barresi (29) looked quiet at ease against the English pacers before change bowlers collabourated with stumper Matt Prior to remove both. Barresi, having hit three fours off Stuart Broad's third over, top edged a Tim Bresnan delivery and Kervezee fell to Prior's sharp stumping in Graeme Swann's first over. Ten Doeschate ensured there was no panic in the Dutch camp.

He offered dogged resistance in the company of former Australia under-19 player Cooper, consolidated the innings with de Grooth before providing the late charge with Borren.

Borren was fortunate to be called back despite being bowled by Broad as England had one extra fielder outside the circle in that powerplay over.

STANDINGS							
	P	W	L	T	NR	P	NRR
Group A							
New Zealand	1	1	0	0	0	2	+7.620
Sri Lanka	1	1	0	0	0	2	+4.200
Australia	1	1	0	0	0	2	+1.820
Zimbabwe	1	0	1	0	0	0	-1.820
Canada	1	0	1	0	0	0	-4.200
Kenya	1	0	1	0	0	0	-7.620
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	----
Group B							
India	1	1	0	0	0	2	+1.740
England	1	1	0	0	0	0	+0.242
Netherlands	1	0	1	0	0	0	-0.242
Bangladesh	1	0	1	0	0	0	-1.740
South Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	----
West Indies	0	0	0	0	0	0	----
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	----

SCOREBOARD			
THE NETHERLANDS		ENGLAND	
A. Kervezee c Prior b Bresnan	16	A. Strauss c Cooper b Bukhari	88
W. Barresi st Prior b Swann	29	K. Pieteresen c Borren b Seelaar	39
T. Cooper c Anderson b Collingwood	47	J. Trott st Barresi b ten Doeschate	62
R. ten Doeschate c Bopara b Broad	119	I. Bell b ten Doeschate	33
B. Zuiderent c Collingwood b Swann	1	P. Collingwood not out	30
T. de Grooth b Broad	28	R. Bopara not out	30
P. Borren not out	35	Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-11)	14
M. Bukhari not out	6	Total (4 wkts, 48.4 overs)	296
Extras (b-3, lb-3, w-2, nb-3)	11	Did not bat: M. Prior, T. Bresnan, S. Broad, G. Swann, J. Anderson	
Total (6 wkts, 50 overs)	292	Fall of wickets: 1-105 (Pieteresen), 2-166 (Strauss), 3-224 (Trott), 4-241 (Bell)	
Did not bat: P. Seelaar, B. Loots, B. Westdijk		Bowling: Bukhari 9-0-54-1; Westdijk 7-0-41-0; Loots 9-4-0-74-0 (2w); Seelaar 10-0-54-1; Ten Doeschate 10-0-47-2 (1w); Cooper 3-0-23-0	
Fall of wickets: 1-36 (Kervezee), 2-58 (Barresi), 3-136 (Cooper), 4-149 (Zuiderent), 5-213 (De Grooth), 6-274 (Ten Doeschate)		Man-of-the-match: Ryan ten Doeschate (NED)	
Bowling: Anderson 10-0-72-0 (2nb); Broad 10-2-65-2 (1nb, 1w); Bresnan 10-0-49-1 (1w); Swann 10-0-35-2; Collingwood 8-0-46-1; Pieteresen 2-0-19-0		Umpires: Asad Rauf (PAK) and Bruce Oxenford (AUS)	
		TV umpire: Kumar Dharmasena (SRI)	

BRIEFS



All-round Windies are as good as any top team, says Bravo

NEW DELHI: Familiar conditions and an abundance of all-rounders make West Indies as good as any other top team chasing World Cup glory, vice-captain Dwayne Bravo said yesterday. The class of 2011 is a pale shadow of the West Indian

side that won the first two World Cups but Bravo insisted they stood good chance this time around.

"The conditions are similar as compared to what we have back in West Indies. I think that is the advantage we have," Bravo told reporters. "We have also got (several) all-rounders in our team. I think this is going to be very important in the sub-continent where all-round abilities will be playing a big part."

West Indies begin their Group B campaign against South Africa tomorrow and according to Bravo, even if half the all-rounders hit form, that would be enough to win any match. "We have our captain Darren Sammy, (Kieron) Pollard, myself and Chris Gayle and they are all top quality all-rounders," he said.

"I think on any given day, if two of us out of the four have a good game, West Indies will be in a good position to win. I think our chances are just as good as any other team. We have prepared very hard and prepared well. We have come in this tournament full of confidence."

Sri Lanka back in tune with cricket fans

HAMBANTOTA: Sri Lanka removed a ban yesterday on taking musical instruments into the island nation's World Cup venues, a day ahead of an expected low attendance match between Pakistan and Kenya.

Sri Lankans, especially youths, love to watch cricket accompanied by music from within the ground and the initial ban threatened to take away much needed atmosphere, especially at sparsely attended games.

"The match without bands is like going to a hotel without the most favourite dish," Mahindanda Aluthgamage, the sports minister, said.

"I had a discussion with the Inspector General of Police, and we have removed the ban on bands and musical instruments."



New Zealand eye Aussie win to lift spirits

NAGPUR: New Zealand cricket captain Daniel Vettori believes a World Cup win over trans-Tasman rivals Australia will help lift national spirits left shattered by the deadly Christchurch earthquake. The 15-man squad desperately scrambled for news on loved ones caught up in Tuesday's 6.3 magnitude quake which killed at least 65 people, with the team

admitting to being left shocked and numbed by the tragedy. "The greatest thing we can do is beat Australia to hopefully help bring a little relief for the people who are going such a rough time at home," said Vettori. "It's been a tough day. Five or six of the team and the management crew are based in Christchurch, so it's been a rough time for them finding out that their families are safe."

"We all have family or friends in Christchurch, it's been tough. We are feeling it too and the Canterbury community is in our thoughts and prayers."

"It's hard to deal with out of context. Guys will be thinking about wives and children at home who are dealing with the aftermath. It might be a distraction, it will be a testing time."

New Zealand's players, who face defending champions Australia in Nagpur on Friday, regularly used Twitter throughout the day in search of information and to offer condolences.

Don't worry, be happy, press tells Zimbabwe

AHMEDABAD: Zimbabwe's World Cup campaign is still very much alive despite their opening 91-run defeat to defending champions Australia, a state daily insisted yesterday. "Yesterday's defeat by the Aussies was by no means a humiliation and, rather than break us, it should build us because it showed we could compete," the Herald said in an editorial.

"There is no need to bury our heads in the sand because, now that the Aussies are out of the way, our 2011 World Cup show can begin in earnest. It said Zimbabwe should find honour in the defeat saying the team had done well compared to Kenya which "looked out of their depth," against New Zealand.