



SENSE & SENSIBILITY

Asin Thottumkal gets candid about her sartorial sense, the importance of being part of the mainstream cinema and remakes. >B6



CABLES

HM sends greetings to Brunei Darussalam and Guyana

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassan Al 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 Al Bolkiah and his country's people further progress.

His Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Donald Ramotar of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on the occasion of his country's Independence Day anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere congratulations along with his best wishes to President Ramotar and his country's people. -ONA

NORTH KOREA

His Majesty receives thanks cable

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has received a cable of thanks from Kim Jong-un, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army.

In his cable, Kim Jong-un expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude for His Majesty the Sultan's cable of condolences on the death of Kim Jong-il, former general-secretary of the Workers' Party, Chairman of the National Defence Commission and Supreme Commander of the People's Army in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. -ONA

HIS MAJESTY CONFERS ORDER

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said conferred the Sultan Qaboos Order for Culture, Science and Culture 'First Class' on Dr Halit Eren, director-general of the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, in appreciation of his good contributions in serving the centre and its objectives. The order was presented by Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, when he received Dr Halit Eren in his office, yesterday. -ONA



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Security beefed up in Sohar town, areas

1 Security forces and police personnel were seen patrolling Sohar town and other areas with a view to avoiding any untoward incidents in the coming days, as the anniversary of last year's protests, which turned violent, approaches. "Police and security forces are seen in Sohar. We heard that some untoward incidents happened on Tuesday. This might also be the reason that the government has beefed up security," a resident of Sohar said. >A2

REGION

Failure of N-talks heightens tensions

2 The United Nations nuclear watchdog ended its latest mission to Iran after talks on Tehran's suspected secret atomic weapons research failed, a setback likely to increase the risk of confrontation with the West. In a defiant response, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran's nuclear policies would not change despite mounting international pressure against what the West says are Iran's plans to obtain nuclear bombs. >A5

BUSINESS

Oman Cement eyes JV plant in Duqm

3 Oman Cement Company is keen to establish a cement plant in Duqm, now the cynosure of all eyes for investments, provided the feasibility study it, along with Raysut Cement, recently awarded to study the viability of the project comes in the positive. It may be recalled that the government had provided a licence a few years ago to the Oman Cement and Raysut Cement to establish a joint cement plant in Duqm due to availability of raw materials. >B1

Salalah hit by power outage

Technical snag at Raysut Power Plant also affects Raysut, Saniya, Thumrait, Taqa and Gharab areas

REJIMON K
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MUSCAT: Darkness engulfed Salalah and normal life was thrown out of gear yesterday evening, following a major power outage in the Dhofar region.

Salalah, Raysut, Saniya, Thumrait, Taqa and Gharab were the areas affected by the power outage which began at around 5:20pm.

Even though power was restored partially in some of the areas by 7:20pm, there was no power in most of the areas, including in Salalah town, at the time this report was going to the press.

As the traffic lights stopped working after 5:30pm due to the power failure, huge traffic snarls and chaos were seen on the roads everywhere.

Backup system

"Police personnel standing at traffic lights and roundabouts were controlling the traffic flow to avoid logjam on roads," a Salalah resident told Times of Oman.

Even though there was power outage in Salalah Port area, indus-

trial area, airport area and in Salalah hospital, the backup system at all the four places helped them avoid service disruption.

"As we had a good backup system, we were not affected by the power outage," a source from the Salalah Port said.

Meanwhile, a source at Dhofar Power Company said that they were on an emergency mode and were trying their best to restore power in the region.

"The power outage is due to some technical snag at the Raysut Power Plant. We are working on emergency mode. Our experts are doing their best to identify the reason behind the outage and fix it. Some problems have been fixed. Restoration of power has been started," the source added.

Apology message

Meanwhile, the residents of Salalah received an 'apology message' on their cell phones from Dhofar Power Company, for the power supply interruption, ensuring that power would be restored gradually.

"We don't have backup system in our flat. The candles which we had are finished now. Even though children are enjoying the power outage, we are praying that let it be restored soon. Today we all had 'candle light dinner'," a family residing in Salalah town said.

"My friends told me that power is back near industrial area and hospital area. But the residential areas are still under darkness," the family said, while adding that they had witnessed a similar situation in Salalah one year back.

"Last time, it was for two days. Hope the same doesn't happen this time," the family added.

Unique 12.76-carat pink diamond unearthed

A9



BUMPER TO BUMPER: Traffic snarls were seen on roads in Salalah as the traffic lights stopped working after 5:30pm. - Photo by S. A. Azeem

AIMING HIGH

Out-of-this-world elevator to put tourists in space

TOKYO: A Japanese construction firm claimed yesterday it could execute an out-of-this-world plan to put tourists in space within 40 years by building an elevator that stretches a quarter of the way to the moon.

Obayashi Corp claims it could use carbon nanotube technology, which is more than 20 times stronger than steel, to build a lift shaft 96,000 kilometres (roughly 60,000 miles) above the Earth.

The company said it would carry up to 30 passengers at a time and travel at a speed of 200 kilometres per hour for a week, stopping off at a station at 36,000 kilometres.

Tourists would stay there, but researchers and specialists would be able to travel all the way to the end, said Satomi Katsuyama, the project's leader. "Humans have long adored high towers," she said. "Rather than building it from the earth, we will construct it from the space."

However, while Obayashi says the plan could work, there are presently no estimates for the cost of the structure or any idea where to build it or who would pay for it.

Obayashi is just days away from completing work on Japan's tallest

structure, the Tokyo Sky Tree, which will stand 634 metres (2,080 feet).

The tower will serve as a digital broadcasting antenna as well as a sightseeing attraction that allows uninterrupted views of the Japanese

capital and beyond.

"We were inspired by construction of Sky Tree," which will open for business in May, she said. "Our experts on construction, climate, wind patterns, design,

they say it's possible."

When Obayashi is not drawing up plans to conquer space it works on a number of projects from building corporate headquarters, bridges and power plants to renovating

ancient temples.

Among its portfolio are the Dubai Metro in United Arab Emirates, Universal Studios Osaka, Japan, and Stadium Australia, which was used for the Sydney Olympics. -AFP



Hi WEEKLY

Meet the military men from Massachusetts who play music... all the time!

Oman's very own lass heads to the South Pole for an icy adventure!

This gatekeeper has a quote at the tip of his tongue for every member of his team!

They've been around for four decades...these men of letters!

Plus, meet the lovey-dovey couples who'd be soon locked in a contest.

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT

Tunisian diva enchants with Mediterranean songs



SCINTILLATING PERFORMANCE: Tunisian diva Sonia M'Barek and her 17-member ensemble delighted audience with her music at the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Monday night.

SARAH MACDONALD
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MUSCAT: Tunisian diva Sonia M'Barek took the audience on a Mediterranean journey with her music at the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Monday night.

With songs in Arabic, Italian and Turkish, and lyrics from Spanish and Arab poets, M'Barek and her 17-member ensemble delighted listeners with their talent, musical passion and ability to fuse different musical genres. Dressed in a turquoise gown, M'Barek reflected the colour of the sea that inspired her concert, and let her gorgeous voice do the same.

Rich voice

M'Barek is a classically trained "ma'luf" singer. In Tunisia, "ma'luf" is traditional music that involves a lot of improvisation, repetition of words, and spiritualism. Traditionally it was male-dominated type of music, but M'Barek made it her own. Her rich voice, which at

times seemed as thick and sweet as honey, and at other times as smooth and silky as a satin ribbon, soared and swooped, and her phrasing expressed a lot of emotion. It didn't matter whether she was singing in Arabic, or another Mediterranean language; her voice broke through the language barriers and touched the hearts of the audience with its power.

Blend of traditions

One of the most wonderful things about the concert was the blend of musical traditions. M'Barek's arrangements were truly amazing, as she was able to take seemingly opposite sounds and combine them. The mixes of traditional Arabic music with jazz rhythms, Arabic with traditional Spanish guitar, and all three together, worked surprisingly well, and produced beautiful results. Though the music was based on old traditions, M'Barek and her ensemble made it fresh and innovative with the jazz riffs.

The ensemble that accompanied

her was also very fine. It consisted of 15 musicians and two male chorus members. The singers had deep, warm voices which complimented M'Barek's perfectly. The musicians, who ranged from a piano player and an electric bass player to a kanun player and an oud player, were all easily able to switch from classical Arabic music to Spanish music to jazz, and just as easily blend the music together, which was fascinating to hear.

Some of the most memorable songs included Syrian poet Nizar Kabbani's Granada, which was so romantic it brought to mind an old, married Mediterranean couple still dancing together after many years with each other, and a couple of songs with lyrics by Khaled Wagh-lani in which the incredibly talented pianist let the jazz flow from his fingers and dance over the keyboard.

Sonia M'Barek's Mediterranean journey, with its surprisingly musical blends, talented musicians, and powerful voices, was definitely a trip to remember at the ROHM.

ON ALERT

Security beefed up in Sohar



TIGHT VIGIL: According to sources, schools have been closed in Sohar and some people have reportedly been detained by the security forces.

KHALID BIN ALI KHAWALDI AND REJIMON K

MUSCAT: Security forces and police personnel were seen patrolling Sohar town and other areas with a view to avoiding any untoward incidents in the coming days, as the anniversary of last year's protests, which turned violent, approaches.

"Police and security forces are seen in Sohar. We heard that some untoward incidents happened on Tuesday. This might also be the reason that the government has beefed up security," a resident of Sohar told *Times of Oman* on the condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, there were unconfirmed reports that some students of three schools in Sohar went on a

rampage destroying both school and public properties on Tuesday.

Schools have been closed and some people have reportedly been detained by the security forces.

Later on Tuesday evening, tension was palpable in some of the areas of Sohar.

"We heard that two government vehicles were set on fire by some. Civil Defence personnel were able to contain the spread of the fire and the police personnel were able to bring the situation under control. We also heard that some, who were involved in the incidents, have also been arrested," sources said.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday night, social media network and micro blogging sites were full of speculation about trouble in Sohar with pictures

of a burning truck posted on a local web forum.

However, some sources said that there were no rallies and protests.

"There's no tension prevailing in the area," the sources pointed out.

Last year, protests turned violent in Sohar and the Royal Oman Police (ROP) used tear gas and rubber bullets to contain and disperse the protesters. Protesters burned a hypermarket in Sohar and also blocked the entrance to Sohar Port.

Later, protests continued as crowds in Sohar congregated at the Globe Roundabout.

Eventually, the security forces peacefully dispersed protesters blocking the Sohar Port and cleared them from the main coastal highway linking Muscat to Sohar.



MAKING A POINT: Speakers at the Corporate Social Responsibility seminar organised at Grand Hyatt Muscat.

Seminar sheds light on CSR policies, plans

The private sector is the **basic engine** that **serves the society** and the non-governmental organisations, said Sheikh Mohammed bin Said Al Kalbani, minister of social development

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Of late, Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have been seen all over the Sultanate, which remarkably signifies a holistic view on the pivotal role played by corporates in serving the society, environment, employees and stakeholders.

To address the significance of adopting CSR strategies in various organisations, a Corporate Social Responsibility Seminar was organised on Tuesday at Grand Hyatt Muscat under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed bin Said Al Kalbani, minister of social development.

The minister said that the holding of the seminar was an indicator of the importance of involving the various government and private organisations in the development process.

The minister hailed the role played by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (PEIE) in the field of social development through the programmes implemented by PEIE, or at which the society takes part in an indirect way through the private sector enterprises.

Al Kalbani said the private sector is the basic engine that serves the society and the non-governmental organisations. He also commended the efforts of the Ministry of Social Development in encouraging the enterprises to adopt social responsibility principle. He praised the role of the NGOs and charitable organisations which serve as basic partners in promoting social development.

Held as part of the Oman Manufacturing Group (OMG) series of seminars and organised by PEIE, the event presented a learning experience and an opportunity to network, and highlighted practical insights while discussing CSR policies and strategies with top experts and professionals. The event gathered CSR experts to share their thoughts and experience in the practical implementation of CSR programmes and how they lead to a success of an organisation in one way or another.

Addressing the audience, Engineer Musallam bin Mohamed Al Shehri, assistant chief executive officer of the PEIE for Operations, said, "The Oman Manufacturing Group (OMG) series of seminars are set to shed light on aspects related to the industrial sector and highlight cutting edge methods for the betterment of the sector."

Al Shehri pointed out that the Corporate Social Responsibility seminar comes within the belief of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates in the crucial role played by the private sector in activating a long-term sustainable development system in the society. "The involvement of the Sultanate's private sector companies in social responsibility activities contributes effectively in guaranteeing the development of the society," Al Shehri noted.

Speakers

The seminar was moderated by Dr M. Sherif Aziz, adviser (Strategic Planning) at PEIE, and featured a line-up of high-profile speakers including Annelies Hodge, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

manager at the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who has 14 years of professional experience in CSR, consulting, business development, organisational change, marketing and stakeholder engagement. Other speakers at the seminar comprised Almutasim bin Said Al Sariri, corporate communication and CSR manager at Oman Oil Company SAOC, Abdullah Mubarak Al Shekaili, national fund supervisor at Oman LNG, and Qasim Mohammed Al Balushi - CSR manager at Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) based in Sur.

'Win-win' strategy

Strategic CSR refers to those set of CSR activities that benefit social and environmental causes as well as the businesses. Speaking at the seminar, Annelies Hodge said, "CSR, when implemented strategically, truly is a 'win-win' strategy which complements and benefits both organisations and society alike. In terms of workplace initiatives for example, organisations that help society by providing healthy and fulfilling jobs also build a more loyal and productive workforce. It is the same for environmental initiatives, organisations that help society by consuming less resources and releasing less dangerous substances into the environment which endanger the health of others also save money while ensuring their ongoing license to operate."

When asked if CSR activities can only be undertaken by high-profile organisations, Annelies said, "We may hear more about the CSR activities of high-profile organisations because they are under the spotlight more and often have well-established PR functions and resources to actively manage their CSR initiatives."

Hodge stressed that to realise the full 'win-win' benefits of CSR regardless of their size or profile; companies should move beyond ad-hoc initiatives and take a more strategic approach to CSR which embeds it in the 'way they do business' across their organisation.

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Luxury & Lifestyle



BRIEFS

Coordination panel for better ties meets

MUSCAT: Within the framework of implementing the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to activate communication and coordination between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman, a meeting was held yesterday. From the government's side, the Interior Minister chaired the meeting. From the Majlis Al Shura Office side, the Chairman of the Majlis chaired the meeting. The meeting reviewed mechanisms that could organise the relation between the Council of Ministers and the Majlis Al Shura in a manner that serves the country and citizen in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State.

Sultanate attends workshop on joint judicial system

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Justice Ministry attended the workshop on means of setting up an Arab judicial network for cooperation in the field of combatting terrorism being at the Arab League HQs' in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime yesterday. - ONA

DEAD WHALE

A giant whale was found washed ashore in the wilayat of Shinas yesterday morning. The Shinas Municipality has ordered to bury the dead whale after taking samples from its body for examination. A large number of people gathered at the site to watch the dead whale. Last year, the residents of Nea'ma had found a dead whale in the wee hours on the same shore.



FOR BOOKWORMS

17th annual global book fair to be bigger than ever



ALL SET: Sheikh Hamad Hilal Al Maamari from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture announcing the details of the book fair at the press conference. - Jun Estrada / TIMES OF OMAN

Times News Service

MUSCAT: With more than 500 publishers all set for participation, the 17th Muscat International Book Fair is all set to be a big book fair on a grander scale.

The fair, which will open on February 28 at the Oman International Exhibition Centre and will last till March 9, will be a good opportunity for book lovers to see what's new in the publishing world, both Arab and international, said Sheikh Hamad Hilal Al Maamari from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture.

The opening ceremony, to be presided over by Rawiya Saud Al Busaidi, the minister of higher education, will include the launch of a new book, though the details have not been disclosed yet.

There will be publishers from 23 countries, including Oman, Lebanon, India, Egypt, Germany, Palestine and Iran at the book fair, with more than 100,000 titles available. Books on a wide variety of topics, from education to architecture, will be on sale.

In addition to the many participants, the annual book fair will also include cultural events related

to books and literacy. An event on March 1 and 2 for children called 'Make your book' promises to inspire young minds.

There will also be lectures on the decline in literary criticism and modern Omani poetry. Two poetry evenings are slated to be held on March 6 and 8 featuring Omani and regional poets.

Al Maamari added that for the first time the fair will focus on the electronic side to facilitate all procedures. A number of electronic services will be launched, such as e-registration, mobile index by PDA, and increasing the number of information centres at the halls.

The 17th Muscat International Book Fair will be open daily from 10am to 10pm and on Fridays from 4pm to 10pm. On March 3, 5 and 7, it will be open from 10am to 4pm just for women and schoolgirls, and on February 29 and March 4 and 6, it will be open from 10am to 4pm just for schoolboys.

Free transportation to the wilayats of Nizwa, Sohar and Al Buraimi will be provided.

For more information about the book fair, visit the website: www.mctbookfair.gov.om

Woman to file case to find 'missing' husband

Santhosh Kumar, a friend and neighbour of Sajid, has been searching for him ever since he went missing from the first week of February

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MUSCAT: An Indian expatriate man's wife is planning to file a habeas corpus in the south Indian state of Kerala, claiming that her husband is "missing" in Sohar.

Sajid, who came to Oman 15 months back, was working in catering unit in Sohar.

"For the last two weeks, I have no clue about the whereabouts of Sajid. I am afraid that something bad might have happened to him," Sameera Sajid, his wife, told *Times of Oman* from India. "My desper-

WHERE IS HE?

- Sajid, who came to Oman 15 months back, was working at a catering unit in Sohar
- Friends claim that Sajid has been missing from the first week of February



Sajid

cause they went missing. The company official is not only declining to reveal the details, but he is also not providing the company owner's contact details," Jabir added.

Denial

Meanwhile, the company official denied the allegations made by Sajid's friends and relatives.

"Sajid worked with me only for 22 days. Even before obtaining work permit papers, he and his father-in-law left me. Since then, we are not aware about his whereabouts. As he was using a SIM card provided by me, we were in touch for a few days," the company official said.

"As my friends advised me to block the SIM card to avoid consequences in future, I blocked it. After that I don't know where he is. I was aware that he was in touch with his family till February first week. His wife also is claiming that he is missing since February first week," the company official added.

An absconding complaint against Sajid had been filed by the company much earlier.

"I am doing business in Sohar for the last two decades. How can a corrupt person do business for such a long time? I don't have anything to do with his missing," the company official added.

ate attempts to get in touch with him over phone have failed several times. Even his friends, social workers and his company officials are groping in dark.

"I have called his company officials also. They say that they are not aware of the whereabouts of Sajid," Sameera said.

Santhosh Kumar, a friend and neighbour of Sajid, has been searching for the latter ever since he went missing in the first week of February.

"We have been searching for Sajid since February 6. We contacted his company officials also. They are claiming that they don't know anything," Santhosh added.

Papers possessed by *Times of Oman* show that on February 11, Santhosh had approached the Indi-

an and lodged a written complaint with the embassy seeking the mission's help to find Sajid.

"At the request of Santhosh, I also made enquiries about Sajid with the help of my friends in Sohar. But my attempts to find him have gone in vain," PM Jabir, community welfare secretary of Indian Social Club, Muscat, told *Times of Oman*.

"I am afraid that Sajid is either under house arrest or handed over to police on some false charges. I hope that one of the company officials or the company owner would be able to tell about the whereabouts of Sajid," he said.

"At the request of Santhosh, I talked to a company official. According to the official, he brought the duo by paying around RO1,400 to the sponsor and he lost the amount be-

HEALTH

Conference on drug safety

MUSCAT: The Health Ministry, represented by the Directorate General of Medical Supplies (DGMS), opened yesterday a two-day conference on Pharmacoeconomics themed "Drug Safety and Quality".

It is being under the patronage of Ali bin Khalifan Al Qutaiti, member of Majlis Al Shura, and head of Health Committee. - ONA

GLORIOUS MOMENT

A student being awarded degree at the Gulf College's fourth graduation ceremony last Tuesday. In all, 430 students earned bachelor degrees and around 100 received higher education diploma.



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WY672	JEDDAH	0010	WY660	BAHRAIN	0010
WY670	DOHA	0010	WY682	RIYADH	0010
WY682	RIYADH	0010	WY670	DOHA	0010
WY660	BAHRAIN	0010	WY648	KUWAIT	0015
FRANKFURT			4H583	DACCA-CHITTAGONG	0130
WY648	KUWAIT	0015	BG021	DACCA-CHITTAGONG	0130
PK229	SIKOKT	0030	IX377	MANGALORE-ABU DHABI	0130
WY621	DACCA-CHITTAGONG	0130	ET624	ADDIS ABABA	0240
4H581	DACCA	0130	EX866	DUBAI	0315
TK858	ISTANBUL	0210	QR170	DOHA	0320
Y384	ABU DHABI	0315	6F565	BAHRAIN	0455
EX858	DUBAI	0315	RJ600	AMMAN	0605
QR170	DOHA	0320	MS930	CAIRO	0625
MS930	BAHRAIN	0455	WY902	SALALAH	0700
RJ600	AMMAN	0605	WY114	FRANKFURT	0740
WY674	JEDDAH	0625	FZ043	DUBAI	0800
WY302	SALALAH	0730	WY202	BOMBAY	0800
WY602	DUBAI	0755	EP655	SHIRAZ	0810
WY202	BOMBAY	0800	WY232	HYDERABAD	0840
DUBAI			WY102	LONDON HEATHROW	0840
NL771	PESHAWAR	0830	WY272	JAIPUR	0855
WY232	HYDERABAD	0840	WY326	ISLAM ABBAD	0900
WY102	LONDON HEATHROW	0840	NL769	LAHORE	0900
WY272	JAIPUR	0855	WY302	TRIVANDRUM	0910
WY326	ISLAM ABBAD	0900	WY282	BANGLORE	0920
NL769	LAHORE	0900	WY212	TRIVANDRUM	0925
WY302	TRIVANDRUM	0910	MADRAS		
WY282	BANGLORE	0920	EX862	DUBAI	0930
WY212	TRIVANDRUM	0925	QR166	DOHA	0950
WY252	MADRAS	0925	WY222	COCHIN	0950
EX862	DUBAI	0930	WY800	MADRAS	1000
WY252	MADRAS	0925	69113	SHARJAH	1000
QR166	DOHA	0950	WY820	BANGKOK	1010
WY222	COCHIN	0950	WY816	BANGKOK	1015
69113	SHARJAH	1000	WY820	BANGKOK	1025
WY820	BANGKOK	1010	WY828	KUALA LUMPUR	1040
WY816	BANGKOK	1015	WY242	DELHI	1050
WY828	KUALA LUMPUR	1040	WY604	DUBAI	1055
WY242	DELHI	1050	WY233	KARACHI	1115
WY604	DUBAI	1055	WY826	KUALA LUMPUR	1140
WY233	KARACHI	1115	WY372	COLOMBO	1140
WY826	KUALA LUMPUR	1140	LAHORE		
WY372	COLOMBO	1140	DX459	TRIVANDRUM	1140
LAHORE			WY384	MALE	1150
DX459	TRIVANDRUM	1140	WY334	KATIMAMDU	1150
WY384	MALE	1150	WY904	SALALAH	1205
WY334	KATIMAMDU	1150	WY654	BAHRAIN	1210
WY904	SALALAH	1205	WY918	BAHRAIN	1220
WY654	BAHRAIN	1210	WY377	COLOMBO-MALE	1220
WY918	BAHRAIN	1220	6F565	BAHRAIN	1230
WY377	COLOMBO-MALE	1220	EP658	CHAH BAHAR	1230
6F565	BAHRAIN	1230	IX377	CALICUT	1255
EP658	CHAH BAHAR	1230	WY906	DUBAI	1320
IX377	CALICUT	1255	WY906	SALALAH	1430
WY906	DUBAI	1320	WY384	KARACHI	1515
WY906	SALALAH	1430	WY616	DUBAI	1540
WY384	KARACHI	1515	FZ045	DUBAI	1545
WY616	DUBAI	1540	WY634	ABU DHABI	1555
FZ045	DUBAI	1545	DH140	LAHORE	1655
WY634	ABU DHABI	1555	WY204	BOMBAY	1700
DH140	LAHORE	1655	WY696	BAHRAIN	1700
WY204	BOMBAY	1700	WY694	BAHRAIN	1730
WY696	BAHRAIN	1700	WY282	CALICUT	1810
WY694	BAHRAIN	1730	WY646	KUWAIT	1815
WY282	CALICUT	1810	WY614	DUBAI	1820
WY646	KUWAIT	1815	69117	SHARJAH	1855
WY614	DUBAI	1820	WY224	COCHIN	1910
69117	SHARJAH	1855	WY908	SALALAH	1930
WY224	COCHIN	1910	WY284	LUCKNOW	1950
WY908	SALALAH	1930	WY608	DUBAI	2020
WY284	LUCKNOW	1950	FZ047	DUBAI	2020
WY608	DUBAI	2020	SV532	JEDDAH	2105
FZ047	DUBAI	2020	AI977	BANGLORE-HYDERABAD	2105
SV532	JEDDAH	2105	WY610	DUBAI	2125
AI977	BANGLORE-HYDERABAD	2105	LH618	FRANKFURT-RIYADH	2120
WY610	DUBAI	2125	AI973	DELHI	2125
LH618	FRANKFURT-RIYADH	2120	AI973	DELHI	2125
AI973	DELHI	2125	WY867	DOHA	2155
AI973	DELHI	2125	AI907	MADRAS	2200
WY867	DOHA	2155	KL449	AMSTERDAM-ABU DHABI	2200
AI907	MADRAS	2200	QR168	DOHA	2230
KL449	AMSTERDAM-ABU DHABI	2200	6F566	BAHRAIN	2240
QR168	DOHA	2230	600E-81	BOMBAY	2240
6F566	BAHRAIN	2240	BA073	LONDON HEATHROW-ABU DHABI	2240
600E-81	BOMBAY	2240	EY388	ABU DHABI	2245
BA073	LONDON HEATHROW-ABU DHABI	2240	WY716	DARESSESLAM	2310
EY388	ABU DHABI	2245	WY658	BAHRAIN	2315
WY716	DARESSESLAM	2310	LX242	ZURICH-DUBAI	2320
WY658	BAHRAIN	2315	WY910	SALALAH	2325
LX242	ZURICH-DUBAI	2320	WY694	DAMMAM	2330
WY910	SALALAH	2325	9W534	COCHIN	2330
WY694	DAMMAM	2330	WY612	DUBAI	2340
9W534	COCHIN	2330	WY636	ABU DHABI	2340
WY612	DUBAI	2340	BOMBAY		
WY636	ABU DHABI	2340	WY406	CAIRO	2350
BOMBAY					
WY406	CAIRO	2350			

FLT NO	DEPARTURES TO	ETD	FLT NO	DEPARTURES TO	ETD
AI986	BOMBAY-AHMEDABAD	0005	AI986	BOMBAY-AHMEDABAD	0005
600E-82	BOMBAY	0015	600E-82	BOMBAY	0015
LX243	DUBAI-ZURICH	0020	LX243	DUBAI-ZURICH	0020
BA072	ABU DHABI-LONDON HEATHROW	0025	BA072	ABU DHABI-LONDON HEATHROW	0025
9W539	BOMBAY	0040	9W539	BOMBAY	0040
KQ318	NAIROBI	0050	WY211	TRIVANDRUM	0115
WY117	BANGKOK	0115	WY201	SALALAH	0115
WY211	TRIVANDRUM	0115	MADRAS		
WY901	SALALAH	0115	WY231	HYDERABAD	0120
WY251	MADRAS	0120	WY529	TRIVANDRUM	0130
WY231	HYDERABAD	0120	WY201	BOMBAY	0130
WY529	TRIVANDRUM	0130	WY377	COLOMBO-MALE	0135
PK230	SIKOKT	0130	WY281	BANGLORE	0135
WY201	BOMBAY	0130	WY221	COCHIN	0140
WY281	BANGLORE	0135	WY271	JAIPUR	0200
WY377	COLOMBO-MALE	0135	WY333	KATHMANDU	0215
WY201	BOMBAY	0130	WY325	ISLAM ABBAD	0220
WY333	KATHMANDU	0215	WY329	LAHORE	0220
WY325	ISLAM ABBAD	0220	IX819	MANGALORE	0240
WY329	LAHORE	0220	4H584	CHITTAGONG-DACCA	0300
IX819	MANGALORE	0240	BG022	CHITTAGONG-DACCA	0300
4H584	CHITTAGONG-DACCA	0300	ET625	ADDIS ABABA	0340
BG022	CHITTAGONG-DACCA	0300	WY241	DELHI	0350
ET625	ADDIS ABABA	0340	EX867	DUBAI	0415
WY241	DELHI	0350	QR171	DOHA	0420
EX867	DUBAI	0415	RJ601	AMMAN	0430
QR171	DOHA	0420	6F561	BAHRAIN	0735
RJ601	AMMAN	0430	WY683	SALALAH	0800
6F561	BAHRAIN	0735	WY903	BAHRAIN	0800
WY683	SALALAH	0800	FZ044	DUBAI	0840
WY903	BAHRAIN	0800	WY311	CHITTAGONG	0800
FZ044	DUBAI	0840	EP656	SHIRAZ	0810
WY311	CHITTAGONG	0800	EP656	SHIRAZ	0810
EP656	SHIRAZ	0810	WY902	SALALAH	0815
EP656	SHIRAZ	0810	WY917	KHASAB	0940
WY902	SALALAH	0815	NL769	LAHORE	1000
WY917	KHASAB	0940	WY613	DUBAI	1010
NL769	LAHORE	1000	WY613	DUBAI	1010
WY613	DUBAI	1010	WY605	DUBAI	1030
WY605	DUBAI	1030	69114	SHARJAH	1040
69114	SHARJAH	1040	WY203	BOMBAY	1045
WY203	BOMBAY	1045	WY323	KARACHI	1050
WY323	KARACHI	1050	EY383	ABU DHABI	1050
EY383	ABU DHABI	1050	WY291	CALICUT	1050
WY291	CALICUT	1050	QR167	DOHA	1055
QR167	DOHA	1055	9W533	COCHIN	1125
9W533	COCHIN	1125	WY715	DARESSESLAM	1140
WY715	DARESSESLAM	1140	IX412	COCHIN	1140
IX412	COCHIN	1140	WY815	BANGKOK	1145
WY815	BANGKOK	1145	WY283	LUCKNOW	1200
WY283	LUCKNOW	1200	WY615	DUBAI	1250
WY615	DUBAI	1250	WY655	BAHRAIN	1250
WY655	BAHRAIN	1250	WY633	ABU DHABI	1305
WY633	ABU DHABI	1305	WY685	DOHA	1305
WY685	DOHA	1305	WY153	ZURICH	1310
WY153	ZURICH	1310	WY645	KUWAIT	1315
WY645	KUWAIT	1315	6F563	BAHRAIN	1315
6F563	BAHRAIN	1315	WY101	LONDON HEATHROW	1315
WY101	LONDON HEATHROW	1315	EP656	SHIRAZ	1320
EP656	SHIRAZ	1320	WY121	MUNICH	1330
WY121	MUNICH	1330	WY113	FRANKFURT	1340
WY113	FRANKFURT	1340	WY141	MALPENSAS	1345
WY141	MALPENSAS	1345	IX3500	SHARJAH-CALICUT	1345
IX3500	SHARJAH-CALICUT	1345	WY131	PARIS	1350
WY131	PARIS	1350	WY405	CAIRO	1420
WY405	CAIRO	1420	WY907	SALALAH	1455
WY907	SALALAH	1455	FZ046	DUBAI	1630
FZ046	DUBAI	1630	WY671	JEDDAH	1640
WY671	JEDDAH	1640	WY607	DUBAI	1710
WY607	DUBAI	1710	ED451	LAHORE	1730
ED451	LAHORE	1730	WY667	DOHA	1755
WY667	DOHA	1755	WY667	DOHA	1800
WY667	DOHA	1800	WY609	BAHRAIN	1815
WY609	BAHRAIN	1815	WY609	BAHRAIN	1815
WY609	BAHRAIN	1815	6F565	BAHRAIN	1845
6F565	BAHRAIN	1845	WY681	RIYADH	1910
WY681	RIYADH	1910	WY683	DAMMAM	1920
WY683	DAMMAM	1920	WY909	SALALAH	1920
WY909	SALALAH	1920	WY909	SALALAH	1920
WY909	SALALAH	1920	WY919	SHARJAH	1935
WY919	SHARJAH	1935	WY669	DOHA	2015
WY669	DOHA	2015	WY611	DUBAI	2030
WY611	DUBAI	2030	WY635	ABU DHABI	2050
WY635	ABU DHABI	2050	WY609	BAHRAIN	2105
WY609	BAHRAIN	2105	AI978	HYDERABAD-BANGLORE	2200
AI978	HYDERABAD-BANGLORE	2200	SV533	RIYADH-JEDDAH	2205
SV533	RIYADH-JEDDAH	2205	WY673	JEDDAH	2210
WY673	JEDDAH	2210	LH619	FRANKFURT	2245
LH619	FRANKFURT	2245	AI908	MADRAS	2300
AI908	MADRAS	2300	AI974	DELHI	2310
AI974	DELHI	2310	KL450	ABU DHABI-AMSTERDAM	2315
KL450	ABU DHABI-AMSTERDAM	2315	6F567	BAHRAIN	2320
6F567	BAHRAIN	2320	QR169	DOHA	2330
QR169	DOHA	2330	EY381	ABU DHABI	2335
EY381	ABU DHABI	2335			

AIRLINE OFFICES

Muscat Airport Flight information (24 hours): 24519456/24519223

Aeroflot: 24704455, Air Arabia: 24700828, Air France: 24562153, Air India: 24799801, Air New Zealand: 24700732, Biman Bangladesh Airlines: 24701128, British Airways: 24568777, Cathay Pacific: 24789818, Egypt Air: 24794113, Emirates Air: 24404400, Ethiopian Airlines: 24660313, Gulf Air: 80072424, Indian: 24791914, Iran Air: 24787423, Japan Airlines: 24704455, Jazeera Airways: 23294848, Jet Airways: 24787248, Kenya Airways:

24660300, KML Royal Dutch Airlines: 24566737, Kuwait Airways: 24701262, LOT Polish Airlines: 24796387, Lufthansa: 24796692, Malaysian Airlines: 24560796, Middle East Airlines: 24796680, Oman Air: 24531111, Pakistan International Airlines: 24792471, Qatar Airways: 24771900, Qantas: 24559941, Royal Jordanian: 24796693, Saudi Arabian Airlines: 24789485, Singapore Airlines: 24791233, Shaheen Air: 24816565, SriLankan Airlines: 24784545, Swiss International Airlines: 24796692, Thai Airways: 24705934, Turkish Airlines: 24703033

WEATHER



Failure of nuclear talks heightens Iran tensions

The failure of the visit by the IAEA could now hamper any **resumption of wider nuclear negotiations** between Iran and the six world powers



DEFIANT: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at a meeting with local nuclear scientists in Tehran, yesterday. Khamenei insisted during the meeting that his country is not seeking an atomic weapon and urged the scientists to 'continue the important and substantial' nuclear work. - AFP

VIENNA/TEHRAN: The UN nuclear watchdog ended its latest mission to Iran after talks on Tehran's suspected secret atomic weapons research failed, a setback likely to increase the risk of confrontation with the West.

In a defiant response, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran's nuclear policies would not change despite mounting international pressure against what the West says are Iran's plans to obtain nuclear bombs.

"With God's help, and without paying attention to propaganda, Iran's nuclear course should continue firmly and seriously," he said on state television. "Pressures, sanctions and assassinations will bear no fruit. No obstacles can stop Iran's nuclear work."

As sanctions mount, ordinary Iranians are suffering from the effects of soaring prices and a collapsing currency. Several Iranian nuclear scientists have been killed over the past two years in bomb attacks that Tehran has blamed on its arch-adversary Israel. The collapse of the nuclear talks came as Iran seems increasingly isolated, with some experts seeing the Islamic Republic's mounting defiance in response to sanctions against its oil industry and

Russia warns against 'catastrophic' attack

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday warned a strike against Iran could have "catastrophic" consequences and urged nations not to draw early conclusions from this week's failed mission by UN nuclear experts.

"The scenario of military action against Iran would be catastrophic for the region and possibly the whole system of international relations," Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov told a news conference.

His comments came after a five-strong delegation from the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) left empty-handed following two days of talks focusing on suspected military aspects of the country's nuclear programme. - AFP

financial institutions as evidence that it is in no mood to compromise with the West. Elections on March 2 are expected to be won by supporters of Khamenei, an implacable enemy of the West. The failure of the two-day visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency could now hamper any resumption of wider nuclear negotiations between Iran and six world powers. A team from

the IAEA had hoped to inspect a site at Parchin, southeast of Tehran, where the agency believes there is a facility to test explosives.

"During both the first and second round of discussions, the agency team requested access to the military site at Parchin. Iran did not grant permission for this visit to take place," the Vienna-based IAEA said in a statement.

"It is disappointing that Iran did not accept our request to visit Parchin. We engaged in a constructive spirit, but no agreement was reached," said IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano.

A Western official added: "We think that if Iran has nothing to hide why do they behave in that way?"

Earlier, Iran's envoy to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said Tehran expected to hold more talks with the UN agency, but Amano's spokeswoman said no further meetings were planned.

Iran rejects accusations that its nuclear programme is a covert bid to develop a nuclear weapons capability, saying it is seeking to produce only electricity.

But its refusal to curb sensitive atomic activities which can have both civilian and military purposes, and its record of years of nuclear secrecy has drawn increasingly tough UN and separate US and European measures. The United States and Israel have not ruled out using force against Iran if they conclude that diplomacy and sanctions will not stop it from developing a nuclear bomb.

"This was only to be expected, given Iran's evasions," a senior Israeli official said. The failure of the IAEA's mission may increase the chances of a strike by Israel on Iran.

"I think there is a serious risk that this crisis is increasingly less about establishing evidence that Iran has taken a decision to reactivate its nuclear weapons programme, and more about the window of opportunity Israel assesses it has for a viable chance of destroying or delaying Iran's nuclear programme by military means, said Henry Wilkinson at Janusian security consultants in London. - AFP

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BRIEFS

High turnout recorded in landmark Yemen election

SANAA: Yemen announced yesterday a high turnout in a landmark vote that ended Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33-year rule and named a new president, despite boycott calls in the south, where violence marred polling. Turnout in Tuesday's vote for Vice-President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, the only candidate on the ballot, reached 60 per cent nationwide, an electoral official said. The replacement of president Saleh marks the first case of a transition through political settlement in the revolts that have rocked the Arab world since January 2011. In the main southern city of Aden, 50 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots, while in other southern provinces, turnout was less than 40 per cent, said the official, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity.

Libya court orders civil trial for Gaddafi 'loyalists'

BENGHAZI: A Libyan military court ruled yesterday that 50 people accused of fighting for Muammar Gaddafi and helping a mass jail break by alleged supporters of the deposed leader should be freed and tried instead in a civilian court. Defence lawyers welcomed the ruling, saying most of the accused were civilians and that the military court on a base in the eastern city of Benghazi was struggling to try the case. "We feel this court is under pressure and... does not have the necessary judicial independence," said Saleh Omran, who represents 17 of the accused, denying that his clients were Gaddafi supporters. A transitional government was appointed in November to lead Libya to elections but it is struggling to impose order on myriad armed groups that toppled Gaddafi last year after 42 years in power.

Israel to approve 500 new West Bank homes in Shilo

TEL AVIV: An Israeli committee yesterday to approve construction of 500 new homes in the West Bank settlement of Shilo and retroactively legalise more than 200 built without permits, a spokesman said. The committee "will meet today to approve construction of 500 units," civil administration spokesman Guy Inbar said. Asked about reports that more than 200 homes built without a permit, some in the nearby settler outpost of Shvut Rachel, would be legalised, he said: "Yes it's true - they will be legalised for humanitarian reasons."

Egyptian judge sets June 2 verdict for Hosni Mubarak

CAIRO: The verdict in the landmark murder and corruption trial of ousted leader Hosni Mubarak has been set for June 2, Judge Ahmed Refaat told the court yesterday. Mubarak, his former interior minister Habib Al Adly and six security chiefs are accused of involvement in the killing of protesters during the uprising that toppled the former president. - Agencies

SYRIA CRISIS

Two Western journalists killed as Homs pounded

DAMASCUS: Two Western journalists were among 26 people killed yesterday as Syrian forces pounded the rebel city of Homs, activists said, while calls mounted for a truce to allow in humanitarian aid.

The latest barrage came a day after security forces killed at least 68 across the country, adding to an overall toll of 7,636 since anti-regime protests erupted last March, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The toll includes 5,542 civilians, the head of the Britain-based monitoring group, Rami Abdel Rahman, said. At least 24 civilians were killed in shelling of the Homs

neighbourhood of Baba Amr in the 19th straight day of a government forces assault on the central city, the Observatory said.

American journalist Marie Colvin, who reported for London's Sunday Times, and French freelance photojournalist Remi Ochlik were killed in latest onslaught of the district, French Culture Minister Frederic Mitterrand said.

France's President Nicolas Sarkozy said the deaths of the journalists showed that "this regime must go." From inside the quarters, activist Omar Shaker said that two were killed and three others wounded as a shell crashed into a makeshift media centre set up

by anti-regime militants. French newspaper Le Figaro said one of its reporters, Edith Bouvier, was wounded in the legs, and Rupert Murdoch, owner of The Sunday Times, said the paper's photojournalist Paul Conroy was injured. The area remained the target of random shelling, blocking attempts to remove the bodies, Shaker said. French television reporter Gilles Jacquier was killed in Homs last month.

A call by the International Committee for the Red Cross for a two-hour truce daily to deliver aid to afflicted areas has gained support from the United Nations, as well as from the US and Russia. - AFP

FOREVER FASHION
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WEEKEND SUPER DEALS

AT AL MAYA - CBD WED-THU-FRI (Time: 8am -12 Midnight)

<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.200 <p>Egg Plant Small</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.250 <p>Carrots Oman</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.350 <p>Beans Oman</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.400 <p>Pears China</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.675 <p>Red Apple U.S.A.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.950 <p>Red Plums South Africa</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 1.150 <p>Feta Cheese</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 2.350 <p>Beef Mince</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.975 <p>Super Ground Mutton Mince (3 X 400gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.990 <p>Malabar Tapioca (3 X 700gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 1.290 <p>A'Saffa Chicken Franks (3 X 340gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 2.775 <p>A'Saffa Whole Chicken (2 x 1100gm)</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.860 <p>Pepsi, Dew, Mirinda, 7up Asst. (6X 355ml Cans) Twistos Sunbites Asst. (1 X 50gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 0.975 <p>Puck Cheese (8 Portions 5 x 120gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 2.375 <p>Mars/Bounty/Twix Asst. (2 x 230gm)</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> R.O. 3.875 <p>Tang Orange / Mango Asst. (1 X 2.5kg)</p> </div>

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ABSCONDING

Name : Saimuth Marikab Ummul Hayar
 Nationality : Sri Lankan
 Passport No. : N 4353301
 Absconding date : 15/02/2012
 Sponsor : Khalifa Fayal Khamis Najim Al Aralmi

She who employs the above employee shall bear the legal consequences. The absconding has the right to report the inaccuracy of this statement to any of the Ministry of Manpower offices within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ABSCONDING

Name : Gonamanda Kumari
 Nationality : Indian
 Passport No. : J 3953809
 Absconding date : 14/02/2012
 Sponsor : Amal Abdullah Said Al Sinani

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Economy to grow at 8% next fiscal

This year's projected GDP growth is substantially down from the budgetary target of around 9%

NEW DELHI: The economy may grow at 7.1 per cent this financial year and inch up to 8 per cent next fiscal if the global environment turns favourable, chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council C. Rangarajan said yesterday.

"We might be able to achieve eight per cent growth on our esteem, if the world environment is favourable," Rangarajan told reporters here after releasing the Review of the Economy 2011-12.

The council has pegged gross domestic product growth at 7.1 per cent for 2011-12, marginally higher than the 6.9 per cent growth projected in the advance estimate early this month by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO).

Inflation is estimated to come down to 6.5 per cent by the end of the current financial year and ease further in the range of 5-6 per cent in 2012-13.

"Headline inflation has shown a decline since November 2011 and more strongly in January 2012. It



HEADING FOR RESPIRE: Shoppers walk through the Galleria Mall in Gurgaon. Inflation is estimated to come down to 6.5 per cent by the end of the current financial year and ease further in the range of 5-6 per cent in 2012-13. - Bloomberg

is projected to be around 6.5 per cent at the end of March 2012. Both monetary and other public policies seem to have had the desired effect," Rangarajan said.

This year's projected GDP growth is substantially down from the budgetary target of around nine percent, and 8.4 per cent expansion registered in the previous year.

High interest rates, fragile global economic conditions and the government's inability to push through key reforms have stunted growth.

The growth in the agriculture and construction sectors is projected to remain higher than the advance estimates released early this month by the CSO, Rangarajan said. The council has pegged farm sector growth at three per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent growth projected in the advance estimate.

A record output of rice and wheat on the back of good monsoon and strong growth in horti-

culture and animal husbandry segments are likely to push upward the agricultural sector growth.

The farm sector has grown by seven per cent in 2010-11.

The manufacturing sector is expected to grow by 3.9 per cent while construction segment is expected to expand by 6.2 per cent.

"Manufacturing and construction have been sluggish during the first three quarters of 2011-12. This may show improvement in the fourth quarter," Rangarajan said.

Strong growth in the services sector will continue with overall growth estimated at 9.4 per cent for the fiscal ending March 31, 2012.

Investment activity has slowed down and as a result the gross fixed capital formation for 2011-12 has slipped to 29.3 per cent, a decline of almost four percentage points over the last four years, said Rangarajan, a former governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). - IANS

BRIEFS

BJP call to oppose move to curtail EC powers

NEW DELHI: The Bhartiya Janata Party yesterday demanded that all political parties should "nip in the bud" the government's reported attempt to make the election model code of conduct statutory, alleging that this was a bid to dilute powers of the poll panel. "I think this very questionable attempt by the government to dilute the powers of the Election Commission through the backdoor by giving the impression that they are actually strengthening the model code of conduct, has to be nipped in the bud," BJP leader Yashwant Sinha told reporters. He demanded that all political parties, apart from the EC, should "stand up and oppose" this move of the government.

Two Bengal CPI-M leaders killed, Left blames Trinamool

KOLKATA: Two Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leaders, including a former legislator, were killed in a clash in West Bengal's Burdwan district yesterday in an incident that the opposition Left Front blamed on the ruling Trinamool Congress. Pradip Tah, who earlier represented Burdwan North in the assembly, and the party's district committee member Kamal Gayen were lynched in the clash in Dewandighi. "Two people were injured," said Inspector General of Police Gangeshwar Singh. "There is a lot of tension in the area," he said. Four people have been arrested, district police superintendent S.H. Mirza said. CPI-M state secretariat member Shyamal Chakraborty blamed the Trinamool Congress for the killings.

Saif Ali Khan arrested, released on bail

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was arrested last night and released by the police on bail after being charged with assaulting an NRI businessman who protested the raucous chatter of the Bollywood actor and his friends in a restaurant. The 41-year-old actor and his two friends were booked under sections 325 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intent) of IPC for assaulting an NRI businessman. - Agencies

MERCHANT VESSEL

India stands firm in row with Italy over fishermen deaths

NEW DELHI: A top Italian diplomat struggled yesterday to extract concessions from India in an escalating row over the possible murder trial of two Italian soldiers on charges of killing two Indian fishermen.

Following talks with officials in New Delhi, junior foreign minister Staffan De Mistura voiced sadness over the deaths, but insisted that the incident occurred in international waters and therefore outside Indian jurisdiction.

His Indian counterpart Praneeet Kaur was equally insistent that the case should be handled by local Indian courts.

"We still maintain that the kill-

ings took place in Indian waters and Indian law should prevail," Kaur told reporters after the meeting. The two soldiers were remanded in custody on Monday by a court in the southern state of Kerala on charges of shooting dead the two fishermen who were mistaken for pirates trying to attack an oil tanker off the Kerala coast.

The soldiers, who were deployed on the Italian-flagged tanker as security guards, had been arrested and escorted off the vessel on Sunday evening.

The Italian foreign ministry has accused the Indian police of taking "coercive" and "unilateral" action against the two men. "We do

acknowledge and recognise that two Indian fishermen died. No one doubts it, and it is terribly sad," De Mistura said after yesterday's talks, while stressing that "the incident took place in international waters." The same argument about jurisdiction was made to the high court in Kerala yesterday by lawyers acting for the Italian soldiers as they sought to have the case quashed.

"As the incident took place in international waters, the officers cannot be subjected to Indian law," lawyer P. Ramanpila said. Italy's Defence Ministry has said the Indian fishing boat behaved aggressively and was repeatedly warned before any shots were fired. - AFP

RARE SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH

New legless amphibian family discovered

NEW DELHI: Researchers digging through mud in northeast India have discovered a new family of legless amphibians in a rare scientific breakthrough detailed in a study released yesterday.

The family of burrowing, tailless creatures was identified by scientists working for five years in remote states of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

"DNA analysis has confirmed that this is an entirely new family," S.D. Biju, a professor at the University of Delhi who led the project with team members from Britain and Belgium, said.

"Habitat destruction is a big problem for amphibians worldwide, and discoveries like this prove that we must protect the environment to save parts of the natural world we



NEW SPECIES: An adult Chikilidae, a new species of legless amphibian known as a caecilian, with eggs and hatchlings at an undisclosed location in north-eastern India. - AFP

know little about," he said.

Biju said that it had been a challenging physical job digging with spades at 250 locations looking for the worm-like creatures, which are

about 20 centimetres (eight inches) long and often 25 centimetres deep into the earth.

The new family, the 10th from the caecilian group of amphibians,

has been called Chikilidae after the name used by the local Garo tribal language.

"This discovery has shown that northeast India is uniquely rich in wildlife and ecosystems," said Biju. "We have to understand more about the region."

Since the age of dinosaurs the chikilidae has burrowed unbothered beneath the monsoon-soaked soils of remote north-east India, unknown to science and mistaken by many villagers as a deadly, miniature snake.

One threat to harmless amphibians in the country is from locals who kill them believing they are venomous snakes, the study said. The findings have been published by the Royal Society of London journal *Proceedings B*. - AFP

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PAKISTAN



Ijaz testifies through video conferencing

Ijaz **claimed to have last year delivered a secret memo** to then US Admiral Mike Mullen at the behest of Haqqani and the Pakistani government in the Memogate case



MUCH-AWAITED ENTRY: American businessman of Pakistan origin, Mansoor Ijaz, arrives at the Pakistan High Commission in London, yesterday — Reuters.

ISLAMABAD: A commission probing the memo scandal here yesterday began recording the testimony of Pakistani-American businessman Mansoor Ijaz, the key figure in the controversy, through video-conference from London.

Commission secretary Raja Jawad Abbas and counsel of Husain Haqqani, former Pakistani envoy to the US, and Mansoor Ijaz, among others, attended the proceedings in London and Pakistan, respectively, Geo TV reported.

Ijaz arrived at the Pakistan High Commission in London to testify before the commission via video link.

Cross-questioning

A three-member judicial commission headed by Balochistan High Court Chief Justice Qazi Faiz Isa is probing the scandal.

Haqqani's counsel Zahid Bukhari

requested the bench that he wanted to cross-question Ijaz in person. The commission asked him to submit an application for the same.

The commission questioned Ijaz whether he can speak Urdu upon which he replied in negative.

Secretary Abbas authenticated that the person present in the video is Ijaz and showed his passport to the commission. Ijaz handed over the evidence to the official.

The commission consented to video-conferencing after Ijaz refused to come to Pakistan fearing for his life.

Ijaz claimed to have last year delivered a secret memo to then chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff Admiral Mike Mullen at the behest of Haqqani and the Pakistani government.

The memo said that Zardari feared a military coup after Osama bin Laden was killed May 2 last

year at his hideout in Abbottabad by US commandos, triggering a scandal that generated much heat in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the BlackBerry manufacturing company, Research in Motion (RIM), has once again refused a request of the Pakistan government to provide it details of the communication that took place between the memogate characters, Mansoor Ijaz and former ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani, Daily Times 1 reported reported yesterday.

The reply has been received by the government while the commission has also been informed. The Judicial Commission tasked with probing the memo scandal had directed the attorney general of Pakistan to again write to the RIM for the BlackBerry data.

Earlier, the British High Commission in Pakistan on Tuesday is-

sued visa to Zahid Bokhari, counsel for Husain Haqqani, and two other lawyers of his team to proceed to London in connection with the memogate case.

Bokhari had decided to fly to London to cross-question Mansoor Ijaz instead of relying on video links. The memo commission had decided to record Ijaz's statement through a video link from London yesterday.

Bokhari told a private TV channel that the visa had been much delayed, adding that he received a message on Tuesday to get it from the high commission. — Agencies

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'43% live below poverty line'

ISLAMABAD: As the Pakistani government continues to shy away from calculating official poverty figures in the country, an independent expert has claimed that around 43 per cent of the population is living below the poverty line in Pakistan.

According to a study titled "Institutional Imperatives of Poverty Reduction", by 2011-2012 as much as 43.1 per cent or 79.1 million persons in the country will

be destitute. The research was undertaken by Akmal Hussain, a professor at Beaconhouse National University and a well known expert on the topic of poverty.

'Poor'

The academic says his estimates are based on the elasticity of food price inflation with respect to the incidence of poverty.

His research concludes that 40.7

per cent of Pakistan's population would be classified as being "poor" last year, compared to 38.5 per cent in 2009-10.

Last year, the government carried out the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) which provides basic information for working out poverty numbers. The exercise has yet to produce any official numbers on poverty trends in the country. — Internews

GULF HOTELS (OMAN) COMPANY LIMITED SAOG
 P O Box: 1455, P C 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman C.R. No. 1059459

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ORDINARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Gulf Hotels (Oman) Company Ltd S.A.O.G is pleased to invite all shareholders of the Company to attend the Ordinary Annual General Meeting of the Company scheduled to be held at 4.00 p.m on Sunday, 11th March 2012 at Crowne Plaza Hotel – Al Khanger Hall – Muscat, to discuss the following agenda:-

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2011.
- To consider and approve the Corporate governance report of the company for the financial year ended 31st December 2011.
- To consider the auditors' report and to approve the balance sheet and profit & loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2011.
- To consider and approve the proposal for distribution of cash dividend to Shareholders at 40% of Paid up capital of the company (equivalent to 400 baizas per share)
- To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of RO 70,000 (Omani Rials seventy thousand) as remuneration to the Board of Directors of the company for the financial year ended 31st December 2011.
- To approve the sitting fees for Board of Directors for attending both the board meetings and the meetings of sub committees for the previous financial year and for the forthcoming financial year (as per the annexure).
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the company with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2011 (as per the annexure).
- To consider and approve the transactions that the company proposes to enter into with related parties during the financial year ending 31st December 2012 (as per the annexure).
- To elect the new Board of Directors of the company from among the shareholders and/or the non-shareholders. Any person wishing to nominate himself/ herself to the Board of Directors may fill out the nomination form prepared for this purpose and submit it to the Company, two working days prior to the Annual General Meeting, not later than Wednesday, 7th March 2012. Any nomination form submitted after this deadline will not be accepted. If the candidate is a shareholder, the candidate is required in accordance with the company's article of association to own 2500 shares of the company at the Annual General Meeting date.
- To appoint statutory auditors of the company for the year ending 31st December 2012 and to fix their remuneration.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company, any Shareholder may appoint a single representative by proxy to vote on his/her behalf by signing the Proxy Form issued by Muscat Clearing & Depository Company SAOG. If the shareholder is a natural person, he/she is required to attach with the signed proxy form, a copy of the identification card for gentlemen and a copy of the passport for ladies and minors - in case of Omanis and a copy of resident card or passport in case of non-Omanis. In case of a juristic shareholder, the proxy form shall be signed by one of the company authorized signatories, affixed with company seal and shall be accompanied by a copy of the list of company authorized signatories and commercial registration certificate.

Please be present at the meeting venue at least half an hour before the time fixed.

For further information, please contact Mr. Yoghish Malya, or Ms Samiya Al Balushi on Telephone No 24660660

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT Statement of financial position at 31 December 2011

	2011 RO	2010 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	492,507	598,154
Current assets		
Inventories	544,545	805,046
Trade and other receivables	230,025	191,389
Cash and cash equivalents	93,086	62,057
Total current assets	867,656	1,058,492
Total assets	1,360,163	1,656,646
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserve		
Share capital	2,000,000	2,000,000
Legal reserve	34,555	34,555
Accumulated losses	(1,859,956)	(1,392,297)
Total equity	174,599	642,258
Non-current liabilities		
Government soft loan	372,141	422,585
Deferred Government grant	131,729	181,285
End of service benefits	32,774	25,491
Total non-current liabilities	536,644	629,361
Current liabilities		
Government soft loan - current portion	318,810	212,432
Trade and other payables	330,110	172,595
Total current liabilities	648,920	385,027
Total liabilities	1,185,564	1,014,388
Total equity and liabilities	1,360,163	1,656,646
Net assets per share (RO)	0.009	0.321

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2011

	2011 RO	2010 RO
Sales	459,802	702,141
Cost of sales	(855,623)	(810,500)
Gross loss	(395,821)	(108,359)
Administrative and general expenses	(156,398)	(130,930)
Selling and distribution expenses	(37,767)	(65,177)
Other income	129,856	670,494
Finance costs	(7,529)	(20,476)
(Loss) / profit before tax for the year	(467,659)	345,552
Income tax expenses	-	-
(Loss) / profit for the year	(467,659)	345,552
(Loss) / earnings per share (RO) – basic and diluted	(0.023)	0.017

Dear Shareholders,
 On behalf of the Board of Directors I welcome you to this Annual General Meeting and I am pleased to present to you the Annual Report and the audited Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2011.

Operations:
 The Sales Turnover during the year is RO. 459,802 against the Sales Turnover of RO 702,140 during the year 2010 decreased 34.5%. The Operation loss is RO.395,821 as against the operation loss of RO.108,359 during the year 2010 increased 265%. The increase of loss is caused by the blaze in April, 2011. The work is stopped for the whole year.

Related party transactions:
 The related party transactions, is mentioned in note number (23) in the financial statements, and it is within normal business transactions with the board members and share holders holding more than 10% capital.

Future Outlook:
 The main objective for company's management at this stage is to increase the geographical area and enhance cliental and increase share on local market base to reflect on increasing income and improving margins.

Acknowledgements:
 We conclude with a prayer, that the almighty continue to protect our beloved, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin said under whose wise leadership we continue to prosper.

Chairman

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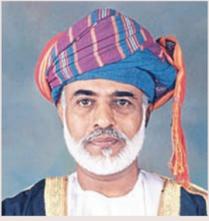
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COMMENTARY

ROYAL SPEECHES



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of Opening of the 2nd Term of the Council of Oman

4/11/2000

Honourable Members of the Council of Oman, Dear Citizens,

That was a brief outline of our domestic policy, which aims to ensure the effective participation of our government and our people through your Council. It also aims to reinforce the foundations of our national economy, diversify its sources and improve the quality of our manpower so that it can respond effectively to the demands of the modern age.

To be concluded



BONHOMIE: Malaysia's Foreign Minister Anifah Aman seen shaking hands with his Sudanese counterpart Ali Ahmed Karti during a photocall before their meeting in Putrajaya, outside Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. - REUTERS

PLAYING POLITICS WITH A DEATH

STRANGE are the ways of politics in Pakistan sometimes. A PPP provincial government in Sindh appeals to a PPP-led federal government to make public the report into the death of the leader of the PPP. Stranger yet, the federal government sends its interior minister to the Sindh Assembly to give a rambling and disjointed briefing that ends with the chief minister and speaker appreciating a self-indulgent presentation and declaring that since the trial of the seven suspected of involvement in Benazir Bhutto's assassination has yet to be completed, little more can be said at this point in time.

But what the PPP won't say, others can. It appears that stung by the criticism of Sindh nationalist leaders that their party has not been able to identify or punish the killers of Benazir Bhutto, PPP politicians in Sindh decided to show that they had not in fact forgotten about the matter of who murdered their iconic leader. With elections coming up in the next year or so, the PPP has to protect its flanks from the potent criticism of opponents on its home turf in Sindh. Hence the political stunt — and that's what it really amounts to — in the Sindh Assembly yesterday where the party tried to show its great concern for what has become of the investigation into Ms Bhutto's assassination.

To be sure, the death of Benazir Bhutto was a personal as well as a political tragedy for the PPP leaders. Her loss was and is felt greatly by the party. Equally, the party does genuinely fear that pursuing the matter of Benazir Bhutto's death too aggressively could imperil the PPP's future, or even the present. There is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that the PPP's fear of the nexus between militancy and shadowy elements of the state is fairly legitimate. That said, for a government that is about to begin an unprecedented fifth year of its term, that has seen off all manner of challenges to its rule and that has navigated a tricky political terrain with dexterity, taking up the investigation into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto with seriousness of purpose ought to be something that can and should be attempted. Pakistan has for too long buried its leaders without knowing who killed them and why. To exorcise the ghosts of that bitter past, the truth has to come out. The PPP, having suffered heavily, has enough of an incentive to establish the truth. But playing politics with the death of Benazir Bhutto is a disservice to her memory. - Dawn

Egypt's step backward

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN



SADLY, the transitional government in Egypt today appears determined to shoot itself in both feet. On Sunday, it will put on trial 43 people, including at least 16 US citizens, for allegedly bringing unregistered funds into Egypt to promote democracy without a license. Egypt has every right to control international organizations operating within its borders.

But the truth is that when these democracy groups filed their registration papers years ago under the autocracy of Hosni Mubarak, they were informed that the papers were in order and that approval was pending.

The fact that now — after Mubarak has been deposed by a revolution — these groups are being threatened with jail terms for promoting democracy without a license is a very disturbing sign. It tells you how incomplete the "revolution" in Egypt has been and how vigorously the counter-revolutionary forces are fighting back.

This sordid business makes one weep and wonder how Egypt will ever turn the corner. Egypt is running out of foreign reserves, its currency is falling, inflation is rising and unemployment is rampant.

Yet the priority of a few retrograde Mubarak holdovers is to put on trial staffers from the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, which are allied with the two main US political parties, as well as from Freedom House and some European groups.

Their crime was trying to teach Egypt's young democrats how to monitor elections and start parties to engage in the very democratic processes that the Egyptian Army set up after Mubarak's fall. Thousands of Egyptians had participated in their seminars in recent years.

What is this really about? This case has been trumped up by Egypt's minister of planning and international cooperation, Fayza Abul Naga, an old Mubarak crony. Abul Naga personifies the worst tendency in Egypt over the last 50 years — the tendency that helps to explain why Egypt has fallen so far behind its peers: South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brazil, India and China.

It is the tendency to look for dignity in all the wrong places — to look for dignity not by building up the capacity of Egypt's talented young people so they can thrive in the 21st century — with better schools, better institutions, export industries and more accountable government. No, it is the tendency to go for dignity on the cheap "by standing up to the foreigners."

That is Abul Naga's game. As a former Mubarak adviser put it to me: "Abul Naga is where she is today because for six years she was resisting the economic and political reforms" in alliance with the military.

"Both she and the military were against opening up

the Egyptian economy." Both she and the military, having opposed the revolution, are now looking to save themselves by playing the nationalist card.

Egypt today has only two predators: poverty and illiteracy. After 30 years of Mubarak rule and some \$50 billion in US aid, 33 per cent of men and 56 per cent of women in Egypt still can't read or write. That is a travesty. But that apparently does not keep Abul Naga up at night.

What is her priority? Is it to end illiteracy? Is it to articulate a new vision about how Egypt can engage with the world and thrive in the 21st century? Is it to create a positive climate for foreign investors to create jobs desperately needed by young Egyptians?

No, it's to fall back on that golden oldie — that all of Egypt's problems are the fault of outsiders who want to destabilize Egypt. So let's jail some Western democracy consultants. That will restore Egypt's dignity.

The Times reported from Cairo that the prosecutor's dossier assembled against the democracy workers — bolstered by Abul Naga's testimony — accused these democracy groups of working "in coordination with the CIA," serving "US and Israeli interests" and inciting "religious tensions between Muslims and Copts."

Their goal, according to the dossier, was: "Bringing down the ruling regime in Egypt, no matter what it is," while "pandering to the US Congress, Jewish lobbyists and American public opinion."

Amazing. What Abul Naga is saying to all those young Egyptians who marched, protested and died in Tahrir Square in order to gain a voice in their own future is: "You were just the instruments of the CIA, the US Congress, Israel and the Jewish lobby. They are the real forces behind the Egyptian revolution — not brave Egyptians with a will of their own."

Not surprisingly, some members of the US Congress are talking about cutting off the \$1.3 billion in aid the US gives Egypt's army if these Americans are actually thrown in prison. Hold off on that.

We have to be patient and see this for what, one hopes, it really is: Fayza's last dance. It is elements of the old regime playing the last cards they have to both undermine the true democratic forces in Egypt and to save themselves by posing as protectors of Egypt's honour.

Egyptians deserve better than this crowd, which is squandering Egypt's dwindling resources at a critical time and diverting attention from the real challenge facing the country: giving Egypt's young people what they so clearly hunger for — a real voice in their own future and the educational tools they need to succeed in the modern world.

That's where lasting dignity comes from. - The New York Times News Service

“Sordid business makes one weep and wonder how Egypt will ever turn the corner. Egypt is running out of foreign reserves, its currency is falling, inflation is rising and unemployment is rampant”



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Times of Oman has met the challenges effectively

It is indeed heartening to learn about Times of Oman winning the maximum global awards for design excellence from the Society for Newspaper Design. This recognition truly depicts the dedication of the entire design team, and is a well deserved acknowledgement of their tireless efforts. Across the world, the size of many of the broadsheet newspapers has reduced in recent times, but the challenge to keep the newspaper smart has increased. Evidently, Times of Oman has met the challenge and has excelled. Well done! Ramachandran Nair Ruwi

Times of Oman's feat makes its readers proud

My heartfelt congratulations on the titanic triumph of the Times of Oman that has brought us all great pleasure. Times of Oman undoubtedly deserves these Best of News Design rewards. However, we all are not only proud to recall the Ramadan tiled-poster and the

business-feature page in the 33rd Society for News Design award, but also every single day of our 'living together' with the Times of Oman is worth reminiscing. I would also like to complement, Times of Oman for the excellent product it has been offering us day after day — both in terms of its look and content. Kudos to you all there!

Gautam Ghosh-Dastidar Wadi Kabir

Times is Sergei Bubka of the media world

As an ardent admirer and regular reader of your esteemed newspaper, Times of Oman, I join all and sundry in congratulating you for your milestone achievement of bagging many awards, including two golds, two silvers and GSR citation from the International Society for News Design in New York. Like the legendary athlete Sergei Bubka, you have been making history and improving upon it. You stand really tall in the Gulf region enjoying third position internationally in terms of your

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design and look. Well done and congratulations once again to all who made all this happen. Keep up the good work. Jacob Thomas Karickom Muscat

The author himself smacks of intolerance This refers to the article, Of the curse of intolerance and dogmatic bigots (February 20). One gets to see a whole lot of spokesper-

sons of the Congress party in the electronic media, defending every misdeed of the party, but none can match the author in this regard. The author should realise that his favourite party survives only on the strength of its 'Gandhi' surname. Further, if the author thinks that only RSS or BJP were against the paintings of M.F. Husain, he is either too naive or is indulging in a desperate attempt on his part to mislead the readers. In a country like India, Husain should have been more sensible about choosing his subjects for painting. While the protests against Husain's paintings are obviously still fresh in the author's memory, he seems to suffer from selective amnesia about worse things that have happened elsewhere on this planet under similar circumstances. The "curse of intolerance" is evident everywhere in the article that he has written, which is a brazen display of the author's utter contempt for all those who do not think like him or his ilk. Damodar M. Bangera Wadi Kabir

Consensus needed to make NCTC workable

This refers to the editorial, We will not let spies police us (February 21), which has briefly justified the need to differentiate spying that essentially adds inputs in the form of intelligence gathering, from criminal investigation. There can be no second opinion on the requirement for a nodal agency on the lines of Homeland Security in US. However, P. Chidambaram's single mindedness, ignoring the states, does not fit in the Indian federal structure and also, as rightly pointed out by many, the NCTC would be duplicating NIA thereby making one feel that it would be another case of too many cooks spoiling the broth. Terrorism is undoubtedly a petrifying monster that needs to be dealt with an iron hand, but unless the Centre works in tandem with the states, the goal may remain elusive. To make institutions like NCTC more workable, a broad-based consensus and consultation is needed. Usha Devi Suddapalli Ruwi



LARGEST PINK DIAMOND: An undated handout photo released by mining giant Rio Tinto yesterday shows a 12.76 carat pink diamond — the largest of the rare and precious stones ever found in Australia. — AFP

Unique 12.76-carat pink diamond unearthed

Named the **Argyle Pink Jubilee**, the huge rough stone was found at Rio's pink diamond operations in **Western Australia**

the Kimberley region of Western Australia and would take 10 days to cut and polish, the miner said.

"This rare diamond is generating incredible excitement," said Josephine Johnson from Rio's Argyle Pink Diamonds division.

"A diamond of this calibre is unprecedented — it has taken 26 years of Argyle production to unearth this stone and we may never see one like this again.

"The individual who gets to wear this remarkable pink diamond will be incredibly lucky indeed."

Though it would not speculate on how much the Jubilee was worth, Rio said extremely high quality pink diamonds could fetch in excess of US\$1 million per carat, meaning it is likely to go for at least \$10 million. The light pink Argyle Jubilee is a similar colour to the 24-carat Williamson Pink given to Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as a wedding gift which was later set into a Cartier

brooch for her coronation.

The Williamson was discovered in Tanzania in 1947 and is ranked among the finest pink diamonds in existence. It is the ninth-largest in the world.

Honour

A Rio spokesman said the recent discovery was named in honour of the long-reigning British monarch, who is celebrating 60 years since her accession to the throne — her diamond jubilee. "This is the Queen's diamond jubilee year and there is a parallel in that the Queen had a solitaire pink diamond, gifted to her — The Williamson Pink — and set in the centre of a flower brooch in the year of her coronation," he said.

When asked if Rio was targeting the Argyle Jubilee diamond at the Queen the spokesman said: "Only if she is shopping for new jewellery. She will have lots of competition."

Rio produces more than 90 per cent of the world's pink diamonds from the Argyle mine, and said large stones like the Jubilee typically went to museums, were gifted to royalty or end up at prestigious auction houses like Christie's.

Christie's had only auctioned 18 polished pink diamonds larger than 10 carats in its 244-year history, Rio added.

Soaring demand for the extremely rare jewel has seen pink diamond prices skyrocket in the past 20 years and they are now among "the most concentrated forms of wealth on earth and well in excess of white diamonds," Rio said. — AFP

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WORLD

HORRIFIC COLLISION

Commuters lie on stretchers after being injured when their train crashed into the Once station during rush hour in Buenos Aires, yesterday. Transport Secretary Juan Pablo Schiavi confirmed that 40 people were dead and 550 others were injured and that passengers were still trapped inside when the train's brakes failed. — Reuters



GPS jamming could cause 'real havoc'

We have moved on from a potentially threatening situation to a real danger that we must address now, says an industry expert

LONDON: Satellite navigation systems are at risk from criminals, terrorists or even just bored teenagers, with the potential to cause major incidents from maritime disasters to chaos in financial markets, leading experts warned yesterday. From maps on car dashboards and mobile phones, to road tolls, aviation and marine navigation systems and even financial exchanges, much of modern life relies on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) that use satellite signals to find a location or keep exact time. The familiar Global Positioning System (GPS) set up by the US government, and GLONASS, a similar Russian system, were both built for military purposes but are now available to anyone with a device

that can receive a signal. The European Union, China and India are setting up similar systems. Experts are worried about havoc that could be caused if GNSS signals were illegally jammed, said Bob Cockshott, a director at Britain's ICT Knowledge Transfer Network — an initiative funded by the UK's national innovation agency — which was hosting a conference in London yesterday. The problem was illustrated in 2009 when navigation systems at Newark Airport in the United States began suffering daily breakdowns brought about by a truck driver with just a cheap, low-powered jammer in his vehicle going by on a nearby road. "We have moved on from a poten-

tially threatening situation to a real danger that we must address now," Cockshott said. Widely available on the internet, jammers are not illegal to own but are illegal to use. Just how widespread they are is unclear but research to be unveiled at the London conference will reveal monitors at one location in Britain recorded 60 individual jamming incidents over six months.

Hijacked vans Criminals have also embraced the technology, Cockshott said, with cases where thieves had hijacked vans carrying high value goods after jamming their GPS and cellphone systems. "Certainly toughening the law to make it illegal to possess one is certainly a step that can be taken. But before that, we need to know just how many of them there are and how widespread the problem is," he said. Some devices confiscated by police possessed "monstrous" transmission power when compared with the weak signal emitted by satellites and that had serious implications, Cockshott said.

Researchers in 2010 issued low-level jamming from the coast to see the effect on shipping in the English Channel, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

False readings They noted that ships veered off course without their knowledge, gave out false readings to other vessels about their position so risking collisions, and caused communications systems to fail, preventing crew talking to coastguard. Cockshott said there were now serious concerns "that we are going to see a disaster" in the Channel within the next decade. Nor do the jammers require great expertise to make. "You could imagine the bored teenager, hacker personality builds one of these things just to see what would happen," he said. — Reuters

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BRIEFS

Dutch prince's skiing companion questioned

VIENNA: The skiing companion of Dutch Prince Johan Friso has been questioned over the avalanche that landed the second son of Queen Beatrix in hospital, prosecutors said yesterday. The 42-year-old companion, whom local media have identified as the Austrian director of the hotel in Lech where the Dutch royals are staying, was questioned by police in the last few days as part of the probe into the avalanche, prosecution spokesman Heinz Rusch told AFP. The prosecution in Feldkirch, in western Vorarlberg province, announced on Saturday it had opened a routine investigation for "negligence under dangerous circumstances", as is the case with any accident of this kind. The key question in the probe, which will likely last several weeks, was who or what might have set off the avalanche.

Honduras prison fire an accident, say officials

TEGUCIGALPA: An inferno at an overcrowded prison in Honduras that killed 360 inmates last week was accidental and may have been caused by a cigarette, local and US authorities said on Tuesday. "The preliminary cause we have is an accident; the ideas of some kind of criminal intent, as well as a short circuit, have been ruled out," said Security Minister Pompeyo Bonilla. The February 14 incident at the Comayagua jail was one of the world's deadliest prison blazes, and highlighted the problem of overcrowding in the region's jails. Bonilla said the prevailing theory was that "people were smoking on a flammable mattresses which caught fire and then flames raced through the crowded facility."

Stem cell implants boost monkeys with Parkinson's

TOKYO: Monkeys suffering from Parkinson's disease show a marked improvement when human embryonic stem cells are implanted in their brains, in what a Japanese researcher said yesterday was a world first. A team of scientists transplanted the stem cells into four primates that were suffering from the debilitating disease. The monkeys all had violent shaking in their limbs — a classic symptom of Parkinson's disease — and were unable to control their bodies, but began to show improvements in their motor control after about three months, Kyoto University associate professor Jun Takahashi said. About six months after the transplant, the creatures were able to walk around their cages, he said. "Clear improvements were confirmed in their movement," he said.

Radiation fears see Okinawa snow event cancelled

TOKYO: A Japanese city on subtropical Okinawa island was forced to cancel a traditional snow event for kids after parents said the snow shipped from the northeast may be radioactive, officials said yesterday. The city of Naha had planned the annual event today with the Maritime Self-Defence Force's aircraft group, which carried more than 600 kilograms of snow from northern Aomori prefecture. But dozens of parents, who have fled from the disaster-hit region to the southern island in fear of radioactive contamination from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi plant, demanded the event be cancelled. — Agencies

HEALTH

Women more likely to get heart attack sans pain

NEW YORK: Women, especially younger women, are more likely than men to show up at the hospital with no chest pain or discomfort after having a heart attack—and they are also more likely to die than men of the same age, according to a US study. That lack of symptoms can result in delayed medical care and differences in treatment, said researchers, whose findings appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Not even know "They might not even know they're having a heart attack," said John Canto, from the Watson Clinic in Lakeland, Florida, who worked on the report. He noted that while the results are based on a study of more than a million heart attack patients, they are still preliminary. But, he added, they do challenge the notion that chest pain and discomfort should be considered "the hallmark symptom" for all heart attack patients. — Reuters

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3:30 & 7:15pm

Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance - 3D (Action/Fantasy/Thriller) CP No: 127 (PG)
Cast: Nicolas Cage, Ciarán Hinds and Idris Elba
9:45 & 11:30pm

Salvation Boulevard (Comedy/Thriller) CP No: 74 (15+)
Cast: Greg Kinnear, Pierce Brosnan and Marisa Tomei
3:30 & 11:30pm

Passion Play (Drama/Romance) CP No: 19 (12+)
Cast: Mickey Rourke, Megan Fox and Bill Murray
5:30 & 9:30pm

West Is West (Comedy/Drama) CP No: 679 (PG)
Cast: Aqib Khan, Om Puri and Linda Bassett
7:30pm

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Cast: Daniel Craig, Rachel Weisz and Naomi Watts
2:00, 6:00, 10:00 & 11:55pm
CP No: 124 (15+)

11.11.11 (Horror/Thriller)
Cast: Timothy Gibbs, Michael Landes and Brendan Price
6:00pm
CP No: 84 (12+)

Man On A Ledge (Crime/Thriller)
Cast: Sam Worthington, Elizabeth Banks and Jamie Bell
4:00pm
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3:30, 6:30 & 9:30pm
CP No: 114

Jodi Breakers (Hindi)
Cast: R. Madhavan, Bipasha Basu and Omi Wadia
CP No: 138
3:30, 6:30 & 9:30pm (Main Cinema)

Nippu (Telugu)
Cast: Ravi Teja, Deeksha Seth, Srikanth and Brahmanandam
CP No: 136
3:30 (Main Cinema), 6:30 & 9:30pm

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SPORTS

YOUR GAME

PITCH PROBLEMS POSTPONE PLS START

NEW DELHI: The inaugural edition of India's Premier League Soccer (PLS), featuring World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro and former France international Robert Pires, has been postponed because of a lack of venues, organisers said yesterday. The six-team competition, modelled on the successful Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 cricket tournament, was slated for a March 24 start in West Bengal but the organisers could not secure the government stadiums. —Reuters

HOCKEY

Sandeep brilliance helps India pip Canada

NEW DELHI: India rode on Sandeep Singh's brilliance to virtually seal its place in the final of the men's hockey Olympic Qualification tournament after defeating Canada 3-2 in a hard-fought round-robin match, here yesterday. Sandeep (40th minute, 61st) converted two penalty corners to not only see India through in the pulsating encounter, but also increase his goal-tally to nine in the tournament.

Shivendra Singh (26th) scored the other goal for India, while Mark Pearson (50th) and Scot Tupper (53rd) found the target for Canada. With four wins out of four matches, India are more or less through to the summit clash of the tournament unless some surprising results in the last round of games hurt their cause.

A draw in the final match against Poland tomorrow would be enough for the hosts to secure their place in the title clash.

Despite two wins and two defeats from four matches, the 14th ranked Canadians are still in the fray for place in the final. They will now have to beat France in their last match and hope India beat Poland. With nine points apiece, Poland and France are also in with a chance as the men's pool is still open going into the last round of games. —PTI

SOUTH KOREA BEAT OMAN TO QUALIFY FOR LONDON OLYMPICS

In a crucial Group A qualifying match at the Seeb Stadium yesterday, Hamad Al Azzani coached Oman had to beat visiting South Korea, but the reverse happened. South Korea defeated Oman 3-0 and became the first team from Asia to book a spot in 2012 Games with 11 points and one more match to play. Oman are still on 7 points and even a win in their last match against Saudi Arabia will not get them through. For South Korea Nam Tae-Hee scored in the first minute, while Kim Hyun Sung (67th) and Baek Sung-Dong (71st) boosted the tally in the second half. The match also saw some crowd disturbance (see inset) with water bottles and fire crackers being thrown on to the pitch whenever the visitors scored. Even the match was stopped for a brief moment. Nevertheless South Korea scored their first win in Middle East. Oman Football Association needs to do much more to control crowd behaviour as such incidences is harmful for the nation's reputation. —Jun Estrada / TIMES OF OMAN



South Africa clinch series

It was disappointing end for New Zealand after Jesse Ryder marked his return from injury with 52

AUCKLAND: South Africa battled to a thrilling three-run win over New Zealand to claim the Twenty20 series 2-1 after the Black Caps suffered a dramatic late batting collapse in Auckland yesterday.

New Zealand restricted South Africa to seven for 165 and went into the last two overs needing just 10 runs for victory, only to fall short after losing three wickets, including ducks for Nathan McCullum and Doug Bracewell.

Adding to the tension, James Franklin and Tim Southee both had chances to snatch victory at the death off the bowling off Marchant de Lange but could not connect bat with ball. Franklin needed a six off de Lange's last ball but missed, scampering down the wicket for a run as the Proteas celebrated, then realised to their horror that the delivery had been ruled a no ball.

That gave Southee the opportunity to be the hero with a boundary but his air swing went nowhere near the ball, stranding New Zealand on seven for 162. It was a disappointing end for New Zealand after Jesse Ryder marked his return from injury with 52 and openers Rob Nicol (33)



JUBILANT: South Africa's Robin Petersen, left, walks off with Johan Botha, centre, and AB de Villiers after their win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 cricket international. —AFP

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and Martin Guptill (26) started their run chase brightly. But the result was also testament to South Africa's never-say-die attitude after man-of-the-match Johan Botha picked up the crucial wickets of Guptill and Ryder to swing the match their way.

"It was an amazing team effort, I'm really proud of the men," captain AB de Villiers said. "We hung on at the end there."

De Villiers admitted South Africa

lost momentum when batting first and he was unsure if 165 runs would be enough on the short boundaries at Eden Park.

JP Duminy top scored for the tourists on 38 and there were decent contributions from Hashim Amla (33) and AB de Villiers (29).

But the Proteas never fired and needed a 22-run cameo from tail-ender Wayne Parnell to edge them towards a competitive total. —AFP

FRIENDLY FOOTBALL

Oman to play India in Fifa friendly today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In what could be their last practice match ahead of the crucial World Cup qualifier against Thailand on February 29, Oman will meet India in an international friendly match at the Seeb Sports Stadium today.

India who are preparing for their AFC Challenge Cup that will be held in Nepal next month will also utilize the opportunity to use their youngsters.

Oman who are currently ranked 95 in the Fifa rankings are 59 places ahead of India who lie at 154.

While India's chances might appear bleak, the match nonetheless is a very good way for the Blue Tigers to prepare for their assault on the Challenge Cup, as Madeira will be looking to test several of the newcomers in his squad and see how they react on being thrust into the limelight on the international stage. A positive result would only be the icing on the cake.

"For us more than the results it's about using the opportunity to utilize our youngsters," said Indian coach Savio Madeira.

With Sunil Chhetri missing with an injury and Climax Lawrence as well as Mahesh Gawli having retired, the core of the team is in need of some restructuring.

Whether players like C.S Sabeeth, Manandeep Singh, Arnab Mondal, Raju Gaikwad and Lester Fernandez can step upto the mark will not only be vital for their international careers, but also for India's hopes in the Challenge Cup. "We have more youngsters in our side so it

Today's friendly soccer match, which is scheduled to be played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher (1.30pm), is a good build-up platform for both the Asian teams. Oman's preparation is for the crucial World Cup qualifier on February 29, while India is getting ready for AFC Challenge Cup title defence

will give them a chance to expose in front of a big team such as Oman," Madeira said.

They cannot expect any sympathy from Oman however, who have become a very tough opponent to beat, especially at home, where they beat Australia 1-0 in a recent World Cup qualifier.

Meanwhile, Oman Football Association (OFA) has urged the Indian expatriates to turn-up in large numbers at the stadium.

"We request the fans to flock in large numbers. It will boost the confidence of the Indian side too. The entry is also free," said Hazza Al Saadi, OFA general secretary. The match will begin at 1:30pm.

T20SERIES

Pakistan look to redress balance

DUBAI: Pakistan captain Misbah-ul Haq said his side are desperate to redress the balance in a Twenty20 International against England today after a One-day series whitewash by the tourists. Pakistan were on Tuesday routed 4-0 by England, who showed a big improvement from their 3-0 defeat in the preceding three-Test series.

Misbah wants his side to regain the upper hand, but also wants to use the match as a stepping stone towards the World Twenty20 series later this year.

"This is a very important series for us, moreso because we won the Tests, they won the ODIs and now it's almost the decider," said Misbah.

"And if you consider that this is World Twenty20 year, it's very important for us to come back."

England will defend the title they won in the West Indies in 2010 when Sri Lanka host the fourth edition of the World Twenty20. "I think we need to learn from England on how they transformed their fortunes in ODIs, and I am confident that my boys can do that," added Misbah.

"I don't think we were dispirited, because the team wants a win desperately and that's why we were like that. Everybody was trying to give one hundred per cent and when it slips out of your hand it seems you are disoriented."

Pakistan will ring some changes, with experienced batsman Younis Khan and Azhar Ali returning home while dashing uncapped opener Awais Zia joins the T20 squad. —AFP

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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



AHLI UNITED FARES WELL

Ahli United Bank reported a record net profit of \$310.6 million for the year ended December 2011, a landmark result since its inception in 2000. This represents a 17 per cent increase over the 2010 result. >B2



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5,672.87	1,608.92	2,534.91	7,031.26	6,088.50	1,154.69	8,692.50
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+0.11%	+0.79%	+0.31%	+0.98%	-0.16%	+0.81%	+0.13%

AILING AIRLINE

India not to bail out cash-strapped Kingfisher Airlines

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: India's federal civil aviation minister yesterday ruled out a government bailout of Kingfisher Airlines as the cash-strapped carrier submitted a new flight schedule after days of cancellations.



Kingfisher Airlines has scrapped scores of flights over the last four days, leaving passengers stranded at airports. Several newspapers reported that State Bank of India would throw a lifeline to the airline

Kingfisher has scrapped scores of flights over the last four days, leaving passengers stranded at airports and the airline's owner, brewing magnate Vijay Mallya, battling to save the debt-laden company. Among at least 20 flights cancelled yesterday were 14 from the financial hub Mumbai.

General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) after the regulator ordered it to come up with a 'realistic' timetable for passengers. Just 28 of Kingfisher's fleet of 64 registered aircraft are in operation, according to the DGCA.

rektor-general Bharat Bhushan said. The airline declined to comment on its submission, which came as a consortium of more than a dozen lenders, led by State Bank of India (SBI), was reported to be considering providing funds to the airline.

adding the government would not interfere. The banks "have to decide on the basis of the business plan of the company. If they are satisfied with the business plan, they can lend money," he said.

"We are not going to bail out Kingfisher but we hope it can mobilise resources," Ajit Singh, federal civil aviation minister, told reporters.

"Kingfisher has submitted an updated schedule of flights. We are still reading and analysing it," DGCA di-

"The banks will decide (about pumping in more money)," Ajit said,

Several newspapers reported that SBI would throw a lifeline to Kingfisher, giving figures ranging from

Rs2 to Rs16.5 billion (\$40-\$335 million). But banking sources said the airline's consortium of 16 lenders, which includes SBI, were still studying a debt-restructuring proposal put forward last week. Banks own about a quarter of the carrier through an earlier debt-for-equity swap. "I don't think any individual bank can take a decision," said a source at the Punjab National Bank, India's second-largest public sector lender. "It will have to be decided by the consortium."

brink of collapse after nearly a week of flight cancellations and the resignation of dozens of its pilots.

Still, the government faces a dilemma over Kingfisher because it owns about one-fifth of its shares and roughly three-quarters of its debt through lenders.

Shares in Kingfisher have dropped around 60 per cent since the start of last year, shrinking its market value to \$269 million. Its domestic market share has almost halved in recent months from about 20 per cent.

On brink of collapse
Divakar Gupta, chief financial officer of State Bank of India, declined to comment on the reports of an imminent rescue package.

Mallya is also chairman of United Breweries, a conglomerate with interests as diverse as aviation, breweries, biotechnology and real estate. The group has annual sales of more than \$4 billion. Analysts estimate that the industry is on course to lose up to \$3 billion. - Agencies

Oman Cement eyes JV plant in Duqm

The cement maker, along with Raysut Cement, is studying the viability of a joint venture cement plant. Oman Cement yesterday recommended a dividend of 30%



MAKING A POINT: Jamal Shamis Al Hooti, right; and Deepak Dikshit speaking at Muscat Securities Market yesterday. Al Hooti said that if the UAE is willing to lower the cement prices for the local market and increase the price for export market, then Oman would be benefited. - A. R. Rajkumar/TIMES OF OMAN

availability of raw materials there. Talking about the price trends in the region, Jamal Shamis Al Hooti exuded confidence in stating that if the development that the UAE is willing to lower the cement price for local market and thinking seriously to increase the price for export market then Oman would be benefited. "If this happens which we hope will happen soon, then the customers will come back to us."

to upgrade Kiln 1 along with the refurbishment of the kiln's pollution control systems. Both upgrades will be completed by April 2012.

stalled large-scale vacuum cleaners to extract the emissions within the factory and now it is clean as this building."

He adds, "Price in the vicinity is improving in countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar but the price is almost same as last year as of now in the UAE and Oman."

The move comes in the backdrop of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs asking the Oman Cement Company to shut down the first production line. The decision came after the company allegedly violated the pollution control laws of the sultanate and failed to comply with emission standards despite repeated warnings as claimed by the environment authorities.

He added that the company has installed new instruments to measure emissions levels. He said three meetings have been held to sort the issue and we hope the authorities will be convinced so that we can restart our production using Kiln no.1. Investors were assured of profitability citing various options in case of different situation.

Environmental concerns

Jamal along with Deepak Dikshit, chief financial officer, OCC, and other officials were present at the MSM to explain the measures taken by Oman Cement Company to address the environmental concerns raised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. Jamal said that \$37 million are being spent to increase the capacity of OCC's Kiln and upgrade its pollution control equipment. It is meant

Explaining to a good number of investors present at the briefing, Jamal said, "We have embarked on an initiative to reduce the emission levels. The work for the upgradation and to correct the emission levels has already been started. Some equipments have been brought at our site while some have arrived at the port. We have now fully covered the raw materials like bauxite, limestone, iron ore, silica. The area of oil well cement has also been covered with a shade while a 6-km road around the factory has been asphalted. The company has in-

Proposed dividend
Meanwhile, the board of Oman Cement yesterday recommended a dividend of 30 per cent for the year 2011, which is subject to the approval of shareholders.

The company's profit before tax for the year 2011 is RO. 14.52 million as compared to RO28.20 million, (which also included RO7,338,828 being reimbursement of past losses by the government) for the year 2010. The profit after tax for the year 2011 is RO12.80 million as against RO25.04 million for the previous year.

REGIONAL MARKET

Saudi shares touch three-year high

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock index rose to the highest level in more than three years on investor bets the Arab world's biggest stock market may this year open up to foreign investors and as oil traded near a nine-month high.

In a growing sign of openness, the market regulator said in January it will allow overseas companies to list securities on the bourse.

Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (Sabic), the world's biggest petrochemicals maker, gained to the highest level since August. Al Rajhi Bank, Saudi Arabia's largest publicly traded lender by market value, jumped 2.7 per cent.

Non-resident foreigners are permitted to trade through share-swap transactions and exchange-traded funds, with the market regulator approving the first ETF in March 2010. The government allowed citizens of neighbouring Gulf countries to buy and sell local shares in 2007.

The Tadawul All Share Index climbed 1 per cent to 7,036.26, the highest intraday level since October 2008, bringing its increase this week to 3.3 per cent.

About 461 million shares were traded in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, double the 12-month daily average of 227 million shares.

The Bloomberg GCC 200 Index added 0.7 per cent.

In Qatar, about 6.8 million shares were traded yesterday, compared with the past year's daily average of 7.1 million shares.

"Some investors in regional markets are putting money into Saudi Arabia with the view that the bourse may soon open up to direct foreign ownership," said Asim Bukhtiar, an equity analyst at Riyad Capital. "Volumes have been going up in Saudi Arabia but are generally muted in regional bourses."

Crude exporter
"With such significant increase in volumes along with a rising trend, this indicates that the Saudi stock market is setting up to break through a three-year consolidation range since September 2009 to date, and a firewall resistance at 7,000," Musa Haddad, head trader at the National Bank of Abu Dhabi's asset-management group, said in a note to investors. "Such breakout on high volumes sets the stage for a long-term uptrend towards 8,000 - 10,000 levels."

Saudi Arabia's Capital Market Authority is in discussions with international banks to open the country's stock exchange to foreign investors early 2012, three bankers familiar with the matter said in October.

Oil traded near a nine-month high after United Nations inspectors in Iran were denied access to a suspected nuclear site, raising concern that tensions between Opec's second-biggest producer and Western nations may escalate. Oil for April delivery on the New York Mercantile Exchange rose as much as 16 cents to \$106.41 a barrel.

Foreign, non-Gulf investors currently can't directly invest in Saudi shares. The kingdom has not set a timeline for opening its market to foreigners, Abdullah Al Suweilmy, chief executive of the stock exchange, said in December.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, depended on oil for 93 per cent of its revenue in 2011.

Swap agreement
The stock exchange will directly link swap agreement portfolios to primary beneficiaries in coordination with the market regulator and brokerages, a statement on the Saudi bourse said on Tuesday. This will replace the previous process of combining beneficiaries under the name of authorised persons.

Sabic advanced 2 per cent to 101.25 riyals, the highest since August 3. Al Rajhi Bank gained to 76.25 riyals. - Bloomberg News

CRUDE

Crude oil falls from nine-month high

NEW YORK: Oil fell from a nine-month high as signs of slowing demand in Europe and China countered concern that a conflict between Iran and Western nations may escalate and disrupt supplies from the Gulf producer.

mies will remain very weak in the months ahead," said Andy Sommer, a senior trader at EGL in Dittikon, Switzerland.

Futures slipped as much as 0.6 per cent in New York after an index based on a survey of euro-region purchasing managers unexpectedly declined, signaling a contraction. Manufacturing in China, the world's second-biggest oil consumer, may shrink for a fourth month. Oil rose earlier after United Nations inspectors in Iran said they were denied access to a suspected nuclear-related military base.

"That means oil demand in the euro zone remains weak." Oil for April delivery on the New York Mercantile Exchange fell as much as 63 cents to \$105.62 a barrel and was at \$105.84. The contract earlier rose to \$106.41, the most since May 5. Front-month prices have gained 13 per cent in the past year.

Brent for April settlement was down 8 cents at \$121.58 a barrel on the ICE Futures Europe exchange in London. The European benchmark contract's premium to New York-traded West Texas Intermediate widened to \$15.74 a barrel from \$15.41. - Bloomberg News

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MARKET

BRIEFS

Galfar wins R04.9m contract

MUSCAT: Galfar Engineering and Contracting has bagged a tender for expansion of water networks project in Barka in the governorate of South Al Batina, for the Public Authority for Electricity & Water. The value of the contract is R04.92 million. The completion period is 540 days with 60 days for mobilisation.

ONEC bags service contract

MUSCAT: Oman National Engineering & Investment Company (ONEC) has been awarded a contract for maintenance services of government garage, workshop, camel corp and race track for the sum of R0975,800.

UAE fuel sellers may lose \$3.3b

DUBAI: Gasoline retailers in the United Arab Emirates may lose Dh12 billion (\$3.3 billion) this year by selling gasoline below cost at government-set prices. The National reported, citing oil minister Mohamed Al Hamli. Losses among the UAE's four retailers were Dh8.5 billion last year as companies absorbed the cost of fuel subsidies for consumers. Al Hamli was cited as telling members of the Federal National Council. Members of the consultative body agreed to form a committee to study a possible reduction in retail gasoline prices. The National reported.

GM invests \$70m in Dubai

DETROIT: General Motors (GM) invested \$70 million in a distribution centre in Dubai to supply parts for Chevrolets and other vehicles as the world's largest automaker expands in the Middle East. The carmaker bought the facility, located in Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone, for \$10 million, and stocked it with parts valued at \$60 million, Detroit-based GM said yesterday in an e-mailed statement. The center will supply replacement and service parts for GM's Chevrolet, Cadillac and GMC brands. "We plan to grow our business in this region by making continued investments in our showrooms, service centers and training academies," John Stadwick, president and managing director of GM's Middle East operations, said in the statement yesterday.

Peugeot, GM plan joint venture

PARIS: Leading French carmaker Peugeot Citroen is in talks with United States giant General Motors on forming a 'strategic partnership', French labour minister Xavier Bertrand said yesterday. Peugeot shares surged 8.48 per cent on the Paris exchange as news of the possible huge tie-up between the two industry giants spread. "The chairman of the group informed me last night about discussions for a strategic partnership, and told me it was good news for the group", Bertrand told Europe 1 radio following press reports.

Alibaba's privatisation plans

HONG KONG: The share price of Chinese online shopping portal Alibaba.com soared in Hong Kong intra-day trade yesterday after its parent company said it plans to take the firm private for \$2.3 billion. Alibaba.com shares rose 42.27 per cent to HK\$13.16 in strong volume after parent Alibaba Group announced its offer of HK\$13.50 per share. It was the stock's first day of trade since it was suspended on February 9. The offer marks the price at which the unit was listed in 2007, the group said in a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on Tuesday. "Taking Alibaba.com private will allow our company to make long-term decisions that are in the best interest of our customers and that are also free from the pressures that come from having a publicly listed company," group chairman Jack Ma said. - Times News Service/Agencies

Ahli United Bank net profit hits record high

The lender registered a profit increase of 17% for the year ended December 2011, a landmark since its inception in 2000. **Associate banks in Qatar and Oman contributed a 10% rise in net earnings**



Despite the geo-political developments in the Mena region and the eurozone crisis, Ahli United Bank sustained its growth in operating income and net profit demonstrating its strong underlying fundamentals and importance of its diversified business model

Fahad Al Rajaan
Chairman, Ahli United Bank

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) reported a record net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of \$310.6 million for the year ended December 2011, a landmark result since its inception in 2000. This represents a 17 per cent increase over the 2010 result.

The last quarter of 2011 contributed \$70.3 million to the overall result, compared to \$64.4 million in the last quarter of 2011.

The year 2011 witnessed major geopolitical developments with associated economic ramifications ranging from declining consumer and business confidence, subdued lending demand and reduced client activity driven by market volatility, widening credit spreads and pro-

active downward revisions in credit ratings of United States and many eurozone countries. The advent of the Arab Spring added a regional dimension to the earlier evolving eurozone debt crisis and generally worsening macro-economic indicators globally.

"AUB continued its solid performance in 2011 against the backdrop of a very challenging global business environment whose risks are continuing. Despite the geo-political developments in the Middle East and North African (Mena) region and the eurozone crisis, AUB sustained its growth in operating income and net profit demonstrating its strong underlying fundamentals and importance of its diversified business model. I am cautiously optimistic that AUB

is positioned to meet the emerging challenges arising out of evolving market conditions both in the region and globally and to maintain its positive performance into 2012," commented Fahad Al Rajaan, chairman of Ahli United Bank.

Long-term liquidity

Against the backdrop of a challenging business environment, Ahli United Bank pursued prudent liquidity build-up and capital preservation measures as its key priorities complemented by stringent cost controls to ensure its ability to effectively service its customers in providing necessary credit and other banking support under the most challenging conditions.

Long-term liquidity and funding profiles were augmented with the

conclusion of the landmark deals with IFC/IFC capitalisation funds in March 2011. These included raising \$290 million through the issuance of Tier-1 mandatorily convertible preference shares of \$125 million and a Tier-2 eligible 10-year subordinated term debt of \$165 million.

Moreover, existing subordinated term debt from IFC of \$200 million was elongated to increase its capital effectiveness and eligibility. Overall customer deposits were increased by 16.9 per cent (\$2.5 billion) to reach \$17.3 billion, while the overall interbank and repo borrowings decreased by \$0.8 billion as part of a plan to reduce wholesale funding dependence.

The AUB group maintained its focus on prudent lending norms.

AVIATION

Boeing 787s 'have potential' shimming fault

SEATTLE: Boeing said yesterday around 55 of its flagship 787 Dreamliners 'have the potential' to develop a fuselage shimming problem, but reiterated that the fault was being fixed.

Shims are used to fill in space between parts and industry publication Flightglobal has reported that improperly joined pieces had caused 'parts of the aircraft's carbon fibre structure to delaminate'. The discovery of the issue in early February is the latest snag to hit the showpiece but troubled jet, which suffered extensive production delays.

Boeing has previously said the problem arose because 'incorrect shimming was performed on support structure on the aft fuselage' of some 787s.

Although — who is concurrently the chief executive of Boeing Commercial Airplanes — stated the problem would not affect total Dreamliner deliveries scheduled for this year. - AFP

LITIGATION

China computer maker asks court to ban Apple's iPad sale

SHANGHAI: A Chinese computer maker yesterday asked a Shanghai court to bar the sale of Apple's iconic iPad in the commercial metropolis in a long-running trademark dispute.

Proview Technology (Shenzhen) says it owns the Chinese rights to the 'iPad' name and is seeking legal backing to force the United States technology giant to stop selling its trendy tablet computer in the city, where Apple has three stores.

It is very rare for a Chinese enterprise to accuse an overseas firm of trademark breaches — although foreign companies frequently complain of intellectual property rights violations in China.

In a half-day hearing at the Pudong District People's Court, lawyers for both firms exchanged evidence and forcefully presented their cases, prompting the chief judge to interrupt several times, spectators said.

The district court will decide whether the case should proceed to formal trial, a court official said.

The case marks the latest round in a lengthy and multi-pronged legal battle between Apple and debt-laden Proview, which has been badly hit by the financial crisis, over the rights to the iPad name.

The Taiwan affiliate of Proview Technology (Shenzhen) registered 'iPad' as a trademark in several countries including China as early as 2000 — years before Apple began selling its product.

The US titan subsequently bought the rights for the global trademark, but Proview Technology (Shenzhen) claims the Taiwanese affiliate had no right to sell the Chinese rights. Speaking after the hearing yesterday, Proview's law-



TRADEMARK DISPUTE: An employee displaying an Apple iPad 2 in New York. Proview Technology says it owns the Chinese rights to the 'iPad' name and is seeking legal backing to force Apple stop selling its trendy tablet computer in Shanghai, where Apple has three stores. - Bloomberg News

yer, Xie Xianghui, said he hoped the Shanghai court would make a decision soon to move the case forward. "We have already provided ample evidence that the Apple company violates the trademark," Xie told reporters outside the courthouse following the hearing.

Apple appealing case

Apple last year took the firm to a Chinese court, claiming trademark infringement, but the court ruled the US company lacked 'supporting facts and evidence' for its claim — even though a Hong Kong court had previously sided with Apple.

Apple is now appealing that case but Proview, which makes computer monitors, has itself filed trademark lawsuits against Apple in China and is threatening to sue the technology giant in the US for \$2

billion. But Xie said yesterday that a settlement was possible.

"There might be negotiations in the near future," he said, although he declined to give a figure for how much money Proview might seek in a settlement.

Apple's law firm this week warned Proview of possible legal action over 'defamatory statements and unlawful actions' aimed at interfering with Apple's business, according to a letter.

But in another lawsuit, a Chinese court last week ordered an electronics chain store to stop selling Apple iPads at a branch in the southern city of Huizhou, according to the GH Law Firm which represented Proview. Proview, based in China's southern boomtown of Shenzhen, has also filed complaints with local governments. - AFP

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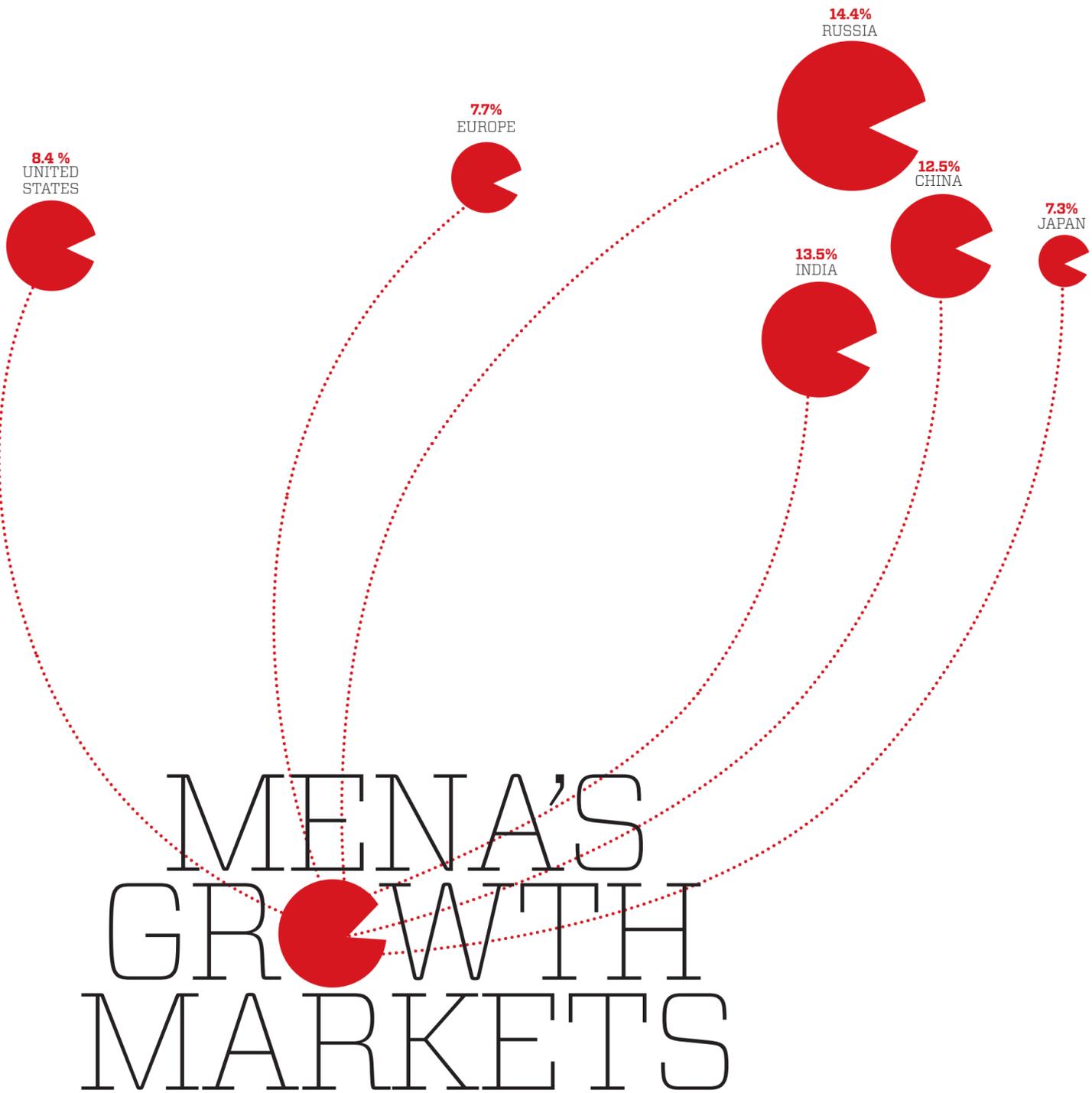
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MENA'S GROWTH MARKETS

The Middle East and North Africa (Mena) trade flows will grow fastest with Russia, India and China over the period 2012 to 2020, according to a report on foreign trade jointly prepared by Ernst & Young and Oxford Economics.

Beating the global average of trade growth that is set at 9.4 per cent per annum, Mena trade with Russia will grow at 14.4 per cent per year, with India at 13.5 per cent and with China at 12.5 per cent through to 2020. On the other hand, annual Mena trade growth with US will grow by 8.4 per cent, followed by European Union at 7.7 per cent and Japan at 7.3 per cent, said a report released by Ernst & Young. This will lag the global trade growth average of 9.4 per cent.

Jay Nibbe, EMEA Markets Leader, Ernst & Young, comments: "While advanced economies muddle through the financial crisis, the rapid-growth markets are going from strength to strength and are an increasingly significant part of the global economy. They will become an even more dominant force in global trade and as a result, businesses are going to have to adjust their strategies to reflect the increasingly regional pattern of world trade."

Balance of trade

The report, part of Ernst & Young's Growing Beyond series, reveals that global trade which has long been dominated by advanced economies is now shifting permanently eastwards. Asia-Pacific will experience the fastest growth in global trade through to 2020 and intra-regional trade there will lead to a renewed concentration of international demand.

Growth of India's trade flows, at over 15 per cent per year with all regions of the world, will be fastest through to 2020. India-China trade growth, at 21.7 per cent, will be the highest in the world.

Asian trade

Ernst & Young estimates that the continuing shift toward global outsourcing of production, as well as the growth of regional supply chains to serve the rapid expansion of demand from rapid-growth markets, will compress the share of the advanced economies in global trade from a little over 60 per cent in 2010 to around 55 per cent by 2020.

Asia will continue to be the most dynamic region in terms of trade, with the fastest growth of exports in goods occurring within the region itself. India and China will drive the continued rise of the emerging markets and together these economies will account for almost one-fifth of global trade flows by 2020.

The forecast shows that two of the most rapidly growing trade routes will be US exports to China and India, which Ernst & Young see growing at an average annual rate of almost 16 per cent.

Bassam Hage, MENA Markets Leader, Ernst & Young, says: "The degree of change in both the scale and direction of trade will have a profound impact on the competitive environment for all companies wherever they are located around the world."

Trade will also be increasingly focused around Asia, the Middle East and Africa, suggesting that the key geographical location for companies will change. Indeed, Europe's exports to Africa and the Middle East are forecast to be around 50 per cent larger than its exports to the US."

Europe's share of global exports will decline from 38 per cent in 2010 to 34 per cent by 2020. However, the forecast shows that Europe is the developed region that will gain the most in terms of export values from the expansion of demand in China, with exports to China rising by \$370 billion over the next ten years. China's predicted exports to Europe at over \$1 trillion will be almost twice as large as US exports to Europe.

Regional patterns

New markets for exports are also opening up within Mena and Sub-Saharan Africa as these economies grow in size. Total exports to these regions are forecast to grow more rapidly than exports to the US, Europe, Japan and the rest of the Americas. Richer economies in the region, particularly the oil-exporting economies of the Middle East, will also represent increasingly important sources of final demand for manufactured products.

"Total exports to Africa and the Middle East are forecast to grow more rapidly than exports to the US, Europe, Japan and the rest of the Americas. Although these new markets represent potentially exciting new opportunities, companies in developed nations will face increasing competition from firms in Asia, as well as Latin America, when seeking to supply these expanding sources of demand. In the sub-Saharan Africa and MENA regions, our forecasts indicate that the fastest-growing sectors will be metals, chemicals, other manufactures and machinery and transport equipment, with broadly similar average annual rates of expansion of around 11 per cent," adds Bassam.

MARKET

CRUDE OIL PRICE *

Type	Delivery	Price
Oman Crude	(Spot)	\$119.83
Dubai Crude	(Spot)	\$118.82
Murban Crude	(Spot)	\$123.04
Arabian Light	(Spot)	\$119.39
Arabian Heavy	(Spot)	\$115.54
N. Sea Brent	(Spot)	\$123.42
West Texas Int	(Spot)	\$105.84

* Rates as of Feb 22 Source: Bloomberg

CURRENCY RATES *

Forex rates vs RO1*	
US Dollar	2.58
Euro	1.94
Pound	1.63
Indian Rs	127.08
Pak Rs	233.10
Bangla Taka	210.53

Source: BankMuscat
* Rates as of Feb 22

Draft rates (RO1)*

Indian Rs	127.40
Pakistan Rs	234.20
Sri Lanka Rs	306.75
Bangla Taka	210.10
Phil Peso	110.20

Source: Oman UAE Exchange Centre
* Rates as of Feb 22

GOLD PRICES *

Muscat 24ct per gm (RO)	2178
Muscat 22ct per gm (RO)	2075
10 Tola Bar Muscat (RO)	N/A
Dubai 24ct per gm (Dh)	210.00
Dubai 22ct per gm (Dh)	197.50
Tola Bar Dubai (Dh)	N/A

Source: Atlas Jewellery
* Rates as of Feb 22

INDIA STOCKS



SENSEX WATCH

Tata Comm	253.80	15.85	Vidhi Dyestuffs-\$	4.80	-0.90
Coromandel Intl	276.40	8.50	Lanco Infra	23.45	-3.95
Gitanjali Gems	406.15	12.40	Brahmaputra Infra	56.80	-8.60
Sun TV Network	331.45	9.00	United Spirits	665.85	-94.95
Container Corp	1015.15	25.80	Sun Techno	0.33	-0.04

Sensex falls on profit-booking

MUMBAI: A benchmark index for Indian equities closed 283 points lower yesterday as investors booked profits after recent rallies. Realty, consumer durables and metal stocks were among the biggest losers.

The 30-scrip sensitive index (Sensex) of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), which opened at 18,490.87 points, closed at 18,145.25 points, down 283.36 points or 1.54 per cent from its previous close at 18,428.61 points. The Sensex had touched a seven-month high on Tuesday. SBI was the main drag on the Sensex, closing a whopping 7.91 per cent lower at Rs.2,253 after reports said that the lender had agreed to give Rs.1,200 crore in new loans to crisis-hit Kingfisher Airlines.

The 50-scrip S&P CNX Nifty of the National Stock Exchange ended lower at 5,505.35 points, down 101.8 points or 1.82 per cent from its previous close.

Broader markets were also in the red, with the BSE 500 index closing 2.37 per cent lower. The BSE mid-cap index was down 3.46 per cent while the BSE smallcap index shed 3.24 per cent.

The market breadth was negative with 769 stocks advancing, 2,208 declining and 106 unchanged.

Sensex 18,145.25 ↓ -283.36



Source: www.bseindia.com

Prominent gainers on the 30-scrip Sensex included TCS, up 1.46 per cent at Rs.1,251.90; Sun Pharma, up 1.24 per cent at Rs.549.15; ITC, up 0.6 per cent at Rs.208.25 and Infosys, up 0.53 per cent at Rs.2,952.65.

Major losers included SBI, down 7.91 per cent at Rs.2,257.80; DLF, down 7.69 per cent at Rs.238.80; Sterlite Industries, down 6.62 per cent at Rs.119.90; and Jindal Steel, down 4.82 per cent at Rs.612.50. Overseas funds, which have been

the main catalyst for the dramatic rise in Indian equities in 2012, continued with their buying spree.

According to data available with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth \$304.5 million yesterday. FIIs have put in \$5.27 billion since the start of the year, having bought equities worth \$2.03 billion in January and \$3.24 billion till February 22. - IANS

AirAsia's net profit falls

The region's biggest budget carrier posted a fourth straight drop in quarterly profit as fuel costs eroded gains from carrying more passengers

KUALA LUMPUR: AirAsia Bhd., the region's biggest budget carrier, posted a fourth straight drop in quarterly profit as fuel costs eroded gains from carrying more passengers.

Net income dropped 56 per cent to 135.7 million ringgit (\$45 million), or 4.9 sen per share, in the three months ended December 31, from 311.1 million ringgit, or 11.2 sen, a year earlier, the Sepang, Malaysia-based carrier said in an exchange filing yesterday.

Revenue rose 9 per cent to 1.27 billion ringgit.

The company will take delivery of three Airbus SAS A320 aircraft in the first quarter of this year and will start two new routes from Ma-

laysia, AirAsia said. The carrier may start a low-cost airline in the Middle East and form ventures in South Korea and Vietnam as it seeks to expand to new markets, Chief Executive Officer Tony Fernandes said this month. Services in the Philippines will begin as early as March.

"Passenger demand in the first quarter for the Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian operations remains positive," AirAsia said in the statement. "Load factors achieved in the month of January were higher than the prior year in Malaysia and slightly lower in Thailand and Indonesia, with average fares higher in all three countries."

AirAsia fell 1.4 per cent to 3.65 ringgit at the close in Kuala Lumpur, before the earnings announcement. The stock has declined 3.2 per cent this year, while the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI Index has gained 2 per cent.

Singapore Air, Qantas

Higher fuel costs and competition also damped earnings at Singapore Airlines Ltd. and Qantas Airways Ltd. Singapore Air said on February 2 its quarterly net income dropped 53 per cent, a fifth straight decline. Qantas' profit slumped 83 per cent in the six months ended in December. Fuel expenses at AirAsia jumped 62 per cent to 475 million ringgit in the fourth quarter from a year earlier. - Bloomberg News

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT SECURITIES MARKET

Muscat shares move up

MUSCAT: The MSM30 index ended on a positive note to close at 5672.87 points, up by 0.11 per cent. BankMuscat was the most active in terms of volume as well as turnover. Oman & Emirates was the top gainer for the day to close up by 5.56 per cent, while Oman Textile Holding lost the most and was down by 3.27 per cent.

A total number of 943 trades were executed in yesterday's trading session generating turnover of RO3.75 million with over 7.53 million shares of trading volume.

The market breadth was in favour of advancers. Out of 48 traded stocks, 11 declined, 15 advanced and 22 remained unchanged. Oman investors were net buyers for RO402,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for RO256,000 followed by GCC and Arab investors for RO146,000 worth of shares.

Banking and Investment Index was marginally up by 0.04 per cent and closed at 6328.24 points. United Finance, Oman United Insurance and Ahli Bank increased by 1.71 per cent, 1.58 per cent and 0.39 per cent, respectively.

Gulf Investment Services, Ominvest, Al Anwar Holding and Oman Orix Leasing declined by 1.75 per cent, 0.98 per cent and 0.94 per cent, respectively.

The Industrial Sector Index closed at 5944.17 points, up by 0.44 per cent. Oman Cement, Salalah Mills, Oman Cable Industry, Raysut Cement and Gulf International Chemicals increased by 1.37 per cent, 1.18 per cent, 1.08 per cent, 1.05 per cent and 0.67 per cent, respectively. Oman Textile Holding, Dhofar Cattlefeed and Asaffa Foods declined by 3.27 per cent, 0.74 per cent and 0.58 per cent, respectively. Services & Insurance Sector Index was up by 0.16 per cent to close at 2598.65 points yesterday. - United Securities

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSM30 Index	5,676.09	5,666.20	5,672.87	5,666.77	6.10	0.11
Financial Index	6,329.97	6,320.63	6,328.24	6,325.65	2.59	0.04
Industrial Index	5,947.39	5,916.71	5,944.17	5,918.24	25.93	0.44
Services Index	2,599.19	2,593.80	2,598.65	2,594.41	4.24	0.16

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
7,533,316	3,754,792	943	10,556,378,070	15	11	22	48

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SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Security Name	Volume	Turnover	Trades	High	Low	Close	Prev.	Diff.	Diff.	Last	Last	Last	Market Cap.	Par
							Fr.	Close	RO	%	Pr.	Bid	Offer	value

REGULAR MARKET

OMAN AND EMIRATES INV OM	99,062	9,404	6	0.095	0.092	0.095	0.090	0.005	5.556	0.095	0.095	0.097	5,789,062,500	0.100
GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT	5,222	308	1	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.057	0.002	3.509	0.059	0.057	0.059	17,700,000,000	0.100
RENAISSANCE SERVICES	436,027	249,678	85	0.576	0.561	0.573	0.560	0.013	2.321	0.575	0.571	0.575	161,640,122,142	0.100
OMAN CEMENT	604,789	267,954	80	0.445	0.440	0.443	0.437	0.006	1.373	0.444	0.443	0.444	146,576,610,530	0.100
SALALAH MILLS	6,100	5,246	3	0.860	0.860	0.860	0.850	0.010	1.176	0.860	0.840	0.870	41,420,235,040	0.100
OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	45,400	33,986	17	0.750	0.742	0.749	0.741	0.008	1.080	0.742	0.732	0.742	67,185,300,000	0.100
RAYSAT CEMENT	592,709	457,869	56	0.788	0.765	0.773	0.765	0.008	1.046	0.788	0.785	0.788	154,600,000,000	0.100
OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	915,257	119,028	47	0.131	0.130	0.130	0.129	0.001	0.775	0.130	0.129	0.130	13,000,000,000	0.100
GULF INT CHEMICALS	254,000	38,102	20	0.151	0.149	0.150	0.149	0.001	0.671	0.150	0.148	0.151	3,150,000,000	0.100
AHLI BANK	45,179	11,639	7	0.259	0.256	0.258	0.257	0.001	0.389	0.256	0.255	0.259	206,769,634,794	0.100
GALFAR ENGINEERING AND CON.	209,968	71,141	38	0.340	0.337	0.339	0.338	0.001	0.296	0.337	0.337	0.339	78,309,000,000	0.100
BANK MUSCAT	1,383,424	999,598	155	0.727	0.718	0.723	0.721	0.002	0.277	0.720	0.719	0.720	1,119,478,534,668	0.100
NAT ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS	280,300	104,097	36	0.375	0.370	0.371	0.370	0.001	0.270	0.370	0.368	0.370	12,455,007,950	0.100
SOHAR POWER	2,798	4,498	7	1.608	1.606	1.607	1.606	0.001	0.062	1.608	1.600	1.610	44,674,600,000	0.100
AL ANWAR CERAMIC TILES	4,238	1,526	2	0.360	0.360	0.363	0.363	0.000	0.000	0.360	0.357	0.360	70,673,086,011	0.100
AL JAZEERA SERVICES	283,601	70,098	55	0.250	0.246	0.247	0.247	0.000	0.000	0.246	0.246	0.248	15,117,455,431	0.100
AL JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	200,000	51,200	1	0.256	0.256	0.256	0.256	0.000	0.000	0.256	0.251	0.256	31,973,877,760	0.100
AL MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MAR	50	698	1	13.950	13.950	14.000	14.000	0.000	0.000	13.950	13.750	13.950	96,600,000,000	1.000
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS IND.	20,000	770	3	0.039	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.000	0.000	0.039	0.038	0.039	3,230,000,000	0.100
FINANCIAL SERVICES	22,222	1,200	2	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.052	0.054	3,510,000,000	0.100
MAJAN GLASS	1,000	587	2	0.587	0.587	0.587	0.587	0.000	0.000	0.587	0.540	0.587	19,500,140,000	0.100
NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN	197,561	62,429	11	0.317	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.000	0.000	0.316	0.316	0.317	341,596,000,000	0.100
NATIONAL GAS	110	61	1	0.550	0.550	0.570	0.570	0.000	0.000	0.550	0.552	0.565	14,250,000,000	0.100
NAWRAS	104,800	64,983	37	0.621	0.620	0.620	0.620	0.000	0.000	0.620	0.620	0.624	403,585,422,600	0.100
OMAN CHLORINE	246,000	110,700	18	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.000	0.000	0.450	0.432	0.450	27,797,412,600	0.100
OMAN FISHERIES	38,000	3,486	6	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.091	0.092	11,500,000,000	0.100
OMAN INTERNATIONAL BANK	110,000	30,800	8	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.276	0.280	271,054,730,800	0.100
OMAN REFRESHMENT	950	1,473	4	1.550	1.550	1.545	1.545	0.000	0.000	1.550	1.550	1.570	77,250,000,000	0.100
ONIC HOLDING	373,351	71,563	78	0.193	0.190	0.192	0.192	0.000	0.000	0.192	0.192	0.193	33,297,264,000	0.100
PORT SER CORPORATION	42,500	18,700	8	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.440	0.449	41,817,600,000	0.100
SHELL OMAN MARKETING	180	414	1	2.300	2.300	2.300	2.300	0.000	0.000	2.300	2.201	2.300	218,500,000,000	0.100
UNITED FINANCE	2,083	244	2	0.117	0.117	0.119	0.119	0.000	0.000	0.117	0.118	0.120	29,751,430,380	0.100
VOLTAMP ENERGY	2,952	1,135	3	0.385	0.381	0.383	0.383	0.000	0.000	0.385	0.381	0.385	21,065,000,000	0.100
OMAN TELECOMMUNICATION	330,030	461,155	41	1.400</										

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GOOD CHEMISTRY
Shreyas Talpade on his upcoming film, 'Will You Marry Me?' and his first production 'Chemistry' being stalled! >B7

SILENCE OF THE DIRECTORS

Chris Kentis and Laura Lau directed the surprise-hit shark drama 'Open Water' in 2004, but it took eight years for them to return with their new film, the haunted-house chiller 'Silent House'

Chris Kentis and Laura Lau scored a surprise hit with their goose-bump-raising, circling-shark indie film *Open Water* (2004), and then followed it up with...nothing.

On March 9, however, the fright-fest *Silent House* will finally signal the husband-and-wife tandem's return to theatres. What took so long?

"We tried to make the leap into more-expensive studio projects," Kentis admits as he and Lau sit for a joint interview at a Manhattan bistro. "I think the thing that really lured us in that direction, even though we've always been very independent and very guerilla, was a passion project that was dangled in front of us, which I could not say no to, and that was the story of the U.S.S. Indianapolis. It would've been a very, very expensive movie for Warner Bros.

"So we were trying to leap into larger-budget filmmaking, to take on something vastly larger than we'd done before and work within the studio system," he continues, "but it coincided with pretty tough times for anybody trying to do anything. You had the writers' strike and then also the economic crisis, and a lot of things changed drastically in Hollywood." Lau puts a hand on Kentis' hand and politely interrupts.

"I think it was the classic situation where New York indie filmmakers get L.A. agents and try to do the Hollywood thing," she says. "We'd write scripts, want to do our own thing, sell something to a studio and be, like, 'Yay! This is happening,' not realising that the studios buy everything and hardly make anything they acquire.

"It was a hard lesson for us." Time passed, and the two grew frustrated. Finally they were offered the opportunity to write, produce and direct a low-budget remake of the Uruguayan horror movie *La Casa Muda* (2010), and they ran with it. The result is *Silent House*, which stars Elizabeth Olsen as Sarah, a young woman who returns to the remote lakeside house of her childhood with her father (Adam Trese) and uncle (Eric Sheffer Stevens), only to be relentlessly terrorized by unseen intruders.

In addition to Kentis, Lau and their *Open Water* halo, the key selling points of *Silent House* are its rising star, Olsen, and a memorable filmmaking twist: The often-violent, real-time story plays out in what seems to be a single, uninterrupted, 86-minute take, a device also employed by Gus-

tavo Hernandez on *La Casa Muda*.

"The one-take element is very important," Lau says, "but the core of the story is this family and what happens when you have secrets that are suppressed, and the damage that is wrought on the people in a family in that kind of a situation. It's about how you become trapped, really, in this kind of a dynamic and you can't get out of it. There's a terror you feel in that situation."

"It's interesting because, honestly, what first attracted me to the project was the technical challenge of pulling off this experience of what feels like one take," Kentis says. "I also liked the challenge of trying to tell a deeper story in that way. It felt like an opportunity to give the audience a unique experience, which doesn't come along every day. I was instantly really excited by that.

"Of course it was a matter of finding the right story to tell in this format," he continues. "In this story, and ours differs from the Uruguayan film, the audience makes the discoveries along with the characters, through the character's point of view, and the technique serves that very, very well."

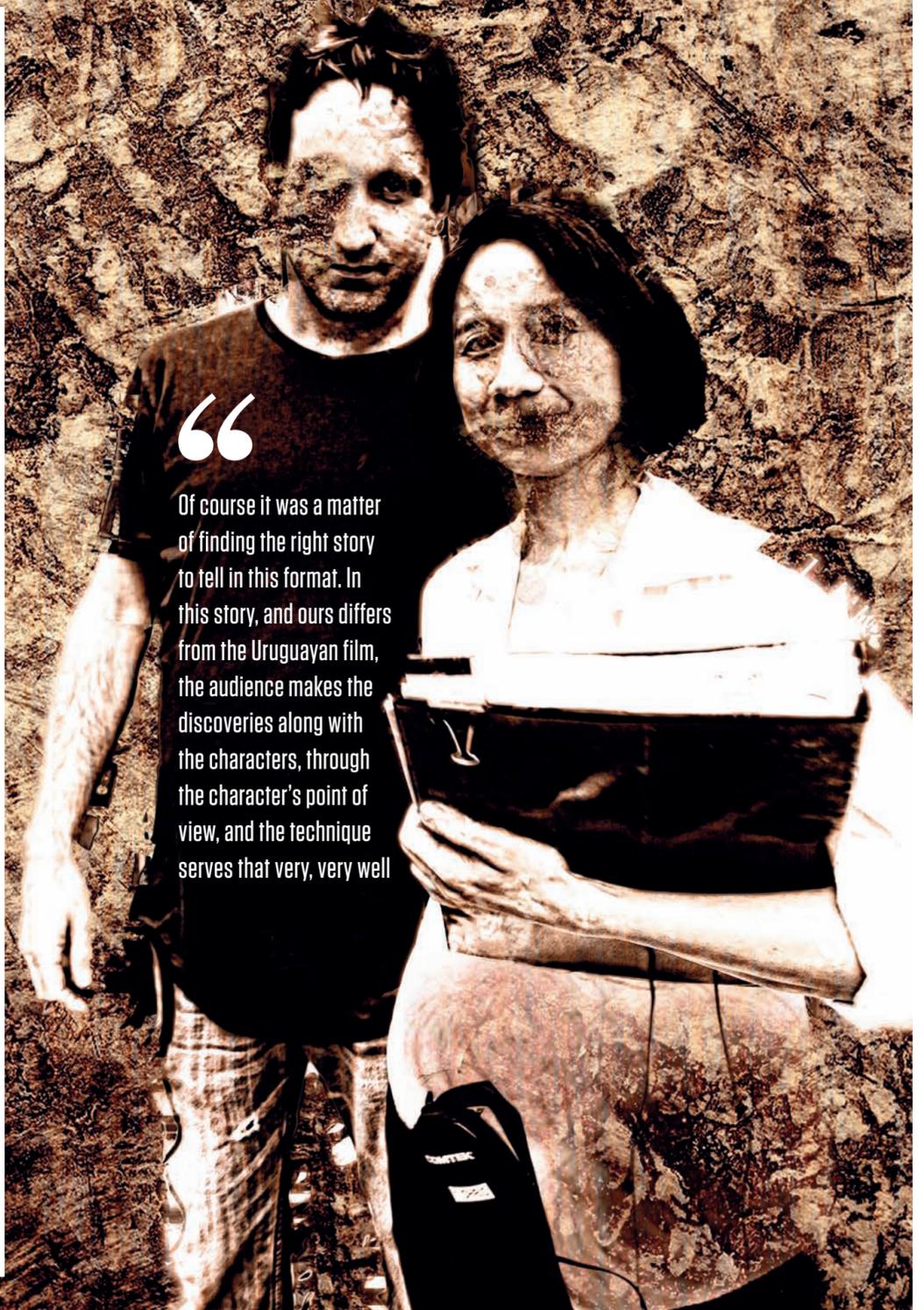
The focus of pretty much every scene in *Silent House* is Olsen, young-sister of Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. Only 22, she won acclaim for her performance in *Martha Marcy May Marlene* (2011) and appears to be on the fast track to stardom.

"This movie doesn't work if Lizzie doesn't bring it all to the table," Kentis says, "and she did. The movie was done in a series of very, very long shots, and there was no hiding or disguising anything. There was very little I could do in the editing, and that's usually where you can make a good performance great or a mediocre performance good, or where you can screw up a performance. She had to bring it each time, which was incredibly challenging, because it was technically and physically tough, and because of the emotional state she needed to be in take after take.

"Lizzie was great."

If the filmmakers follow their current pattern, they won't be back with another film until 2020. That won't happen, they promise, at least not if they can help it.

"We have two films in the works that we're writing right now," Kentis says. "I'm working on a thriller that can be done on a really low budget. I've never seen anything like it, and it's a subject matter that's true to my heart". - Ian Spelling/THE NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



“Of course it was a matter of finding the right story to tell in this format. In this story, and ours differs from the Uruguayan film, the audience makes the discoveries along with the characters, through the character's point of view, and the technique serves that very, very well”

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SENSE & SENSIBILITY

Asin Thottumkal gets candid about her sartorial sense, the importance of being part of the mainstream cinema and remakes

Two blockbusters out of three releases. Does that give you a high?
I am a level-headed person, so success doesn't give me an unnatural high nor does failure keep me down. That solely cannot determine my happiness. Life has been very stable so far and I am keeping my fingers crossed for *Housefull 2*.

What prompted you to do a multi-starrer like *Housefull 2*?
Several reasons, starting with the opportunity to work with a lot of senior and contemporary actors. Working in this film has been a great experience and good fun. We had a long schedule in London and we literally had a houseful of actors. Johnny Lever, Boman Irani, Rishiji, Randhirji – I bonded well with all of them. There was a personal connect with Rishiji who plays my dad in the film and Randhirji who plays my uncle. Even Mithunda was encouraging and supportive. He said that he has been closely following my career. Not just after I entered Bollywood with *Ghajini* but even when I was doing South films. I was really touched.

With so many actors in the film, it would be interesting to know what is your role.
Well, it's a mainstream film and I play the lead role opposite Akshay Kumar. Let's not intellectualise it. It is a commercially entertaining film with Sajid Khan's stamp of comedy. For me at this point, it is important to be

part of mainstream cinema. Both the Sajids (producer Nadiadwala and director Khan) have proved themselves in this genre and it makes sense to be a part of this franchise.

After the Khans (Aamir and Salman), you are working for the first time with Akshay Kumar. How was the experience?
It was a riot working with Akshay. He has so much energy and is quite a joker with his pranks. John (Abraham) and he gel well together and with the two Sajids around it was a lively set. I was always smiling, so much so that Akshay started addressing me 'constant smiley'.

Looks like you had a lot of fun shooting for the film.
Oh yes! I would play word games with Rishiji and Riteish (Deshmukh). Also, Rishiji has some beautiful songs on his iPad that we kept listening to. Then there was our girl gang including Jacqueline (Fernandez), Shazahn (Padamsee) and Zareen (Khan) who would bond on BB (Blackberry). In the middle of the night, we would eat cakes and pizzas and then have a round of guilty confessions. All of us were together for the long climax scene that was shot over a few days and that's how we bonded.

Usually when two or more actresses get together, there is an undercurrent of rivalry. I am only concerned about my role and not about what others are doing. I take

people at face-value and don't look at the baggage they carry or over-analyse them.

After *Housefull 2*, you have the remake of the 1979 *Golmaal*, coming up.
Let me tell you that *Bol Bachchan* is not exactly a remake of *Golmaal*. Yes, the core idea has been taken from that, but a lot of changes have been made. I am shooting for it in Jaipur after which we will be moving to Wai.

Recently, you were in the news for turning down *Shootout At Wadala* while Sanjay Gupta claimed that you had never been approached for the role... (Cuts in) It's weird why he should lie or be in denial but the fact is that I had been approached for the film by Swati Shetty of Balaji Motion Pictures and I have my reasons for not doing it. Beyond that I have nothing to say as I'm least interested in being a part of some PR stunt by Mr Gupta for his movie or for himself.

Haven't you also been approached for *Special Chhabbis* directed by Neeraj Pandey and starring Akshay Kumar?
I was approached but I can't tell you anything beyond that.

What kind of roles are you looking out for?
I would like to do a performance-oriented role but in the space of a commercial cinema. I want to focus on projects which combine both, like a *Ghajini*, in which I played a strong character.

Are you doing any films in the South?
No, I have a body of work there and I don't want to repeat myself as far as the roles are concerned.

Won't you lose out to other upcoming heroines there?
I have done my share of work and only something better or exciting can entice me to do a film there.

Talking about your South films, many of them have been remade in Hindi. What is your take on this trend?
Remakes are healthy. The story gets a wider group of audience, which in turn gets a new story. Most of my films including *Ghajini*, *Pokkiri (Wanted)*, *Bodyguard* and *Khakha Khakha (Force)* have been remade. Another film of mine Sami is being remade as *Thanedar Returns*. However, I would like my first Telugu film *Amma Nanna O Tamil Ammayi* to be remade in Hindi. It's a nice family-oriented story. It has romance, songs and a great story.

In the three years that you have been in Bollywood, you have maintained a low profile but now you are suddenly seen at various events.
Yes, I have started going for events organised by friends. I have worked with Riteish in *Housefull 2*, so naturally I attended his wedding, Farah (Khan) and I go back a long way, which is why you saw me at her party.

You have also upped the glamour quotient with your sartorial sense. What gives?

That's a conscious decision. I realised that in Bollywood, a lot more importance is given to how well you are turned out. Earlier I didn't care for styles or trends. Though I wore designer outfits I did not care so much about my appearance. Now, I am taking a little more interest and putting my thoughts into the styling, which reflects my personality. Like for Riteish's sangeet, I wore a colourful lehenga but avoided embroidery or bling. The colours took centre-stage as it reflected the vibrancy, fun and dancing that signifies the ceremony. For the wedding, I decided to take the traditional route and since I am a *Mallu*, I wore my mum's white and gold border saree which connects me to my roots. It was simple, yet elegant. The response has been encouraging. My basic style of dressing is uncomplicated. Understated, chic and elegant, that's me.

Even your Mirinda ads are reflecting the change.
Yes, it was Raju Hirani's idea. He has directed the ad campaign and he told me to sport a short hairdo. Frankly, I am open to experimentation and would like to cut my hair short but being a mainstream heroine that is not possible, so I sported a short hair piece. **INDIAN EXPRESS**

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GOOD CHEMISTRY

Shreyas Talpade on his upcoming film, 'Will You Marry Me?' and his first production 'Chemistry' being stalled!

The first look of Will You Marry Me? looks interesting. So what's in store for the audience?

Will You Marry Me? (WYMM?) is about three friends and their contrasting thoughts on marriage. There's Rajeev Khandelwal, who doesn't want to get married. As for my character, he is interested in getting hooked, while Muzamil Ibrahim is confused over the very thought of tying the knot. The film starts with a confusion, which begins in Mumbai and unfolds in Dubai. Mugdha Godse, who plays a girl next door, is our love interest. She is also one of the big reasons to start the chaos. The film is completely of the youth, for the youth and by the youth!

Tell us about your role and look in the film

I play a wedding planner. My character is dominating in nature. Though I am a 'good' boy, I later become wicked in order to get the girl. In the first half of the film, I sport a simple look with one side parted hair and in the later part, I have spiked hair and a pony tail.

Major part of the shooting for the film was done in Dubai,

how was the outdoor experience?

The film was shot at Fujairah, which is a couple of hours drive from Dubai city. We went berserk shooting there. We would party every night after work. Nights were pleasant, but it was very hot during the day with the temperature rising to 48-49 degrees at times making it impossible to shoot.

Since you play a wedding planner, what's your take on this new trend?

It was Dipti, who played a perfect planner during our wedding. Ours was a very simple Maharashtrian wedding where we concentrated on all the traditional rituals. I feel since marriage is all about finding your life partner, it is a personal affair. However, these days it is becoming more commercial. Recently when a friend invited me for his wedding, I was shocked to learn that the sangeet was organised in Mumbai, the actual wedding was in Bangkok and then the reception in some other place. I guess times are changing and one should adapt to the changing trends.

You had ventured into Hindi film production with Chem-



istry. What is happening to that film?

My financing partner is having some issues and hence the shooting of the film is presently on hold. Actually, most of the film has been shot with only a few portions left. I have seen part of the film that is ready along with my friends and it is looking fantastic. I hope the conflict is sorted out soon and the audiences gets to see my creation.

Have the differences and the delay discouraged you as a producer?

Not at all. One should only learn from such situations, instead of getting discouraged. Anyway such things are common in every field. It even happened with *WYMM?* and the film was stuck for almost eight months.

Like WYMM?, Chemistry too seems to be a love story.

Yes, it is a love story between two underdogs. It is about two people who are in different relationships, but are unhappy with their lovers. Destiny brings them together and after certain incidents, they feel that they are made for each other. It is a romantic comedy. The film has been shot in Mumbai and Paris.

You had earlier produced a Marathi film besides even acting in a few. Are you considering any Marathi films now?

The market is really good for Marathi films right now. I am eager to produce one. In fact I am looking into some offers to act in one as well.

What was the idea behind your six-pack look?

I was very lazy till I realised that if you have to survive in Bollywood, it is necessary to have a good physique. Also, I wanted to be prepared in case a film requires me to go shirtless. After all, people should like what they see! It was a challenge for me after a producer told me that I can't be a part of any action film as I don't have a good physique. My six-pack abs will now speak for itself.

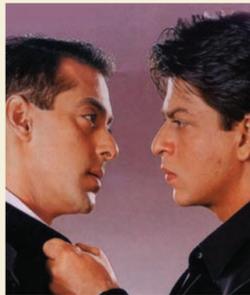
What are the other projects on hand?

In *Housefull 2* I play a fashion photographer. Shirish Kunder's *Joker*, which is a science fiction adventure has me playing the younger brother of Akshay Kumar. Both the roles that I am doing are challenging and it was fun portraying them.

- Onkar Kulkarni/INDIAN EXPRESS

FILMS

SALMAN AND SHAH RUKH FOR 'DHOOM' SERIES?



'*DHOOM 3*', with Aamir Khan, hasn't gone on floors yet, but the media has gone ahead and announced *Dhoom 4* with Salman Khan and *Dhoom 5* with Shah Rukh Khan. Yes, you read it right! A section of the media has proclaimed that Yash Raj has already locked the scripts and cast of the 'Dhoom' series. While *Dhoom 3* will feature Aamir, *Dhoom 4* (with Salman) will release in Eid 2014 and *Dhoom 5* (starring SRK) is slated

for release in 2015-16. However, the news seems more like a bluff, since the gap between *Dhoom 2* (with Hrithik Roshan) and *Dhoom 3* (with Aamir Khan) will be more than seven years, since *Dhoom 3* is expected to release in 2013. Hence, expecting *Dhoom 4* to release a year after *Dhoom 3* release, in 2014, seems ludicrous. Ditto for *Dhoom 5*, which, reportedly, is expected to release in the following year (2015-2016). - INDIAN EXPRESS

REPORT



'FURIOUS' AKSHAY DENIES SPLIT WITH TWINKLE

AKSHAY KUMAR is fuming over reports that his marriage with Twinkle Khanna is on the rocks. Rumours recently swirled that Akshay and Twinkle's relationship was going through a rough patch and they were planning to get separated.

These reports have angered the Bollywood hunk, who has now hit back saying that such false news would upset his family.

"You speak anything about me and my work, it's ok, but getting family into it is insensitive, and especially news that is false would upset my family," the 'Khiladi' star said. - INDIAN EXPRESS

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ADRIEN BRODY

PLAYS A TEACHER WITH A LOT TO LEARN



'Detachment' casts Adrien Brody as Henry Barthes, a substitute teacher in the New York City school system

Check out the cast of *Detachment*: Adrien Brody, James Caan, Bryan Cranston, Blythe Danner, Marcia Gay Harden, Christina Hendricks, Lucy Liu, Tim Blake Nelson, William Petersen and Louis Zorich, not to mention newcomers Sami Gayle and Betty Kaye. They all signed on for the opportunity to work with director Tony Kaye, a filmmaker who has had a frightfully bumpy, clash-filled ride in Hollywood.

"It's a beautiful cast," Brody says. "It's a tribute to Tony and also to the material. I think actors, and good actors, are always craving relevant material. There is, unfortunately, not enough of it available, and there are a lot of talented, creative individuals who wish to express themselves in a meaningful way. The beauty of making a film is that there's a permanence to it, and we can entertain and, at the same time, delve into subjects that are extremely important to us and to our society as a whole."

"I was very honoured to work with my fellow cast on this movie," the Oscar-winning actor says. "I was very impressed with Sami Gayle's performance. She was so vulnerable and raw and open. Carl Lund wrote a beautiful script, and Tony is a fascinating and unpredictable human being, in a really great sense, and a gifted filmmaker, and I think people were drawn to all of those parts of it."

Currently available via On Demand and set to open in limited theatrical engagements throughout March, *Detachment* casts Brody as Henry Barthes, a substitute teacher in the New York City school system. Henry likes the vagabond, commitment-free nature of substitute teaching, but is surprised to find himself caring when he settles in for an extended stay at a chaotic high school populated by unruly, troubled

students and a mostly burned-out staff. Complicating matters, Henry's elderly father (Zorich) is fading fast and Henry recently has befriended a young prostitute (Gayle) whom he tries to save from the streets.

Speaking by telephone from a hotel room in China, where he's shooting a new movie, Brody - who won his Oscar as Best Actor for *The Pianist* (2002) - explains that he viewed Henry as a damaged soul, hanging in and barely hanging on.

"I feel that Henry is pretty universal, in the sense that many people can relate to that state of mind," Brody says. "Some of his encounters are more extreme than others, and some people have greater tragedies to overcome, and I think that's partially what the film focuses on, that we must overcome the pain and suffering in order to be kind to and present for the people that matter to us in our lives, and to not help perpetuate that cycle of sadness and lack of accountability."

"Tonally *Detachment* is similar to the early '70s movies that De Niro was very attracted to, that Scorsese made, like *Taxi Driver* (1976)," Brody says. "You don't know what the potential for this man is, and I feel like Henry is at a breaking point in this story, and you don't know if he's capable of doing tremendous good or of being completely self-destructive and imploding and creating harm for himself and others."

"I love that," he adds. "You can attribute that to Tony's creative genius and unpredictability."

Critics and moviegoers can decide for themselves whether or not they like *Detachment*. It's dark and edgy, occasionally melodramatic and fanciful, and it won't be for everyone. Still, it's a worthwhile endeavour. That said, though, *Detachment* is premiering on pay-per-view, even as pieces of utter cinematic drive



open on 3,000 screens and gross hundreds of millions of dollars.

The irony is not lost on Brody, who laughs ruefully at the thought.

"Don't ask me about what makes a film successful and what warrants marketing dollars and what doesn't," he says. "Every explanation I've heard is that it's a numbers game and a film about a somewhat heavy subject matter, about guiding our youth and taking some accountability ... I guess the elements that the film speaks about are intimidating on a massive scale."

"I do feel that there's a very intelligent audience out there that would love to see films like this and deserves to see films like this," Brody says. "With *The Pianist* there was belief in it. It also went to Cannes and won the Palm d'Or, and it had the historical significance and the personal connection to the filmmaker. It had all these things that allowed it to be very enticing in the onset."

For Brody, however, this film also has a special, deeply personal appeal.

"I think *Detachment* has the potential to inspire a lot of people," he says. "My father was a public-school teacher, and a wonderful one at that, and a great father. Part of my motivation to make this film was that I attribute my own ability to have discipline and belief in myself to my parents, to having someone guide me through the more challenging times. My friends who

didn't have that have failed to surmount the tragic moments in their lives, and it's unfortunately suppressed their ability to succeed in their artistic endeavours."

"That is the most valuable message to encourage, that we have to be there, and I am living proof of that."

Brody seems completely at home in *Detachment* and thoroughly immersed in his character. It's easy, in fact, to say that it's his kind of film, his type of character - easy, but unfair.

Brody has played very different roles in some huge studio films, including M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village* (2004), Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005) and *Predators* (2010), the latter two of which cast him as action heroes of one sort or another.

"I don't know an actor who'd pass on an opportunity to play an intelligent leading man in Universal's biggest movie that Peter Jackson personally asked you to play the protagonist in," Brody says. "I don't know anyone who'd say no, and I loved the experience. That was very much like an independent film. Even though there were enormous resources to make the movie and bring Peter's dream to fruition, it was his autonomy and working in his environment, with his crew, that made it very similar to the process of working with a gifted independent filmmaker". -¹aa

Spelling/THE NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

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