

OMAN-THAILAND TIES RIDE MEDICAL TOURISM WAVE

Thailand has become a well-known medical tourism destination, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors in response to the rising demand for medical treatment. >A6



ESSA BIN MOHAMMED AL ZEDJALI: 1939-2013

Doyen of journalism in Oman passes away



Essa pioneered a genre of journalism that will continue to inspire media professionals

Death is not always an end. To a majority, or to the teeming millions, it may be so. But there are a few extraordinary individuals who leave a permanent imprint in the sands of time. By conceiving something epic in scale and grand in imagination, Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, who passed away on February 21, 2013 in Bad Neustadt an der Saale, Germany, will always be remembered for his immense contributions to journalism and society.

A key figure in the history of media industry in the Sultanate of Oman, Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali has left behind an unprecedented legacy written in extreme passion – shaping the course of journalism by the strength of his ideas and vision. A doyen of journalism in Oman, he personified triumph of resilience and planning with precision and perfection to win over the heaviest of odds.

He dared to dream and had the courage to chase those dreams with conviction. Essa introduced the first-ever English newspaper in the Sultanate and pioneered a genre of journalism that none before him dared to imagine. On February 23, 1975, he gifted Oman its first English newspaper – *Times of Oman* – in an exciting tabloid format.

"I owe to the telex from Flying Tiger Corporation, who mentioned the country (Oman) as Muscat, Oman, Saudi Arabia. If it were not for the telex, *Times of Oman*, would not have happened," said a beaming Essa, when *Times of Oman* celebrated its 35 years of successful existence in the year 2010. >A5

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan has wished him good health and happiness and his country's people further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Donald Ramotar of Guyana on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan has expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people further progress and prosperity. —OMA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

ASIA

Four killed in Bangladesh clashes

1 Bangladesh police fired live rounds yesterday in fierce clashes with hardliners demanding the execution of bloggers they accuse of blasphemy, killing at least four people and injuring about 200. Two people were shot by police in Palashbari. >A12

WORLD

UK immigration wave

2 Britain is expecting a second wave of immigration from East Europe next year – this time from Bulgaria & Romania. >A14

MARKET

Oman-Spain trade up

3 Trade between Oman and Spain have soared, tripling from OMR52 million in 2011 to close to OMR150 million in 2011. >B1



Fat chance of slimming

B5

GIRLFRIEND'S KILLING

Pistorius released on bail pending trial for murder

PRETORIA: South African Paralympic icon Oscar Pistorius was freed on bail yesterday, pending a high-profile trial for killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

Pretoria magistrate Desmond Nair ruled the "Blade Runner" was not a flight risk and did not pose a danger to society after an emotionally charged four-day bail hearing that transfixed South Africa and the world.

"I come to the conclusion that the accused has made a case to be released on bail," Nair said to cries of "yes!" from Pistorius's supporters in court.

Pistorius later left the magistrate's court in a silver sports utility vehicle flanked by photographers and cameramen on motorbikes.

Long legal battle

It was a first victory in what is expected to be a long legal battle with the state, which accuses Pistorius of premeditated murder.

Bail was set at one million rand (\$112,770) and Pistorius will have to surrender his passport, firearms and report to Pretoria's Brooklyn police between 7:00 am and 1:00 pm on Monday and Friday.

As the two-hour ruling was read, the 26-year-old stood in the dock weeping and quivering as his family looked on, riven with tension. Following the magistrate's decision, Pistorius was escorted to the holding area sobbing uncontrollably, as his brother Carl hugged sister Aimee and the broader family huddled in prayer.

"We are relieved by the fact that Oscar got bail today, but at the same time, we are in mourning for Reeva Steenkamp and her family," said the athlete's uncle and family spokesman Arnold Pistorius. "As a family, we know Oscar's version of what happened that night, and we know that it is



IN THE DOCK: Oscar Pistorius

the truth that will prevail in the coming court case." Pistorius will head to a relative's house rather than return to the Pretoria estate where Steenkamp was killed.

"He doesn't want to go back to the house," said his attorney Barry Roux. His arrest on February 14 shocked the world and gripped South Africa, where he is still considered a national hero after becoming the first double amputee to compete in the Olympics.

Pistorius spent more than a week at a Pretoria police station charged with the premeditated Valentine's Day killing of Steenkamp, a model and law graduate.

If found guilty he faces a possible life sentence. He denies the charge, saying that he shot 29-year-old Steenkamp repeatedly through a locked bathroom door having mistaken her for a burglar.

Steenkamp's housemate Kim Myers greeted the decision with restraint. "This is just a bail application. This is not a trial. We trust and hope that justice will prevail," she said.

"In South Africa, as far as the law is concerned, if you are rich you are always free," said 29-year-old law student Adolph Baloyi. —AFP

Russia hits out at 'US ambivalence' on Syria

Moscow flays Washington for **blocking a UNSC statement** condemning a car bomb attack in the Syrian capital

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the United States yesterday of having double standards on Syria, saying it had blocked a UN Security Council statement condemning a car bomb attack in Damascus.

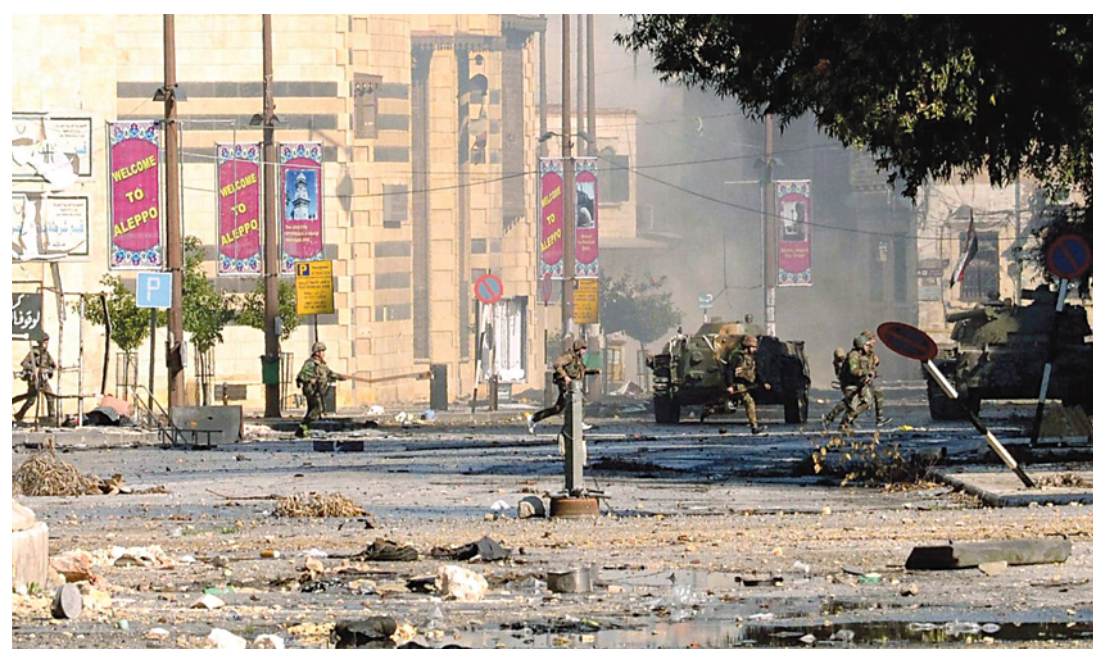
Washington denied it had blocked the statement and said it had only asked for balance. The disagreement was likely to sour the atmosphere before Lavrov meets newly appointed US Secretary of State John Kerry next week in Berlin.

Lavrov told a news conference that Washington had disappointed Moscow by blocking a statement condemning "terrorist attacks" near the Russian embassy in Damascus that killed more than 50 people and that Washington was threatening international unity in the "war on terror".

"We believe these are double standards," Lavrov said after talks with China's foreign minister.

"And we see in it a very dangerous tendency by our American colleagues to depart from the fundamental principle of unconditional condemnation of any terrorist act, a principle which secures the unity of the international community in the fight against terrorism," he said.

A spokeswoman for the US mission at the United Nations said it had not blocked any statement of



BATTLE ON THE STREETS: Syrian government forces cross a street in a district under their control in the city of Aleppo, yesterday. —AFP

condemnation but had sought to balance the text with criticism of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's forces, which it said Russia had rejected.

"We strongly condemn all indiscriminate terrorist attacks against civilians or against diplomatic facilities," said Erin Pelton, spokeswoman for the US mission.

Ties worsen

Ties between Washington and Moscow have worsened since Vladimir Putin returned to Russia's presidency last May.

The passage of U.S. legislation intended to punish Russian officials accused of human rights abuses and a Russian ban on American families adopting Russian children have also contributed to the deterioration in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of the magazine *Russia in Global Affairs*, said the alignment of Russian and Chinese positions was meant to give them more leverage

when negotiating with the West. "Chinese and Russian positions so far on a global level are almost identical. This is an important factor, because if Russia were alone it would be much less powerful. This is a factor Western powers cannot ignore, that Russia and China act together," said Lukyanov.

Syria's opposition National Coalition said it would form a government to run "liberated areas" of the country, as violence raged on with at least 12 people killed and dozens wounded in a missile strike on Aleppo.

"We agreed to form a government to run the affairs of liberated areas," spokesman Walid al-Bonni said after a meeting in Cairo, adding that the Coalition will meet in Istanbul on March 2 to decide on the composition of the government and to choose its head.

The Coalition had been discussing a proposal by chairman Ahmed Moaz Al Khatib to talks directly with the regime of President

Bashar Al Assad.

But while saying there was a place for "honourable members of the Baath Party and the political apparatus" in the political solution, the group said afterwards that "Assad and the security and military command cannot not part of any political solution."

Khatib had offered to talk to regime officials without "blood on their hands"—an initiative welcomed by the Arab League and the United States, as well as Iran and Russia.

12 killed

In Aleppo, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights director Rami Abdel Rahman said, "at least 12 bodies have been recovered so far and there are more than 50 people wounded."

The Britain-based Observatory said the number of victims was likely to rise, as many people were trapped under the rubble of collapsed buildings in the eastern district of Tariq Al Bab. —Agencies

A PIONEER WITH A GREAT VISION

With his great contribution and service to the Sultanate's media industry spanning well over three decades, Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali was the most well-known journalist in Oman.

Apart from being the founder and editor-in-chief of Oman's premier English daily *Times of Oman*, he was also considered to be among the pioneers of both Arabic and English journalism in the Sultanate.

His bold and incisive column, *Viewpoint*, on a host of national and international issues on the front pages of the two national newspapers, not only carried a lot of depth and weight, but was also eagerly awaited by thousands of readers every Sunday. People who knew him and admired him, talk of the man they knew...

PERSONAL LOSS

The demise of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali is a great loss to me. He was a personal friend. When I came to Oman in 1972, my visa was signed by him. He was then working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was a great friend of the Indians. I have known him since I landed here. He was an extremely nice person. His demise is a personal loss to me, the Indian community, and also Oman. I am sure he will live in the people's hearts for many years to come. We will all remember him forever. I join with so many others who knew Sheikh Essa in offering my deepest condolences on his demise. If the outpouring of grief on his loss is any indication, and it most certainly is, you can confidently say that his indeed was a life well-lived. We pray for eternal peace for the departed soul and for the family strength to bear the loss.

Dr P. Mohamed Ali, vice chairman and managing director of Galfar

HIGHLY GIFTED PROFESSIONAL

Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali was not only a pioneer and a highly gifted professional in the media world of Oman, but also a personal friend of mine. I feel a deep sense of loss. He was a fearless intellectual and impacted the newspaper journalism space of our country in a very significant manner. His demise is not only a passing away of a gifted and talented individual, but of an epoch in the true sense of the word. The KR management, staff and my family members join me in praying for everlasting peace for his soul.

Sheikh Kanak Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas

UNDERSTOOD PEOPLE'S PULSE

Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, founder and editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman* and chairman of the MPPH Group, was a pioneer of Omani print media, who made valuable contributions to the development march of the Sultanate. He truly understood the pulse of the people and set high standards for responsible journalism in Oman with a balanced approach, mirroring the progress and prosperity of the country on the one hand and initiating constructive dialogue by taking up social and economic issues that mattered for the lives of citizens. I am saddened by his demise but confident that the media institutions nurtured by him will continue to hold aloft his ideals and contribute to the progress of Oman.

Abdul Razak Ali Issa, Chief Executive, Bank Muscat

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

The demise of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali will leave a deep void in the media and communications industry in Oman, which will be difficult to fill, in the years to come. I can vividly recall the painstaking efforts that he took to make *Times of Oman* from its humble beginning to what it is today. His team building skills and leadership are exemplary. Not only did he create a newspaper of national and international repute, but also successfully brought out quite a few publications from the Muscat Press and Publishing House, over the years. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family and pray to God gives succour to his near and dear ones to overcome this loss.

Aqeel Jawad Sultan, chairman, Jawad Sultan Group of Companies

TRANSFORMED THE MEDIA SCENE

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, an influential figure and role model. He played an instrumental role in transforming the media scene and was the first to establish a privately operated newspaper in Oman. He was an inspiration to this generation's young journalists and aspiring editors. We join the nation in conveying our heartfelt condolences to the Al Zedjali family and friends,

and are comforted by the knowledge that his legacy will live on forever.

Ross Cormack, CEO Nauras

COMMENDABLE CONTRIBUTION

I would like to convey my profound condolences and deepest sympathies to the family, friends and the *Times of Oman* team on the sad demise of Sheikh Essa Mohammed bin Al Zedjali, founder and chairman and editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman*. Sheikh Al Zedjali's contribution in building *Times of Oman* as the leading English newspaper of Oman, especially popular with the expatriate Indian community, was truly commendable. A renewed commitment to further strengthening the *Times of Oman* group of publications would be the most befitting tribute to the memory of late chairman Al Zedjali.

J.S. Mukul, Indian Ambassador

ZEALOUS MISSION

I join with so many others who knew Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali in offering our deepest condolences on his demise. Sheikh Essa is completely irreplaceable and his vision and pulse on the nation has for years been the conscience keeper to the Sultanate. His column 'Viewpoint' was something we always looked forward to, which reflected a zealous mission and its role in society. His insight and thinking capabilities reflected the mind of a good, principled journalist, providing the cutting edge incisiveness of modern day reporting to his readers in a responsible manner. He was the epitome of the free press while shouldering the incredible responsibility of accountability. We share in the bereavement and pray that his family has the courage and fortitude to bear this loss.

Ananth A.V, Regional Director, LuLu Hypermarkets

THE LEGEND

Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, the legend and founder of news print media in Oman is no more. A kind hearted man, a gentleman is no more and in many ways, a statesman is no more.

Having said that, I say Sheikh Essa is no more only physically – he shall always be there in spirit and thoughts, not only in my mind or not only, as a guiding light, in the minds of his family and friends or Times staff, but of the entire print media – nay the minds of Omanis and expatriates alike. I had the good fortune of meeting him right from 1977, when Times started as a weekly till recently. Oman and all of us have lost a great man. May his soul rest in peace.

Suresh K. Virmani, Managing Director, Bahwan Engineering Co. LLC

HIS LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

Everyone at Oman Air has been very saddened to hear of the demise of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali and we would like to express our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

As a pioneer of Omani journalism, Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali has played a key role in shaping the media in the Sultanate. His wisdom, integrity and experience not only ensured the success of MPPH and the *Times of Oman*, of which he was chairman and editor-in-chief, but also made a major contribution to the blossoming of the Omani business sector in the years since the Renaissance.

The coverage by his titles of the development of Oman Air since its foundation in 1993 has helped us to establish a powerful and positive reputation at home and internationally. For this, and for his many other achievements, we are grateful to Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali. His demise leaves us all the poorer, but his legacy will live on through MPPH, the *Times of Oman* and the nation on which he has had so great an impact.

Usama Karim Al Haremi, Oman Air



AN EXCELLENT HUMAN BEING

I have been greatly saddened by the demise of Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, chairman of Muscat Press and Publishing House and editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman*. He was not only a great journalist and a well-known philanthropist but an excellent human being too. The whole Pakistani community is distressed at this colossal loss and we sincerely pray that Allah Almighty rests his soul in eternal peace and gives the bereaved family the strength to bear this loss with fortitude.

Sheikh Essa was known as the pioneer of English journalism in Oman and set very high standards in the discharge of his professional duties. His highly popular weekly column 'Viewpoint' not only addressed local issues, but also highlighted sensitive regional and international issues freely and fairly.

The growth of all MPPH publications under his guidance proves his mettle as a capable leader, who knew how to maintain balance and neutrality in the media industry. That is precisely the reason *Times of Oman* and other MPPH publications became equally popular among all segments of society and all expatriate communities in Oman. I really wish and pray that his successors work with similar zeal and maintain those standards to ensure continued success.

Nawabzada Aminullah Khan Raisani, Ambassador of Pakistan

LEADING JOURNALIST

I have learned of the demise of Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali with profound sadness. I think it is a great loss not only for *Times of Oman* but also for the Sultanate, for he has been a leading journalist in the region. The Embassy is deeply indebted to him for the opportunities to reach out to Omani readers. I have a great admiration for his love of his country. I will pray that God may give the departed soul eternal peace and give strength to his family and all staff of *Times of Oman* at this very difficult time. I will also pray that

Times of Oman may continue to grow under the principles he has set.

Jonghyun Choe, Korean Ambassador to Oman

TRUE FRIEND

The Embassy of Bangladesh in Muscat, on behalf of the Bangladesh Community in the Sultanate of Oman and on its own behalf, expresses deep shock at the sad demise of Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, chairman of MPPH and editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman*. On this sad day, we recall with deep appreciation the significant contribution that Al Zedjali made over the years in developing English journalism in the Sultanate. Al Zedjali was a true friend of the Embassy and the Bangladesh community at large. We pray for salvation of the departed soul and convey deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Embassy of Bangladesh

MAN OF GREAT VISION

Oman has lost an iconic figure in Oman's journalism. I met him last year when I invited him to attend an embassy's function and I told him how much I was proud when I saw him receiving a prize of excellence in Dubai. He was a man of great vision.

Adil Al Rahbi, US Embassy

A GENTLEMAN IN EVERY ASPECT

It was indeed shocking to hear the sad demise of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, founder and editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman* and chairman of the MPPH Group. A gentleman in every aspect and a pioneer in journalism, he has brought quite a lot of changes in the print media world in Oman with his vision and actions. May his soul rest in peace and I pray to Almighty to give solace to the bereaved family members.

Tonny George Alexander, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman



OMAN HAS LOST A GREAT SON

I am shocked to learn here in Thailand that Sheikh Essa Mohammed bin Al Zedjali with whom I was closely associated during my stay in Oman from 2008 to 2011, is no more. I feel a great void has been left behind by his demise. Sheikh Essa was a different person to different people, but most importantly, he was respected and looked up to by all. A simple soul at heart and a humanist, he took great interest in people and helped everyone in times of need. He was a scholar who had a broad world view and who thought on his feet and did not hesitate in professing his views on the burning issues before Oman and the world. He loved Oman. He was also a lover of Indian food, music and the Indian way of life. We used to have long discussions on Indian philosophy and culture and on the current topics of the day. Ever a reasonable human being, Sheikh Essa was never rattled by a situation and took everything in its stride. He was not afraid to take a stand and took some bold business decisions with regard to his publications based of practicality and common sense. Oman has lost a great son and I have lost a wonderful friend.

Anil Wadhwa, present Indian ambassador to Thailand and former Indian ambassador to Oman

GREAT VISIONARY

The Indian School Muscat family was deeply saddened by the news of heavenly journey of unforgettable great visionary Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, who is synonymous with the torch bearer lumina in the Sultanate. It is a profound grief for all of us. His love for children and his passion to promote knowledge and news with missionary zeal for several news activities in schools through photographs, events, quizzes and competitions will sadly be missed by all in schools. We do hope his inspirations and news vibrations will continue shine on us in enhancing media efforts for children. A great noble soul who selflessly served the mankind, he will always be fondly remembered in our hearts with love for many years to come. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those dear to the noble soul.

*Achuthan Madhav
Principal, Indian School Muscat*

PIONEERING INITIATIVES

We at Greycaps, are deeply saddened to learn of the demise of the beloved chairman Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali. He leaves us with fond memories of the interactions we had during our visits to host the *Times of Oman* quiz shows. While one was instantly touched by his simplicity, grace and humility, as a quizmaster, I saw him from the perspective of my profession and was amazed by his memory. He had on one instance recalled a question I had asked about six years ago.

He enjoyed the quiz and would often ask me where I found the questions and would smile when I told him "It's from your newspaper!". My last interaction with him was on stage when I made a request for an exclusive school quiz that he instantly replied "Yes, we should do it". To me he was one of those who chose not to stand by and watch the modern history of Oman unfold, rather help shape it by pioneering initiatives, including quizzing.

Giri 'Pickbrain' Balasubramaniam

COMPASSIONATE GUIDE

My condolences to the family. We have lost a great man in Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali. I had the great pleasure of first meeting him during Oman's 10th National Day. Being a stranger to this beautiful country many decades ago, Sheikh Essa provided me with the unconditional support whilst I founded a private school. He provided me with guidance and showed me compassion throughout my career as an educator and principal without discrimination and these are only some of the characters of a great man that I respected and we as a community will miss. May Allah rest his soul in peace, Ameen.

Suad bint Mohammed Al Mudhaffar, Life Coach and Lecture

HE WILL REMAIN IN OUR MEMORY

We feel deeply grieved at the heartbreaking news of the sad demise of Sheikh Essa Bin Mohammed Al Zedjali. He was an open and warm hearted friend of long time. His modest and humble manners and feelings of concern for friends and society will always remain in our memory. He allowed an insight to his intellectual world through his writings expressing a strong desire for a just and fair world for all humanity.

His gentle smile will be missed at all social occasions. May Allah grant him place in Jannah. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family. May Allah grant them strength to bear the loss.

Dr S Arshad Ali Wasti and Dr Shahnaz Wasti

SMILING PRESENCE

Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali was a gentle, humble human being, who I had the pleasure of meeting several times and I was always surprised how he remembered even those he met infrequently. He was a pioneer in many ways for the print media and a father figure to many who have followed him. He is someone who will always be missed for his quiet, smiling presence. We all mourn the demise of a giant and our deepest condolences go out to the grieving family. He will certainly rest in peace in a special place he created for himself in heaven while he was amongst us.

Dr Avirat Vaishnav, senior consultant Paediatric surgeon, Royal Hospital

HIS NAME WILL LIVE ON

The news of Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali's demise is very sad. He has been a pioneer of English journalism in Oman for many years and he will be greatly missed by a huge number of loyal readers. His name will live on.

Jane Jaffer, author

PIONEER OF NATION'S MEDIA

Sheikh Essa Bin Mohammed Al Zedjali was a leader and pioneer of this nation's media but also a person who was faithful to honour friendship, such as the one he shared with our family and particularly with my late husband, Tom, with whom his closeness dated back to 1956. Tom was once quoted in a *Times of Oman* article as having said, "I believe that every place needs a strong media to connect the world with the country that is developing, and Essa Mohammed Al Zedjali, whom I know as a friend, took the initiative." The members of our family convey their sincere condolences to both the immediate and the extended family of Sheikh Essa.

Lorna Todd, Surrey, UK

A MAN TO WHOM ALL WERE EQUAL

Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali was just such a lovely, warm, and caring person who always had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes. He made everyone feel so special no matter what their position.

He was a man to whom all were equal. I will always remember his great kindness, generosity, support and encouragement to all the students and teachers when I was in charge of 'The English for Life' competitions.

He would always attend our award prize ceremonies despite his hectic schedule. For years afterwards, he would always recognise me in a crowd and enquire as to how students were doing. I will miss him for all his wonderful qualities but most of all for the compassionate human being he was. My deepest condolences to all his family, friends and colleagues.

Michele Ni Thoghda, Ministry of Education

FRANK AND FEARLESS EDITOR

I first interacted with Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali in 2003 to seek his support for launching a programme 'Spreading the Light through Human Values' in association with the Ministry of Education, and without a second thought, he said "yes" as he felt it was the need of such a programme for the youth - future citizens of the country. He was a frank and fearless editor when it came to the welfare of the nation. He will be truly missed.

Lt.Col.(Dr) Narayan Ramachandran, senior consultant and chief, orthopaedics and trauma, Armed Forces Hospital

KEEN PHILANTHROPIST

I have known Sheikh Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali for 25 years. His demise is an immeasurable loss to the community, to the media and the country. He was a philanthropist and very keen in all the happenings around him. Personally, I feel the loss because he had always supported the Indian Social Club whenever approached.

His demise is going to leave a big void in the activities that he partook. I wish his family strength to bear this irreparable loss. May the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace.

Dr Sathish Nambiar, chairman, Indian Social Club



Obituary

With hearts filled with grief and sorrow,

Anees bin Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali,
Faiq bin Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali,
Mohammed bin Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali,
Ahmed bin Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali

and all their family members

Mourn the sad demise of
their beloved father

Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali

Who passed away on Thursday,
February 21, 2013 in Germany

The family prays to Allah the Almighty to bestow His mercy and eternal peace to the departed soul and grant the family members strength and fortitude to bear this irreparable loss.



A MAN OF MANY FACETS

FROM A1 A champion of the oppressed

Essa never compromised with ethics and objectivity in journalism

And indeed extremely fascinating has been the story of the birth of *Times of Oman*.

It was a vision of fusion — an effort on the part of a visionary who was deeply affronted by the telex message which wrongly mentioned Muscat and Oman as part of Saudi Arabia. His injured sense of pride as an Omani drove Essa to take a daring decision to introduce his country to the world outside, and thus germinated *Times of Oman* in his mind. In 37 years, the publication he founded on February 23, 1975 has grown into a behemoth — perhaps the strongest and the most enduring brand in Oman today.

Few entrepreneurs have had so much of impact on society and nation in such little time as Essa. Quintessentially a quiet man gifted with an amazing sense of humour and full with respect for humanity, Essa was a man always in quest of perfection and precision — traits and qualities that created the foundations of every enterprise he set up.

Essa was the face of media of

Oman, both English and vernacular, to the world beyond its horizons. His extreme penchant for micro-management, ability to work under most compelling duress and his courage to defy and go against the conventional wisdom of the industry coupled with his relentless quest for simplicity made him stand out — arguably the tallest among his contemporaries.

Essa personified commitment and excellence. And these are the traits that defined the evolution of everything he touched with his Midas touch. Not that his life had been a bed of roses or that his journey through time has always been smooth. Muscat Press and Printing House (MPPH), that he made into an empire from a humble beginning, today owns seven publications including *Times of Oman*, *Al Shabiba*, *Hi*, *Al Youm Al Saba*, *Thursday*, *Faces*, and *Black and White*. He achieved in making MPPH one of the most valuable companies in Oman by his sheer hard work, judicious thinking and power of vision.

Boldness, courage to speak out the truth and to stand by what seemed right to him always defined Essa as an individual, entrepreneur and, most importantly, as the editor-in-chief of *Times of Oman*. In his own right, Essa became one of the most endearing voices of the Arabs to the world. His weekly column, *Viewpoint*, soon after it was first published on April 15, 2000, became one of the most keenly-awaited columns not only in Oman but also beyond its shores across the Arab world.

For the past 12 years, *Viewpoint*, published simultaneously in *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* every Sunday, has been offering its readers new and incisive perspectives about several national and international issues.

To the people and readers, Essa offered a bold stand on the Palestinian issue imploring the United States, the world and Arab leaders to work together in the best interest of the Palestinians. Through his column Essa championed the cause of Palestinian independence and fearlessly exposed Israeli shenanigans.

Viewpoint became a window to the Arab thinking and Arab perceptions to the world, a highly respected column, revered, and well read equally by the Arabs and non-Arabs.

But never ever did Essa compromise with objectivity in voicing his opinions. And that was the character which made his column, *Viewpoint*, stand out uniquely in the multitude.

In standing with the Palestinians and the oppressed population of the world, irrespective of their ethnicity, colour and creed, Essa's biggest contribution to journalism was his spectrum with which he viewed and analysed the issues, adding emotional dimensions — while speaking out, loud and clear — against injustice.

As a journalist he was second to none and was a newsperson par excellence, always encouraging colleagues to scratch the surface and peep beyond the apparent with a keen devotion to ethics and

principles.

He guided *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* into an era of modern technology, introducing the latest designs which kept all the publications he edited miles ahead of the others. In constantly helping *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* to reinvent and evolve their daily content and editorials, Essa added perceptible sharpness and edge which none of the contemporaries of *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* could even imagine.

Essa was therefore a pioneer and the architect with the unique ability to shape and reshape, define and redefine the phases of evolution of the media industry in Oman. He was the pioneer and architect who set the rules — forcing all others to emulate.

A keen observer of politics and global issues, Essa was also a connoisseur of classical music and art which has, time and again, found expressions in his weekly column. He was a doting father, a caring husband, a loving grandfather, a friend in need to thousands, and a protective employer.

Even in diplomacy, Essa had had a glittering stint. Between 1988 and 1992 he served at the Philippines' Honorary Consul General to Oman. And it was during this time that Essa consolidated the diplomatic stand of Philippines in the Sultanate.

Essa's demise is a big loss not only to the journalistic fraternity, but also to the nation as well as the Arab world. He has left a big vacuum that will be very hard to fill. A true visionary, indeed.

A CAREER SPANNING DECADES

A pen portrait of the author



- Born in Muscat in 1939.
- February 1956-March 1957: Administration In-charge at Petroleum Development of Oman's office in Fahud, Oman.
- June 1957-May 1958: Insurance Officer at M/S Gray MacKenzie & Co. Ltd, Muscat.
- June 1959-September 1968: Head of Archives Department at Ministry of Post, Telephone and Telegraph, Government of Kuwait.
- October 1968-January 1971: Secretary to the Department (now ministry) of Petroleum & Minerals, Government of Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- February 1972-December 1975: Director of Administration, Finance Consular Affairs, Protocol, Security & Coding Department at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman.
- December 1975-May 1979: First Consul General of Sultanate of Oman to Bombay, India.
- June 1979-March 1983: Chief of Administration and Finance Department at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman.
- March 1983: Resigned from

- Foreign Service to look after own business.
- Member of World Association of Newspapers (WAN) since 2000.
- Member of Gulf Press Union, HQ in Bahrain.
- Incumbent Vice-Chairman of Oman Press Club.
- Had been Member of Consultative Council (now Majlis Al Shura) for two terms of four years each.
- Member Board of Directors, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) from 1984 to 1994.
- Member of Commercial Dispute Committee led by the Undersecretary of Ministry of Commerce & Industry from 1984 to 1994.
- Also served on the Board of Directors of the following companies/institutions: Oman Arab Bank; Bank of Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait; Oman National Gas; Oman Sun Farms; Al Ahlia Insurance Company; Oman International Investment Company (Ominvest).
- Had also been member of Anti-Communist League, a private world organisation.

VIEWPOINT

First Viewpoint
Published on April 15, 2000

It is really a heresy!

RECENTLY, many phenomena unusual to our community have started to crop up every now and then, shocking me to the extent that I feel compelled to raise an alert on such issues.

One of these phenomena is non-adherence of some private companies to some invariables that we have grown up to respect, appreciate and regard as holy.

The anniversary of the Hijra (migration) of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the celebration of the New Hijri Year have driven me to write this Viewpoint. The whole Muslim world, throughout the history, has celebrated this blessed occasion. Though the celebrations may differ from one country to the other, we all agree that the said day should be a holiday for all and an opportunity for prolonged thinking on the lessons derived from this blessed occasion.

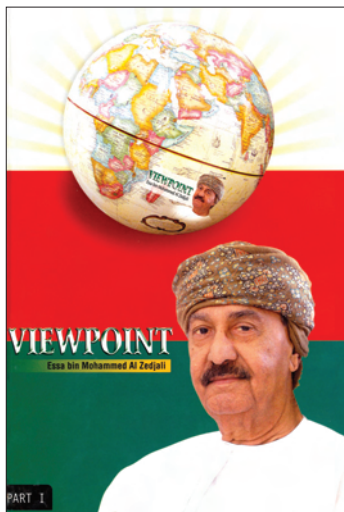
The holiday aims to bid farewell to a Hijri year and welcome a new one. To make such a holiday legal for celebrating the new Hijri year, the ministry concerned issues a binding ministerial decision, to which all adhere.

At the beginning of the current new Hijri year, two weeks ago, Sayyid Saif bin Hamad, minister of the Diwan of Royal Court and chairman of the Civil Service Council and Sheikh Amer bin Shuwain Al Hosni, Minister of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training issued ministerial decisions stopping work in all departments on the first day of Muharram.

The general scene of the daily life is supposed to conform to the said decisions, traditions and customs. But I came to notice that several companies, including a few mega ones, do not adhere to either the decision or the significance of the two events that fall on first Muharram. Such companies continue with their operations as usual, as if there is no occasion to be respected or no ministerial decisions to be adhered to.

It is true that the decision of the Minister of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training allows employers and employees to agree on work during the holiday if necessity arises but such an exception is only for those providing necessary services that cannot afford any delay. The decision clearly stipulates "if necessity arises".

Any keen observer of the daily life on first Muharram must have noticed that many companies, not providing urgent and necessary services, have thrown all traditions and ministerial decisions out of the window. It is really a heresy!



2001

Khareef Festival and the global dream

EVERY year, tourists from within and outside the country flock to Salalah, thanks to its distinguished Khareef Festival when Salalah beckons the visitors with its green hills, cool showers and cloud-capped mountains.

People enjoy themselves with the bounty of nature, besides the rich cultural and entertainment programmes for children as well as adults. They find peace and pleasure, thanks to the organisers of the festival.

Over the years, Khareef Festival has gained in popularity. Indeed, it has become an important event in the diary of festivals of the people in the Sultanate and our brothers in the AGCC countries. The cultural programmes are selected in a way that appeals to the taste of all people.

Needless to say, the festival has succeeded in attracting tourists from all over the world and Salalah has become the favourite destination for families from the AGCC states.

The success of the festival, no doubt, is largely owing to careful planning and concerted efforts. However, in order to achieve still better success, we need to make greater efforts.

2002

Why citizens pay the price?

ACCIDENTS are unforeseen and however careful you are, you may meet with one while driving a vehicle. You are lucky that you emerge from the accident unhurt but your car is not; it sustains damage which needs repairs.

Whether you are at fault or not, there are a number of procedures that you will have to go through, beginning with the inspection of the accident site by the police and the preparation of the accident report, which is followed by insurance procedures.

And in the end, your car is in the garage.

Now you find yourself in a vicious circle. The police report would, of course, not be issued in one day; it may take days. And hell is waiting for you in the insurance company, where the procedures move at a snail's pace.

You then wait for the person who caused the accident to come and pay the compensation. Then the expert would inspect the car and prepare his report. The garages submit their quotations so that the insurance company can choose the lowest price.

2003

How can we minimise the number of road accidents?

THE mass media occasionally publish news and pictures of major road accidents that occur in various regions and governorates of the Sultanate. These accidents cause deaths and severe injuries, inflicting unbearable grief on their relatives and friends.

The number of victims of traffic accidents has been increasing steadily — in fact, it has already reached a huge figure. This alarming rate of deaths and injuries calls for serious measures to stop the flow of blood on the streets.

Schools are set to open after the summer break, so it is all the more important to take a fresh look at ways and plans to end the "harvest of souls" of our youths and children by some reckless, irresponsible motorists.

2004

Sparks of crises ignited by the media

THE media has been playing an active and positive role in all societies of the world, especially in times of wars and crises, during which it is, indeed, the first line of defence.

Unfortunately, the media, be it print, visual or audio-visual, is no longer confined to its traditional role of just transmission or dissemination of events and images as they are. It has assumed playing a bigger, dangerous role of triggering off crises that transcend the borders of nations.

2005

Arab unity is important than Arab initiative

THE 17th Arab summit, held last Tuesday and Wednesday in Algeria, calmly ended with a unanimous agreement to reactivate the Arab initiative for peace with Israel, which was adopted in the 2002 Arab summit in Beirut.

The Arab peace initiative includes full normalisation of ties with Israel in return for complete withdrawal from occupied Arab lands, including Al Quds, in accordance with international resolutions adopted by the UN, in addition to the solution of the refugees issue as per international Resolution number 194.



2006

Arab world and nuclear technology

THE PRESSING need for the Arab nation today is, without doubt, the acquisition of nuclear technology. Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa's call during the 18th Arab Summit in Khartoum last week for Arabs to join the nuclear club for peaceful purposes reflects the views of the Arab fraternity and confirms the fact that the Arabs are fully aware of the necessity of having nuclear technology. Today, the stance of the Arabs on various issues is all but ignored, and they are forced to tamely carry out whatever is dictated to them. There are about 280 million Arabs distributed in 22 countries, but their status in the international community does not correspond with this mighty figure.

By rights, this figure should have enabled the Arabs to challenge and confront various issues unitedly and thus win the respect of the world; but sadly, the reality is different.

The Arabs fail to come out of their shell of denunciations, condemnations and grandstanding. The Arabs need to take a leaf from the book of North Korea, which is in possession of nuclear technology and has not succumbed to any pressure or threats from big powers. It is to be noted that in the recent past, the US-North Korea nuclear negotiations were carried out on an equal footing with the latter having been given an opportunity to put up its conditions and reject what it found unsuitable.

2007

HM deserves much more than awards and medals

THE PRESTIGIOUS Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding, deservedly awarded to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said a few days ago, is indeed another glorious feather in our beloved leader's cap. In fact, His Majesty the Sultan's track record as the Sultanate's leader brims with such international awards and medals. The latest honour represents a new milestone in the international community's recognition of His Majesty's efforts and achievements, a clear evidence of the innovative thinking of a leader and builder of a modern state. As a matter of fact, the prestige of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding has gone a notch up when it has added His Majesty's name in its records. The world leaders and intellectuals alike have repeatedly praised His Majesty's distinct way of dealing with regional and international issues and in taking decisions wisely after proper and precise assessment of the situation in question, thus setting a good example to others. This has won the Sultanate a high status in the comity of nations. The prestigious award to His Majesty the Sultan represents international recognition of his efforts to place the Sultanate on the list of developed countries and foster bonds of friendship among the people of all nations.

2008

A milestone in Arab, Korea collaboration

THE KOREAN CAPITAL Seoul last week witnessed hosting of an international conference to set up the Korea-Arab Society (KAS) with over 300 high profile government personalities, Korean officials and businessmen as well as Arab government officials and businessmen from 22 Arab countries taking an active part. Han Seungsoo, Korean prime minister and Yu Myunghwan, minister of foreign affairs and trade, led the Korean officials taking part in the event. From the Arab side, it was attended by Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir; Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of Djibouti; H.E. Ahmed Ouh, representative of the Algerian president, representative of King of Morocco and the representative of the president of Mauritania. After a welcome speech by the Korean foreign minister, the conference was addressed by the Korean prime minister, Sudanese president, president of Djibouti, representative of the Algerian president, representative of King of Morocco and the representative of the president of Mauritania.

2009

A message of love and peace

NEWSPAPERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST and across the rest of the globe were buzzing — and justifiably so — with the news of the visit of US President Barack Obama to the region last week, radiating dollops of hope and high expectations of a "new beginning" in the relations between the US and the Muslim world.

On the first leg of his tour, President Obama visited Saudi Arabia, where he held talks with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, last Wednesday, and then flew to Egypt where he had discussions with President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak before delivering his much-awaited, landmark speech at the University of Cairo on Thursday. To put it briefly, the imposing, domed hall of the university reverberated with a message of love and peace, all through the gripping speech, befitting the solemn surrounds of the learning centre and the profound atmospherics of the region.

2010

The largest budget in Sultanate's history

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID issued on January 1, 2010 a Royal Decree ratifying the 2010 general budget, which is arguably the biggest in the contemporary history of the Sultanate. This is confirmed by the volume of the budget expenditures amounting to R07.180 billion, registering an increase of 11.7 per cent compared to R06.424 billion in the 2009 budget. The revenues of 2010 are expected to reach R06.380 billion, an increase of 13.6 percent over the last year.

Ahmed bin Abdunabi Macki, minister of national economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council, held a press conference the following day of the announcement of the budget, attended by newsmen from the local papers, radio and TV channels as well as from the Arab and foreign media accredited to the Sultanate, wherein he explained in detail the salient features and components of the 2010 budget. Seamless effort Referring to the Sultanate's economic condition, he affirmed that the country got over the ill-effects of the global financial crisis pretty much seamlessly thanks to several factors, most importantly the rise in oil production during the year 2009. The 2010 budget has made quite a healthy impact on the Muscat Securities Market, the domestic construction sector and the business world as a whole.

OMAN



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

DON'T WASTE A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY LIKE OMAN.

Plastic takes 1,000 years or more to break down



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for collection of tender document	Submission Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)	Office where Tenders are to be deposited (HQ)
021/2013	Provision of Cleaning & Pest Control Services to rented Building for the Health Institute's Students in Muscat Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 17 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
022/2013	Supply of Surgical Items (Disposable Items)	06/03/2013	12 pm on Saturday 16 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
023/2013	Supply of Surgical Items (Ilizarov Items)	06/03/2013	12 pm on Saturday 23 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 75/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
024/2013	Supply & Installation of Standby Generator Set to Jalaan Bari Bu Ali Hospital in South Sharqiyah Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 24 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 30/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
025/2013	Supply & Installation of Computer Equipments for Various Health Facilities.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 24 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
026/2013	Supply of Rider Stacker for Directorate General of Medical Supplies in Bausher at Muscat Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 17 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
027/2013	Refurbishment of Air Handling unit of RO Plant at Rustraq Hospital in South Batinah Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 24 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
028/2013	Supply of Anaesthesia & Common Items for the Royal Hospital.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Saturday 23 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
029/2013	Supply & Installation of Medical Equipments for New Masirah Hospital in South Sharqiyah Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Saturday 30 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 150/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
030/2013	Supply & Installation of Medical Equipments for Various Health Facilities at north Batinah Governorate	27/02/2013	12 pm on Saturday 09 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
031/2013	Supply & Installation of CCTV System at Ministry's Head Quarters in Al-Ghoubrah at Muscat Governorate.	26/02/2013	12 pm on Sunday 3 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
032/2013	Supply of Pharmaceuticals.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Saturday 23 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Health Affairs
033/2013	Supply & Installation of Standby Set for Taqa hospital at Dhofar Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 24 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 40/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs
034/2013	Maintenance & Shifting of Generator Set from Darsait Workshop at Muscat Governorate to Sinaw Hospital at north Sharqiyah Governorate.	06/03/2013	12 pm on Sunday 24 / 03 / 2013	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O. 25/= Per set	H.E.The U.S – Admin. & Financial Affairs

Please note the following:

- Copy of Registration Certificate issued by the Tender Board is to be submitted for collection of Tender Documents.
- Tender Documents can be purchased from the Office of the Director of Purchase & Contracts at the Directorate General of Financial Affairs between 8.00 A.M and 12.00 P.M on working days, on payment of Tender Fee mentioned above. Tenders should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope, enclosing a Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque issued by a Local Bank for One per cent (1%) of the quoted value of the tender.
- Tender(s) submitted without Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque will not be considered.
- Tenderers are requested to deposit their Tenders Documents in the Ministry of Health – H.Qrs. Building, Al-Ghoubrah at the Offices specified.
- The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.

COMMENTARY

Oman, Thailand ties ride medical tourism wave



Dr Pornchai Danvivathana
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand

“The new regulations allow nationals from GCC countries to stay in Thailand for medical treatment up to a period of 90 days without a visa

ENVOY SPEAK

DR PORNCHAI DANVIVATHANA

Thailand has become a well-known medical tourism destination, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors in response to the rising demand for medical treatment. Over the years, medical tourism has proven to be a lucrative business for a number of countries in Asia as it generates a lot of income for all stakeholders in tourism and its related industries. In order to remain competitive in these services sector, Thailand has relaxed its immigration law to promote medical tourism, and at the same time to facilitate treatment of premium quality, including tourist attractions, for patients coming to Thailand.

Taking effect on January 5 this year, the new regulations allow nationals from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to stay in Thailand for medical treatment up to a period of 90 days without a visa. A tourist-patient falling into this category may be accompanied with no more than three individuals of GCC nationals (i.e. parents, children, spouse or maid), who will likewise enjoy a 90-days visa exemption.

It should be noted that those wishing to get the benefit of the 90-days visa exemption shall present certain documents required for their eligibility. Nationals from South Korea, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru are also eligible for the present scheme due to the respective agreements on a 90-day visa exemption concluded between Thailand

and those countries.

Other than medical tourism, Thailand has gained a lot of recognition in spa and wellness. The government agencies concerned have worked with all stakeholders in Thailand to set appropriate standards and criteria for Thai masseurs and masseuses and for businessmen who are offering Thai spa and/or wellness within the country and abroad. In this regard, Thai herbal medicine may be infused with massage and spa to offer tourists and the local people the best quality of services of this kind. Extra-entrepreneurial skills, as well as integrity and accountability, to run the business are additional elements Thailand has taken steps to enhance for meeting international standards.

To put it simply, Omani people and other GCC nationals, except Saudi nationals, who can apply for a visa on arrival for a stay of 15 days, may go to Thailand and are eligible to the 30-days visa exemption as usual. They may now enjoy the 90-days visa exemption, if proof of medical purpose is presented at the airport.

I would like to underline that Thailand has more to offer to non-Thai visitors, in addition to hospitality and friendship it has never failed to provide. Communication and travel as a result of medical tourism could be the prevailing avenue to promote people-to-people connectivity, thus strengthening ties between Oman and Thailand in the years to come!

Dr.Pornchai Danvivathana is Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Sultanate of Oman

UREGENTLY REQUIRED

A Corrugated Card Board Making Company at Salalah requires the following personnel very urgently.

01. Production Manager
02. Marketing Manager
03. Maintenance Supervisor/ Incharge(Mechanical)
04. Maintenance Supervisor/ Incharge(Electronics)
05. Boiler Attendant /Operator
06. Office Assistant

Candidates with suitable qualification and experience may send their resume by email to:

natpack@omantel.net.om
or Fax: (968)23227188



Labour smuggling exposed by driver

Abdul Nasir has turned over **forged passports and other documents** to Indian embassy officials for legal action



Abdul Nasir

REJIMON K
reji@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: An expatriate driver from the south Indian state of Kerala, who was forced to assist a human trafficking gang's operations along the Oman-UAE border in Buraimi, has sought shelter at the Indian embassy.

"I am afraid to work with them. I am afraid for my life. I paid around OMR800 to get a visa to work as a driver. When I had just landed, I came to learn that I had to transport people and do this risky and illegal job," Abdul Nasir, the driver, told *Times of Oman*.

According to Nasir, those migrants who cannot enter the UAE legally arrive in Oman on a visitor's visa and are then transported

to the UAE through the Rouda and Wadi Jissi border check posts using forged UAE resident ID cards. They are also provided jobs in the UAE. Their passports, however, are taken from them and altered. Later, these passports are used by others who cannot legally fly out to India from the UAE. The migrants are brought to Oman through the same route, as well as taken from Oman. These people later fly back to India safely as if they are returning after a visit to Oman.

"When I was the driver for them, I witnessed at least 35 trafficking cases. Out of these, only four were caught at Indian airports," Nasir said.

"Around AED15,000 to AED40,000 is charged by the gang. Some of those who escape are

mostly involved in criminal cases in the UAE," Nasir added.

Nasir came to Oman in June 2012 on a visa provided by Ashraf Paika, alias Camry Asharaf, who is now in Kerala. "The visa was issued by a national in Buraimi, who has no connection with this gang. When I reached Oman, I was engaged by Asharaf, who is also my relative, to transport people from Muscat International Airport to Buraimi and then to the Dubai border. I was afraid of doing this job and asked Asharaf to remove me from it after paying back the money I gave him for my visa. But he was reluctant to pay back the amount and asked me to quit if I was scared to continue. Then I quit the job and went back to India in September 2012," Nasir said.

According to Nasir, there are two Keralites and one Pakistani involved in the gang. "In December 2012, I came back to Oman on the same visa and told my sponsor the whole story. After hearing my story, my sponsor supported me in fighting against the illegal activity of this gang. So, as the first step, I have filed a complaint with the embassy against the gang," Nasir said, while adding that soon the gang members will be arrested.

Nasir has turned over forged passports and other documents to embassy officials. "They have assured me of action," he added.

BRIEFS

Al Khuwair murder bid case accused arrested



AN official of the Royal Oman Police has informed that the accused, who was arrested last Tuesday on charges of attempted murder in Al Khuwair area, had illegally entered the apartment of two Arab nationals. The accused stole a mobile phone, a computer, watch and money, and then fled. He later entered the same apartment through the window and stabbed the husband and wife with a sharp object, severely injuring the couple. Following search and investigation, the accused was arrested on February 19 and admitted to committing the crimes. The ROP has called upon citizens and residents not to touch tools and other evidence left at crime scenes, but to wait for the arrival of police.

Two held for smuggling drugs



PERSONNEL at the Directorate General of Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances at the Royal Oman Police (ROP) have arrested two persons for possession and selling narcotics and associating with international gangs. The accused were selling psychotropic substances and were associated with a drug trafficking network from an Asian country from where they smuggled drugs into the territory of the Sultanate. After verifying that information, the accused were arrested and 60 capsules of heroin were found in their possession.

Two Asian fraudsters nabbed

THE Investigation and Criminal Investigation Department has arrested two Asians on fraud charges for selling counterfeit jewellery. According to officials, the accused brought a substantial quantity of counterfeit jewellery into the country and sold it to other persons. The accused were later arrested and handed over to the Public Prosecution for trial.

Mother accuses son of theft

AN Omani mother lodged a complaint at the Al Khoudh police station, accusing her 24-year-old son of stealing her gold. Police learned that the son was a drug addict who steals to raise money to buy drugs. The accused was arrested. -**ROP**

EXPATRIATE ISSUES

Nepal to set up embassy in Sultanate

REJIMON K
reji@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: In view of the increasing flow of Nepali migrant workers to the Sultanate, the Nepal government plans to open a residential embassy, a move that has been welcomed by Nepalis working here.

"We were pressing the Nepal government to set up an embassy here in Oman for the last five years. Finally, we have succeeded in our mission. It would be a great help for the Nepalis here. We will get official papers from Nepal within a few days and we expect that everything will materialise soon," Deepak Shrestha, the Saudi Arabian Nepal Embassy representative in Oman, told *Times of Oman*.

According to official statistics, Nepalese started entering Oman for employment beginning in 1994. Figures provided by the Department of Foreign Employment (DOFE) indicate that, officially, 17,083 Nepalese have been employed in Oman. According to Nepali social workers, the actual number of Nepalese workers in Oman might reach 30,000 to 40,000.

"This is a sigh of relief for us. For all kinds of consular needs, we had to struggle a lot. We had to contact the Nepali Embassy in Saudi Arabia for our needs. Now, when the embassy will be set up here, it will be a great relief for us," Arzun Thapa, a Nepali who has been working here for the last two years, said.

According to Nepali media, the government has already forwarded a proposal to establish embassies in Bahrain, Oman and Spain. But the proposal to establish an embassy in Spain was turned down. The government has also decided to establish a Consular General Office in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and a Consul General Office in Guangzhou, China.

POLICE ACTION

Five document forgers in the dock

THE Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested five Asians accused of forging official documents and violating residence laws. Police raided the suspects' hideout in the Ruwi area following a tip, and caught them forging documents. They have been referred to the Public Prosecution for further investigation and trial.



The Chairman of Omani Qatari Telecommunications Company (Nawras)

along with Members of the Board, CEO and the entire Nawras family
extend their most sincere and heartfelt condolences to

Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Faiq bin Essa Al Zedjali
Mohammed bin Essa Al Zedjali
Ahmed bin Essa Al Zedjali

On the sad demise of their father

Essa Bin Mohammed Al Zedjali

Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Times of Oman,
Chairman of MPPH Group

Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family at this time.
May Allah grant him eternal peace and serenity.

COMMENTARY



Founder: **Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali**
 Deputy Editor-in-Chief: **Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali**
 Vice-Chairman: **Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali**
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Bumi is the canary in the city's coalmine

Even judged by the standards of, say, BP's troubles with its business in Russia, the short life of Nat Rothschild's mining venture has been an unusually torturous affair. Amid accusations of corruption and threats to sue and counter-sue, the battle over Bumi has pitted the billionaire scion of the renowned banking dynasty against a trio of powerful Indonesian brothers. It has also yielded some sharp lessons – not just for Rothschild and his investors, but, more importantly, for Britain's financial regulators. The saga began in 2010 when the youngest son of the Rothschild family set up a company called Vallar, through which he hoped to buy natural resources assets in emerging markets. Rothschild listed the group on the London Stock Exchange, raised £707m, and promptly bought into two Indonesian coal mines owned by the Bakrie brothers. Thus, Vallar became Bumi and, for a while, all went well.

But the honeymoon did not last. Tensions between Rothschild, the Bakries and the board steadily increased, finally exploding last autumn with the claim from Rothschild that hundreds of millions of pounds was missing from a Bumi affiliate company. Both the allegations themselves and the boardroom mud-slinging that followed them are inordinately complicated – as the analysis in our Business pages today makes clear. But the outcome needs no detailed explaining: Bumi's stock has plunged in value and Rothschild's investors have lost the lion's share of their money. The 41-year-old financier must accept a considerable slug of the blame for the debacle. Even without the benefit of hindsight, Rothschild's signing the deal with the Bakrie brothers after just two meetings, despite question marks over their reputation, looks more reckless than decisive. Even more so, given that he had not inspected the mines in question.

That said, Rothschild alone does not bear all the responsibility. After all, the £700m-plus was raised using a so-called "cash shell" – that is, a company that exists only to elicit funding – and there were almost no restrictions as to what he might do with it. Granted, Rothschild has had some successes in the past – notably his Atticus hedge fund (before it was torpedoed by the financial crisis, that is). But for investors to have handed over their money with so few strings attached is a carelessness that begs for a lecture on caveat emptor. There are also broader lessons here, however. Rothschild's big idea was to use a London-listed "shell" company to enable investors to put their money into resource-rich emerging markets without risking their sometimes questionable corporate governance. Such a plan might make sense on paper. In practice, Rothschild's stake was not enough to counterbalance that of the Bakries, his power base was insufficient to sway the Bumi board, and London's rules were not enough to tame behaviours so far away. — *The Independent*

Shifting alliances

As polls draw closer, and parties step up the process of planning strategies, we can, of course, expect changes in the current order of things. The twists and turns to come are indeed hard to predict. The first of these has come with the MQM's not entirely unexpected decision to part ways with the PPP, at both the federal and provincial levels. Following the announcement by Dr Farooq Sattar, ministers have already handed in resignations, ending – for now at least – what has been a long, often uneasy political partnership, built to a very large extent on expediency and the needs of both partners. The breaking point came in the decision by the PPP to drop cases against the Lyari-based Peoples' Aman Committee (PAC). It is not known why this step was taken at this point or the cases dropped after so long a delay, though it is known that the delicate PAC issue has been causing rifts within the ruling party itself. The move, however, prompted an MQM walkout from an in-camera session of the Sindh Assembly, followed by desperate efforts from the PPP to, once more, appease its prickly coalition partner. However, the meetings at Bilawal House in Karachi, with President Asif Ali Zardari himself taking part, eventually came to naught as Dr Sattar, on February 16, stated that his party could have nothing to do with groups that backed gangsters. The PAC issue has then, after all, resulted in the break-up of an alliance.

This parting of ways will, of course, have a significant impact in urban Sindh. In Karachi, and some other cities, the election has now come to be seen mainly as a tussle between two forces to hang onto traditional strongholds. These areas of influence are, of course, fairly well demarcated, and have not really changed markedly over many years. Together, the PPP and the MQM would have formed an almost invincible force in some of these constituencies. Divided, of course, things grow more complex – with the potential for violence also growing as a result in a city where many tensions prevail even before the business of balloting begins in earnest. — *The Express Tribune*

Fake notes culprits must be arrested at earliest

This refers to the news story, *Omani couple returns to a rapturous welcome* (February 15). In view of the trauma that the couple underwent, I would expect that the real culprit of their tribulation is quickly arrested and punished. I was in India recently and one of my friends from Oman presented a Rs.500 note to the pharmacy of a hospital. The teller immediately recognized that it was a fake note and returned it to my friend. I advised him to keep that note and complain to the nearest police station on way back to Oman. The man concerned is from Ibri but says that he purchased the Indian currency from two different places – in Ruwi and Ibri. **Shangubi Muscat**

Fascism is an integral fact of Zionism



Fascism is too conspicuous a fact of Jewish life and this cannot be denied. We were warned of this menace long before the World War II was over. William Zukerman, a Jewish thinker, was prophetic in his warning. Way



So you think you know why Blair went to war?

STEVE RICHARDS



“Why was Blair intensely relaxed about the onslaught from some newspapers that he was ‘Bush’s poodle’? Blair’s public answer was that he had ceased to care about media opinion and just did what was ‘the right thing to do’. The reason Blair was relaxed about the poodle accusation was because so many previous Labour leaders had been accused of being anti-American

The 10th anniversary of the war in Iraq has triggered a fresh wave of comment, reflection and debate. The arguments are familiar and will continue to rage. Yet one key element is overlooked, as it has been in the past and probably will be in the future, and it revolves around the pivotal domestic calculations that propelled Tony Blair towards war. From a British perspective, they explain more or less everything.

Most immediately, the question Blair had to answer in the year or so before the conflict is not the one debated ever since. The question that ignites eternal fury is why Blair took Britain to war, but in fact he had to address an altogether different proposition: should he support or oppose President Bush, who had decided that he was ready to invade Iraq? For Blair, there were important subsidiary questions arising from this fundamental one. Should he form an alliance with France and Germany against the US? Should he alienate the Atlanticist wing of the Labour party? Or oppose Bush and ally himself with the party's anti-US tendency? Should he sever all relations with Rupert Murdoch and his newspapers? Should he risk appearing soft on defence, reinforcing perceptions of Labour that he had spent his leadership seeking to purge?

To ask the questions points to the answers. It was obvious at the time, and in retrospect, that a leader with Blair's background and approach, a figure who had defined himself against his party, was never going to be in a situation where he led the anti-American left of the Labour Party, in alliance with Germany and France. The domestic political dynamics all pointed in one direction.

They also help to answer another mystery. Why was Blair intensely relaxed about the onslaught from some newspapers that he was “Bush's poodle”? Blair's public answer was that he had ceased to care about media opinion and just did what was “the right thing to do”. This is not the case. To give one example of many, several years later he agonised about the smoking ban in public places and finally justified the move by suggesting: “The public gave us permission to introduce the ban.” He was still very bothered about public and media opinion.

No, the reason Blair was relaxed about the poodle accusation was because so many previous Labour leaders had been accused of being anti-American. For him to be seen as a poodle to a Republican president was much safer politically than being accused of being anti-American. He knew also that the opinion formers he cared most about, from Murdoch downwards or upwards, welcomed

his close relationship with Bush. Politically, he was in his comfort zone.

More specifically, during this period Blair once told me: “At least when we have the referendum on the euro no one will accuse me of being anti-American.” Blair's calculations in relation to Iraq can only be understood in a much wider political context. He still hoped to be the Prime Minister that took Britain into the euro. He assumed that, in the campaign, he would face the opposition of Murdoch's newspapers which would then be in alliance with the Eurosceptic leadership of the Conservative party. From that perspective, the dynamics of Iraq were the perfect counter – Blair showing that, although he was a pro-European, he was a rock solid ally of the US and willing to challenge Germany and France over international affairs. Shortly after the war ended, in the early summer of 2003, Blair made an extraordinary attempt to bounce Gordon Brown into accepting the case for joining the euro.

Blair was a true believer in Third Way politics, a simplistic approach that meant navigating a middle way when faced with a nightmarish dilemma. After Bush made his famous speech about the “axis of evil” more than a year before the invasion, Blair knew for certain that Iraq was in the sights of the US.

Blair recognised almost instinctively that his unique alliance of electoral and media support would implode if he were to oppose Bush, but hoped that if he persuaded Bush to take his case to the UN he might be able to retain the support of most of his party and “progressive” opinion as well as so-called middle England. Facing the most politically acute conundrum of his leadership Blair clung to his third way: yes to Bush, but through the UN.

Once the course was set, there was no going back. Blair could not announce to Bush and to admiring media watchers that he had changed his mind. Rightly, Blair believed there was nothing he could have done to stop Bush invading Iraq. The war would have happened even if he had opposed it. Once he had decided, via his third way, to support the conflict, the evidence that war would be a terrible catastrophe was for him irrelevant. Any evidence to justify the war acquired overwhelming significance.

In a very tight corner, the domestic calculations for Blair were overwhelmingly in favour of one direction, even if they were not the decisive factors. Note that the three main war leaders in the US, UK and Australia all went on to win their subsequent domestic elections. The lessons for our current leaders are many and for another column. — *The Independent*

READERS' FORUM



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RENE DESCARTES

back in 1934 he was categorical in saying, “It may sound like a paradox, but it is nevertheless a fact that Jews ... probably more than any other people except the Germans, are stricken with the virus of fascism. The bulk of Zionist movement gravitates towards fascism”. Israel's claim that it faced an existential threat in 1967 is a blatant lie and a propaganda that towed the Nazi principle postulating that a lie turns into truth if repeated over and over. **Mohosin Abedin Al Ghubra**

Merkel's decision is a knee jerk reaction

In deciding to phase out Germany's 17 nuclear reactors by 2022, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has made a display of her

political desperation to offset the growing clamour and clout of the nation's powerful green brigade. The decision is fundamentally a knee jerk decision – an irrational aftershock of the nuclear disaster in Japan. It is irrational because she has been convinced of the conservative coalition's electoral defeat against the environmentalist parties. In taking Germany away from nuclear energy, Merkel intends to take the steam out of her political opponents and show the world a pioneering achievement. It will certainly not be a mean achievement on her part if she can maintain Germany's economic and industrial prosperity with renewable energy. Her political future will then be more than guaranteed. **Eric Stromayer Qurum**



Arabs urged to go for proper crowd control

Amnesty International has called on China, the US and other arms exporting countries to ensure that weapons sold at the Abu Dhabi fair do not lead to human rights abuses

ABU DHABI: Defence experts who say many lives could have been saved during Arab uprisings if states used proper crowd control measures sought to tap into a growing market at an Abu Dhabi arms fair.

Anti-riot vehicles with sophisticated acoustic repellents have boldly taken their place alongside the likes of Eurofighter's Typhoon warplane and the bristling firepower of rocket launchers at the arms industry's biennial quest for petrodollars in the Gulf emirate.

"If a given state lacks the means, the doctrines, and the training for homeland defence and internal security missions, that government is more likely to use lethal means that are disproportionate," said Steven Adragna of US defence consultancy Arcanum.

Riot-control specialists such as South Africa's Paramount and Turkey's Otokar are bidding to change an apparent regional mindset by exhibiting their wares at the IDEX arms fair.

Paramount's Ivor Ichikowitz said governments need to be better equipped for crowd control to avoid resorting to use of disproportionate force.

"The riot catastrophe in Egypt, for example, was greatly exacerbated because police were using inappropriate equipment," said Ichikowitz.



DISGRUNTLED: Jordanian protesters hold signs against corruption during an anti-government demonstration in Amman, yesterday. - AFP

"Appropriate and better-quality anti-riot vehicles and equipment increases police safety, thus reducing the pressure they feel in conflict situations."

From inside one such mobile fortress, police can repel rioters using acoustic repellents that emit ear-shattering frequencies over a 30-metre radius.

Adragna said anti-riot gear, which in addition to batons and shields includes shotguns, rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades, can maintain order.

"If an individual policeman is trained on how to use those devices, I think they are perfectly legitimate," he said.

Thousands have been killed in demonstrations that have swept across several Arab countries since December 2010 as security forces used overwhelming force against peaceful protesters demanding political change.

Street protests in Syria that began in March 2011 escalated into an armed conflict that the United Nations says has now killed more

than 70,000 people. Security forces in Bahrain, where an uprising was crushed in 2011, continue to use tear gas to quell regular Shiite protests and also use shotguns.

In Egypt, security forces under the Islamist government of President Mohammed Mursi appear to have reverted to the same heavy-handed practices used under toppled former strongman Hosni Mubarak.

Mauro Della Costanza of Italian shotgun maker Benelli says "Egypt is a big customer."

"Egyptian police have several thousand of these," he said, showing off the company's M3 shotgun marketed to law enforcement authorities.

"In the past two years, we had a big increase in purchase orders from the Middle East, especially the UAE," he said.

But he said that exports to some countries face delays, and sometimes complete bans, from Italian export authorities which investigate "how guns will be used."

Tunisia, where violence erupted

again this month two years after the first Arab Spring uprising, "is under a 100 percent embargo," Della Costanza said.

Amnesty International has called on China, the United States and other arms exporting countries to ensure that weapons sold at this week's fair do not lead to human rights abuses.

Brian Wood, Amnesty's head of arms control and human rights, charged that commercial pressures were taking precedence over concerns for rights.

"Governments are letting the unrelenting commercial pressures of arms companies and their own narrow national interests take precedence over building the rule of law and respect for human rights," Wood said in a statement. - AFP

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PM-designate pledges govt for all Tunisians

TUNIS: Ali Larayedh, the Islamist interior minister tapped to become Tunisia's next prime minister, pledged yesterday to form a cabinet representing all Tunisian men and women and upholding gender equality. "We are going to enter the phase of forming a new government that will be for all Tunisian men and women, taking into account the fact that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities," he said. President Moncef Marzouki tasked Larayedh with forming a new government after fellow Islamist Hamadi Jebali resigned in the face of a political crisis. Larayedh "will have 15 days to form a new government and present its plan" to the head of state, Marzouki's spokesman said, adding that the president urged him to do so "as quickly as possible because the country cannot wait any longer." The ruling Islamist party Ennahda had put forward Larayedh's name after its consultative council selected him on Thursday night.



Protestor dies of wounds

MANAMA: A protestor died of wounds after he was shot during clashes with Bahraini police on the second anniversary of the February 14, 2011 uprising, the opposition said yesterday. Mahmud Al Jaziri, 20, succumbed on Thursday to wounds suffered when he was "hit with a direct shot to the head by regime forces during peaceful protests" marking the uprising, the main Shiite opposition Al Wefaq group said. Video footage posted on YouTube showed what was said to be a Bahraini policeman firing from close range at a protestor hurling stones at advancing riot police.

UAE denies torture charges

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates yesterday dismissed charges that Dubai police had tortured three young Britons arrested more than seven months ago on drugs charges, a day after a court denied them bail. "The UAE is aware of allegations of torture of three British citizens by police in Dubai. An internal investigation was conducted and these allegations were found to be baseless," the UAE embassy in London said, in a statement carried by Wam state news agency. According to the UK-based organisation Reprieve, Grant Cameron, Karl Williams and Suneet Jeerth, all 25, have been "subjected to torture including beatings and electric shocks" by police. - Agencies

Mursi calls for April-June elections

CAIRO: President Mohammed Mursi has called parliamentary elections that will begin on April 27 and finish in late June, a four-stage vote that the leader hopes will conclude Egypt's turbulent transition to democracy.

The vote will take place in a country deeply divided between hardline parties that have come out on top in all elections held since Hosni Mubarak was ousted in 2011 and more secular-minded opposition parties that have struggled to get organised.

The administration hopes the election of the new parliament

will help stabilise Egypt so an economy in deep crisis can start to recover from spasms of unrest and violence that have dogged the transition.

The new parliament will convene on July 6, according to a decree issued by Mursi. The Shura Council, the upper house of parliament, earlier adopted an electoral law that cleared the way for Mursi to set the date for the lower house election.

Under the new Egyptian constitution adopted in December, Mursi must secure parliament's approval for his choice of prime

minister, giving the chamber more power than it had under Mubarak, when it was no more than a rubber stamp.

With Egypt so polarised, the stakes are high for the Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The party has said it will seek an outright majority in the vote, an outcome that would allow Mursi administration to press ahead with its plans for a country caught in political limbo despite the ruling group victory in last year's presidential vote.

Opposition groups have ac-

cused Mursi and the Brotherhood of seeking to dominate the post-Mubarak order, accusations denied by the hardliners but which have fuelled protests against his rule. The opposition must now decide whether to take part in the vote and try to gain a foothold in Egypt's elected institutions or boycott in an attempt to deny legitimacy to the process, analysts said.

"This confronts them with a real dilemma," said Nathan Brown, professor of political science at George Washington University and an Egypt expert. - Reuters

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Terror group under scanner over blasts

Nothing has been officially said but the accusing finger in the case is being pointed towards the Indian Mujahideen that has a 'network' in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: A blame game over intelligence inputs erupted yesterday after the twin bomb blasts here as the role of banned militant outfit Indian Mujahideen was being increasingly suspected by probe agencies who got some "leads".

The death toll in the blasts in a crowded area at Dilsukhnagar last night rose to 16 with the number of injured being put at 117 even as the multi-agency investigative teams combed the blast sites at Dilsukhnagar rocked by near simultaneous explosions. All but one of the dead were men.

Eight CCTVs installed in the area were of no use for the investigators pinning hopes on them for evidence as they malfunctioned. Union Home Ministry sources denied that the CCTV wires were snapped by the perpetrators of the attack.

Forensic experts who collected evidence from the blasts site submitted a preliminary report indicating that ammonium nitrate were used in the bombs, which were planted in tiffin boxes and fitted to two bicycles, police sources said.

"This is an explosive mix in which aluminium sharpeners were added to nails and iron pieces used to create more impact," a forensic expert noted. Investigators were also looking for a timer device.

Clues
Cyberabad Police Commissioner Dwaraka Tirumala Rao said they had gathered enough clues about those involved but added the information could not be divulged. He



PAYING TRIBUTE: People hold candles as they pray for the victims of Thursday's bombings at the site of the explosions in Dilsukhnagar, in Hyderabad, yesterday. -AFP

France condemns bombings, offers support

NEW DELHI: France has condemned "in the strongest terms" the twin bombing in Hyderabad and said India can count on Paris's "steadfast support and cooperation" in the fight against terrorism.

French President Francois Hollande "most firmly condemns the attacks" that struck the people of Hyderabad, said a statement. Conveying his condolences to the victims' families on behalf of France, Hol-

lande expressed "his complete solidarity with the Indian people and the government in the fight against terrorism, for which they can count on France's steadfast support and cooperation", the statement said. -IANS

denied having "detained" anyone in connection with the case.

Nothing has been officially said but the accusing finger in the case is being pointed towards the IM that has an "established network" in Hyderabad. The modus operandi in strapping Improvised Explosive Device (IED) to bicycles was similar to blasts triggered by IM in the past.

Hyderabad along with Bangalore, Coimbatore and Hubli were specifically alerted by the central security agencies about possible attacks by terrorist groups to avenge the hanging of Mumbai attack convict Ajmal Kasab and Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. Apart from a general advisory

sent to all states on February 19, Union Home Ministry officials said the specific information about possible attacks was shared with authorities in the four cities on Thursday morning.

Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said all states were alerted about a possible terror strike by militant groups.

However, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy had said those were general alerts which often keep coming from the Centre. It has also emerged that two of the alleged IM operatives arrested by Delhi Police for their involvement in Pune blasts last year did a recce of Dilsukhnagar on a motorcycle in July 2012.

Sayed Maqbool and Imran Khan, both of whom hail from Nanded district in Maharashtra, told police during interrogation after their arrest in October that they both did a recce of Dilsukhnagar, Begum Bazar and Abids in Hyderabad on a motorcycle in July 2012.

"About a month before Ramzan in 2012, Maqbool helped Imran in doing a recce of Dilsukhnagar, Begum Bazar and Abids in Hyderabad on a motorcycle. This was done on the instruction of Riyaz Bhatkal," officials said. Police announced "suitable reward" to those who provide information about the perpetrators of the crime with Tirumala Rao promising to crack the case at the earliest. -PTI

BRIEFS

Govt sets rules for bank licences in rural areas

NEW DELHI: The government yesterday unveiled rules for issuing new bank licences in a push to expand financial services into the country's rural hinterland where hundreds of thousands of villages have no banking outlets. Ninety per cent of country's 600,000 villages do not have banking facilities, the Reserve Bank of India says, while fewer than half of the country's 1.2 billion people have a bank account. Private companies, public-sector groups and non-banking financial firms will be eligible to apply for licences for new banks by setting up financial holding companies, the central bank said in a statement. Groups seeking to set up a bank "should have a past record of sound credentials and integrity, be financially sound with a successful track record of 10 years", the Reserve Bank said. The minimum capital needed to set up a bank will be five billion rupees (\$91 million).

Italian marines can go home to vote, says SC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court ruled yesterday that two Italian marines accused of murdering Indian fishermen while guarding an oil tanker could return home to cast their votes in upcoming national elections. The marines are suspected of shooting dead two fishermen off India's southwestern coast near the port city of Kochi in February 2012, when a fishing boat came close to the Italian oil tanker they were guarding. The marines' lawyer, Harish Salve, told the court that the men needed to go home for four weeks in order to cast their votes since Italy did not allow postal ballots. Salve said, "my clients give an undertaking that they will keep Indian police informed of their whereabouts while in Italy". "The Italian government takes full responsibility to ensure their return to India," he added.

Thousands of Pashmina goats perish in Ladakh

JAMMU: Thousands of Pashmina goats may have perished in recent heavy snowfall around the nomadic areas of Changthang on the Sino-Indian frontier of the Ladakh region, officials said yesterday. The area is a production hub for the finest quality of Pashmina (Kashmir) wool in India and is used in manufacturing of popular Kashmiri shawls sold across the world. "We have no information of several places in the area. Many places are still snowbound and inaccessible. There is no communication link with them", said Tsering Samphel, a former lawmaker from the region. He said up to 10,000 domesticated animals including Pashmina goats have perished due to fodder shortages and the freezing cold.

Maoists kill six policemen

PATNA: Maoist rebels killed six policemen yesterday in a landmine attack in Bihar in their second deadly attack on security forces in recent weeks, police said. "The Maoists targeted a convoy heading out on patrol duty, killing six policemen in Gaya district," district police chief N. H. Khan said. A village elder and a police informer who were travelling in the same vehicle as the policemen were also killed in the explosion, Khan said. The attack is the latest in a simmering conflict that pits the insurgents against local and national authorities in the forests and rural areas of mainly central and eastern India. The rebels also shot dead seven policemen on January 7 in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand. -Agencies

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13 KILLED IN PESHAWAR BUS ACCIDENT

People gather around a bus carrying wedding guests which plunged into a canal in Char-sadda, Peshawar, yesterday. At least 13 people were killed and 12 others injured, officials said. The bus travelling from Hazar Khani to the Landi Sarak area of Peshawar met with an accident due to 'overspeeding', police said. - AFP



Rebel leader arrested over Quetta bombings

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leader Malik Ishaq was being held under public order legislation in the town of Rahim Yar Khan at his home yesterday afternoon



IN THE NET: Leader of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) Malik Ishaq speaks during an interview at his home in Rahim Yar Khan in this October 9, 2012 file photo. - Reuters

QUETTA/MULTAN: Police said they arrested Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) leader, Malik Ishaq, in the town of Rahim Yar Khan at his home yesterday afternoon.

"LeJ has accepted responsibility for the recent Quetta blast and Ishaq is its supreme commander. That's why we have arrested him and 24 other LeJ militants," said Zafar Chatta, the district police officer.

The LeJ claimed responsibility for a blast that killed 89 people last Saturday in Quetta. It also claimed responsibility for blasts on January 9 that killed 96 in the same city.

It was unclear why authorities did not arrest Ishaq, who was living openly at his home protected by gunmen, after the LeJ claimed the first bombing.

Pakistani leaders have done little to contain hardline Sunni groups which have stepped up a campaign of bombings and assassinations of Shi'ites in a bid

to destabilise the country.

Sectarian attacks

The LeJ, whose roots are in Punjab province, wants to expel the Shi'ites, who make up about a fifth of the 180 million population. Human Rights Watch says more than 400 Shi'ites were killed in sectarian attacks last year.

Chatta said Ishaq was being held under public order legislation and would be held at least a month while investigators interrogated him.

Ishaq was released from prison in July 2011 after spending 14 years behind bars charged with 34 counts of culpable homicide and terrorism. He was released after the charges could not be proved partly because of witness intimidation, officials said. Supporters

showered him with rose petals when he left jail.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Farooq H. Naek said that governor's rule in Balochistan will be revoked before March 14, *Express News* reported yesterday. He added that extension order of governor's rule was needed after two months from parliament's giant session, but government had no intention of extending the order.

Governor's rule

Naek said that establishing a caretaker government ahead of announcing national elections was a constitutional requirement and the government had to undertake negotiations with the opposition parties and the speaker of the National Assembly to make this happen.

The federal government had

“

LeJ has accepted responsibility for the recent Quetta blast and Ishaq is its supreme commander. That's why we have arrested him and 24 other LeJ militants

Zafar Chatta
District police officer

imposed governor rule in mid January after a massive terrorist attack in Quetta that killed over 100 people.

A security official disclosed that the army would, however, remain on standby during the targeted operation that would be launched against the outlawed Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which has claimed responsibility for both attacks.

The official confirmed that the army would not directly take part in the 'intelligence-driven, integrated' operation against militants. - Agencies

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LAW PROCEDURES

Chief justice raps airport security agencies

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Supreme Court Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary reprimanded airport security agencies yesterday after a wealthy murder suspect managed to flee abroad, warning that lax procedures could allow terrorists to escape.

Chaudhary is investigating how Shahrukh Jatoi, 20, managed to fly to the United Arab Emirates from Karachi, without any record of his departure despite an alert for his arrest. He is the chief suspect in the December murder of 20-year-old Shahzeb Khan, the son of a senior police officer who was shot dead in Karachi.

Jatoi returned to Pakistan last month to face trial, but the Su-

Chaudhary is investigating how Shahrukh Jatoi managed to fly to the UAE from Karachi, without any record of his departure despite an alert for his arrest

preme Court is now calling for those who allowed him to board the plane to be punished.

"Two months have passed and nobody knows how Shahrukh Jatoi managed to escape... If this is the state of affairs of security agencies at airports, then tomorrow, terrorists might escape

after carrying out attacks," said Chaudhary.

Investigator Mohammad Malik told the court that Jatoi had "deceived" immigration and blamed Pakistan's "VIP culture", which allows the rich and influential to move around unchecked at airports and through the country.

"If a young boy can deceive you, then how can you stop terrorists?" the judge said, describing Karachi as "the largest den of human trafficking and rife with corruption."

Police officer Shahid Hayat told the Supreme Court that CCTV footage provided by airport security had been analysed but no record of Jatoi was found.

"The entire country is in the grip of terrorism. Your security is so loose that you will never know if some criminal commits a crime and escapes the country," Chaudhary said. He then ordered investigators to submit an explanation for the lack of progress in the case and adjourned the hearing for 10 days. - AFP

NOTICE



Khimji Ramdas LLC announces that **Francis Fernandes**, Indian National, holder of ID card no. 63034587 who works as Commercial Manager no longer represents the company in anyway from the date of 19/12/2013.

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NUCLEAR TEST

Russia, China to oppose foreign intervention in N. Korea



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (right) with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi, in Moscow, yesterday. -Reuters

MOSCOW: Russia and China said yesterday they would oppose any foreign military intervention in North Korea over its recent nuclear test.

The two countries' foreign ministers condemned last week's test but said any action against North Korea had to be agreed at the United Nations, where Russia and China have the right of veto as permanent members of the Security Council.

"We are against the carrying out of a nuclear test in North Korea," Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told a joint news conference after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow. "The UN Security Council

should give an adequate response ... but the action should be directed towards peace on the Korean peninsula," he said.

Lavrov said China and Russia had agreed that it was "vitaly important not to ... allow the situation to be used as a pretext for military intervention."

North Korea's latest test, its third since 2006, prompted warnings from Washington and others that more sanctions would be imposed on the isolated state.

The UN Security Council has only just tightened sanctions on Pyongyang after it launched a long-range rocket in December.

The North is banned under UN sanctions from developing mis-

ile or nuclear technology after its 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests.

Meanwhile, Russia and China said they saw eye-to-eye on all the world's problems.

Yang confirmed after talks with Lavrov that Communist Party chief and president-in-waiting Xi would visit Russia after he is confirmed as head of state in March to succeed Hu Jintao.

Yang did not directly confirm Chinese reports that Russia would be Xi's first foreign destination after taking the office of president at a session of the National People's Congress (NPC) next month, in what would be a hugely symbolic trip.

But he made clear that Xi would be attending the BRICS summit

of the world's top five developing economies in Durban from March 26-27 alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Russia and China have united positions, and promote these united positions in negotiations, on the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, including the Syrian crisis, Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear programme and other crises," Lavrov said.

"On all these cases, we and our Chinese friends are led by one and the same principle - the necessity to observe international law, respect UN procedures and not allow interference from outside in domestic conflicts and all the more the use of force," added Lavrov.

Fully developing ties with its booming neighbour has become a major priority for Putin's Kremlin at a time of difficult relations with the West and as state gas firm Gazprom and other Russian firms seek new markets for exports.

Despite their tight diplomatic alliance, Russia and China have still failed to finalise a potentially huge gas deal which could eventually see almost 70 billion cubic metres of Russian gas pumped to China annually for the next 30 years.

Gazprom and China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) signed a framework agreement in 2009 but differences remain over the pricing and no final agreement has yet been signed. -Agencies

Four killed in Bangladesh

Police fire rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse protestors demanding the bloggers' execution



DEFIANT CROWD: Activists shout slogans before they clash with the police, in Dhaka, yesterday. -Reuters

DHAKA: Bangladesh police fired live rounds yesterday in fierce clashes with hardliners demanding the execution of bloggers they accuse of blasphemy, killing at least four people and injuring about 200.

Two people were shot dead by police in the northwestern town of Palashbari, and two others died elsewhere, police said.

Parts of the capital Dhaka were turned into a battlefield as thousands of protestors attacked police with bricks and sticks in front of the national mosque. Officers there retaliated with rubber bullets and tear gas.

The country's 12 Islamic parties called the protests after prayers yesterday in nearly half a million mosques nationwide, demanding the execution of bloggers.

Tensions have risen in the nation over allegedly anti-religion blog posts by Ahmed Rajib Haider, who was hacked to death last week near his home in Dhaka.

In recent weeks Haider and fellow bloggers had launched huge protests demanding a ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami party, and the execution of its leaders for alleged war crimes.


Since Haider's death, Bangladesh social media has been flooded with his alleged blog posts and with those by other bloggers, triggering protests by a number of groups and clerics.

At Palashbari at least 4,000 hardliners attacked police with home-made bombs and sticks, prompting officers to respond

with live fire, district police chief Nahidul Islam said.

A dozen people were injured including five policemen, Islam added. In the northeastern city of Sylhet a young man died as police shot rubber bullets and tear gas after protestors went on a rampage, attacking and torching vehicles, Sylhet metropolitan police commissioner Nibas Chandra Majhi said.

Uzzal Dutta, an emergency doctor at the city Hospital, said 31 people were admitted and most had injuries from rubber bullets. One person was killed in the western district of Jhenidah. Police said clashes also broke out in the port city of Chittagong. -Reuters



Sultanate Of Oman
Ministry of Regional Municipalities
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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources invites Specialized Companies/ Establishments/ Enterprises Registered with the Ministry and Tender Board to the following Tenders:

No.	Tender No.	Tender Name	Grade	Payment	Last date for Purchasing Tender Document	Tender Submission Date
1	90/2012	Design & construction of road leading to public prosecution building at firq in wilyat Nizwa (Retender).	Excellent	R.O 60/- non-refundable fees	9/3/2013	25/3/2013
2	15/2013	Street lighting works at the internal road of Khadra Al Borshid in wilyat Al Suwaiq.	Registered & Specialized	R.O 25/- non-refundable fees	9/3/2013	25/3/2013
3	16/2013	Maintenance & repair of Al-Shkhoot faja's at Kahina'at village's at wilyat Ibr- Dhahirah governorate.	Registered & Specialized	R.O 55/- non-refundable fees	9/3/2013	25/3/2013


Tender Document can be obtained from the Directorate General of Technical Affairs, Al Khuwair, during the office hours. Tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Bond for 1% of total tender value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local Bank, valid for 90 days from the last date of tender submission.

Tenders must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The Tender No. and name of the project shall be written on the top of the envelope containing the tender. Nothing should be written on the exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the tender.

Tenders should be addressed to H.E. The Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee and deposited in the Tender Box, ground Floor, MRM&WR Building, Al Khuwair by 10.00 AM on As Abo ve date ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

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DECLARATION OF TENDERS

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1/2013	Supply of Weshah's & Miessar's for students at College's of Applied Sciences	Specialized in supply of Weshah's & Miessar's for students and registered with the Tender Board	25/= R.O twenty five Omani Rial	09/03/2013	29/03/2013
2/2013	Supply of Besht for students at College's of Applied Sciences	Specialized in supply of Besht for students and registered with the Tender Board	25/= R.O twenty five Omani Rial	09/03/2013	29/03/2013
3/2013	Supply of Abaya for students at College's of Applied Sciences	Specialized in supply of Abaya for students and registered with the Tender Board	25/= R.O twenty five Omani Rial	09/03/2013	29/03/2013

Tender Documents may be collected from second floor, Ministry of Higher Education, At Airport heights, during normal working hours starting from Wednesday 20/12/2013, the tender documents will be issued from 8:30am to 12:30pm only.

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Submit bids, signed and sealed with red wax and addressed to Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of Internal and Ministry of Higher Education. Only tender number to be written on the envelope.

Offers must be placed in the tender box, before ten o'clock in the morning schedule. Bids submitted after that date and time regardless of the reasons for the delay, will not be accepted. A representative of the company must attend bid opening which will be intimidated.

Preference will be given to companies or institutions that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization. Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender commette
Ministry of Higher Education

BRIEFS

Nato 'to keep' over 8,000 troops in Afghanistan

BRUSSELS: Allies are discussing keeping a Nato force of between 8,000 and 12,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, the United States said on Friday in the first official indication of how many foreign troops will stay in the country after most combat troops leave. US President Barack Obama has not decided how many American troops will remain in Afghanistan after 2014, Pentagon spokesman George Little said. "The president is still reviewing options and has not made a decision about the size of a possible US presence after 2014, and we will continue to discuss with allies and the Afghans how we can best carry out two basic missions: targeting the remnants of Al Qaeda and its affiliates, and training and equipping Afghan forces," Little said after a Nato defence ministers' meeting in Brussels.

Indonesia's ruling party chief suspect in graft case

JAKARTA: Indonesia's anti-graft body named yesterday the chairman of the ruling party as a suspect in connection with a multi-million-dollar corruption case, the latest scandal to hit the president's party ahead of 2014 elections. "We have decided to name AU as a suspect," said the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) spokesman Johan Budi, referring to the initials of Democratic Party chairman Anas Urbaningrum. The commission said it has sufficient evidence that Urbaningrum allegedly "received gifts or a promise of gifts" in relation to the corruption case linked to the construction of the Hambalang sports centre development project near Jakarta, worth \$120.5 million in late 2010. The suspect status of Anas is an embarrassment for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who won a landslide victory for a second term in 2009 on a corruption-fighting platform.

Rally in Japan over islands dispute with South Korea

TOKYO: Japan held an annual rally yesterday over Tokyo's claim to a set of tiny islands controlled by South Korea, which has been at the centre of a long-standing territorial feud. Some 500 people flocked to the event in Shimane prefecture in western Japan, including the highest-ranking Japanese government official ever to attend and local and national politicians. South Korea, which had urged Tokyo to cancel the rally, reacted angrily and hundreds of activists shouting anti-Japanese slogans demonstrated outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul. -Agencies

'Uncertainty' as Italy goes to poll



CAMPAIGN TRAIL: A supporters of the Party of Freedom (PDL) walks past PDL flags as he arrives to take part in a campaign meeting of PDL leader Silvio Berlusconi in Naples, yesterday. - AFP

The most **likely outcome is a centre-left government** led by Democratic Party leader Pier Luigi Bersani, a former communist with a down-to-earth manner who now espouses broadly pro-market economic views

ROME: Italy held its final day of campaigning yesterday ahead of crucial elections, as international investors warned an unclear outcome could shake the economy and set off shockwaves through the eurozone.

Italians will cast their ballots tomorrow and on Monday as they grapple with the longest recession in two decades and austerity cuts that have caused deep resentment in the euro area's third economy.

The most likely outcome is a centre-left government led by Democratic Party leader Pier Luigi Bersani, a former communist with a down-to-earth manner who now espouses broadly pro-market economic views.

"I am very, very confident of victory although we should not underestimate the right," Bersani

said in one of his last television interviews ahead of Saturday, when no campaigning is allowed.

But the result is by no means certain and whether Bersani can form a stable coalition with a majority in both houses of parliament is in serious doubt, putting the financial markets on edge.

The European Commission added further pressure yesterday, downgrading its forecast for the Italian economy to a 1.0-per cent contraction this year from its previous forecast of a 0.5-per cent shrinkage.

Bersani is due to address his last electoral meeting in Rome later yesterday, while his rival Silvio Berlusconi will address a rally in Naples.

With everything at stake, the campaign has been remarkably

underwhelming, with few rallies and a lot of back-and-forth in television interviews with little or no hard detail on electoral promises.

A case in point was Silvio Berlusconi's vow to refund Italians an unpopular property tax levied by Prime Minister Mario Monti in an official-looking letter that prompted some people to queue up at post offices to claim their money straight away.

European capitals and foreign investors will be watching closely as a return to Italy's free-wheeling public finances could spell disaster for the eurozone.

"We believe that a risk exists that after the February 24-25 elections there may be a loss of momentum on important reforms to improve Italian growth prospects," Standard & Poor's ratings agency said in a report this week.

London-based Capital Economics warned that even with a stable governing majority "huge underlying economic problems suggest that it may only be a matter of time before concerns about the public finances begin to build again."

"And a hung parliament might plunge Italy and the eurozone back into crisis rather sooner," the economic research company said this week. - AFP

RESEARCH

Remains of rare mammoth found

MOSCOW: The rare remains of a prehistoric species of southern mammoth, whose giant tusks stretched more than a metre long, have been uncovered in

southern Russia, news agency Itar-Tass reported.

It is the eighth known find of a full skeleton of the gargantuan mammal - which stood at an esti-

ated height of 4 metres. The mammoth was discovered when a cliff collapsed in the mountainous province of Kabardino-Balkaria in North Caucasus. - Reuters

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WORLD

BRIEFS

Chavez still suffer from respiratory problems



CARACAS: Venezuela's cancer-stricken President Hugo Chavez is still suffering from respiratory problems, and the evolution of that condition "has not been favorable," the information minister said on Thursday. The somewhat pessimistic medical report from the minister, Ernesto Villegas, comes after Chavez's surprise return home on Monday, following a fourth cancer surgery in Cuba. The respiratory problems that emerged in the wake of Chavez's surgery on December 11 in Havana "persist, and the trend has not been favourable, so it is still being treated," Villegas said. "Medical treatment for the underlying condition (cancer) continues without significant adverse effects so far," he said. The 58-year-old Chavez, who has been in power since 1999, "remains in communication with other family members and the government's political team, and is working in close collaboration with the medical team," Villegas added.

Kids found with slit throats

PARIS: Three French children were found with their throats slit at their home near Paris yesterday, police said, adding that a search had been launched for their absconding mother. The doctor father of the children aged nine, 11 and 17 raised the alarm after returning home in the morning from work, police and judicial sources said. "The children had their throats slit but we are still awaiting forensic reports," a judicial source said. The bodies of the nine-year-old girl and her 11-year-old brother showed multiple stab injuries. The eldest brother was found alive but later died of his injuries. The killings took place in the suburban town of Dampmart, 30km east of Paris. The father was found in a state of shock. "We are actively looking" for the mother, a judicial source said, adding that she was in her forties.

Madonna top music earner

NEW YORK: Madonna was named the biggest money maker in music in 2012 yesterday, with a world tour helping her take home up to \$34.6 million and highlighting the earning power of live performances as the industry increasingly goes digital. The 54-year-old Material Girl topped *Billboard Magazine's* annual list of 40 top money makers for the second time after earning an estimated \$32 million — 93.5 per cent of her revenue — from her 88-date 'MDNA' tour, 2012's biggest tour. In second place in the music magazine's list was Bruce Springsteen. - Agencies

Britain gearing up for a new immigration wave

Britain is expecting a second wave of immigration from Eastern Europe next year — this time from Bulgaria and Romania



OPPORTUNITIES: Job adverts are seen placed in the window of a recruitment agency in London. - Reuters

BOSTON: Welcome to Boston, the most Eastern European town in Britain.

Census data show that more than a tenth of the residents of this sleepy outpost in rural Lincolnshire, in east England, are immigrants from the 10 ex-Communist countries that joined the European Union in the 2000s.

With its streets dotted by Polish cafes and Baltic food shops, Boston is almost unrecognisable from the town which listed 249 Germans as its biggest foreign population at the time of Britain's census in 2001.

But now Britain is expecting a second wave of immigration from Eastern Europe next year — this time from Bulgaria and Romania, as the EU lifts restrictions on their 29 million citizens' access to the bloc's labour markets.

There are few who view this prospect with more trepidation than the English residents of Boston, where one elementary school

already has signs on its gates in five languages.

"We'll be foreigners in our own town soon," said Joan, a retired office worker, as she sat on a park bench enjoying a rare patch of winter sun.

"I've got neighbours from Eastern Europe and they couldn't be nicer. But we just don't want any more of them."

Her English neighbours have a litany of complaints against the town's newer inhabitants, from claims that they put a strain on public services to moans that they frequently drive on the wrong side of the road.

Mixed feelings

Even among the town's existing Eastern European community there are mixed feelings about the new arrivals.

"I like it here, and people are nice," said Barbara Sieczkowska, owner of Basia's Pantry which

sells imported Polish food.

"But there are too many Eastern Europeans here now. There must be 20 shops in Boston selling the same kind of food as mine. It's bad for business."

Free movement

Boston is an extreme example of how free movement of labour within the 27-nation EU has changed the face of Britain over the last decade.

When the so-called "A8" countries — Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic — joined the EU in 2004, Britain was one of just three states to immediately open its labour market to them.

As the third biggest economy in Europe, it quickly became a major destination for workers from poor post-Communist states.

Today, Britain's biggest ethnic

communities remain the 7 per cent of the population who are of south Asian origin and the 3 per cent who are black, a legacy of the country's colonial past.

But the 62 million-strong population also includes a million Eastern Europeans. Polish is now Britain's most widely-spoken language after English.

When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, Britain joined several other states in restricting the new members' access to their labour markets until January 2014.

But with less than a year to go, right-wing British newspapers are whipping up fears that "floods of beggars" will sweep in from Bulgaria and Romania, two of the EU's poorest members.

Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives, who have tried for years to shake off their image as Britain's "nasty party", are now toughening their talk on immigration.

Last week Cameron said Britain was reviewing immigrants' access to the welfare system to ensure that the country is not a "soft touch".

Romania's ambassador to London, Ion Jinga, warned that the inflammatory rhetoric could lead to discrimination and even physical attacks against Romanians living in Britain. - AFP

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SPORTS

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HYDERABAD WILL HOST SECOND TEST: BCCI

NEW DELHI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) yesterday made it clear that the second cricket Test between India and Australia will go ahead in Hyderabad since the state government has assured of safety and security of the players. The city was rocked by two terror blasts on Thursday, killing 14 people and injuring many. The visiting team had expressed concerns but BCCI assured them all safety measures would be in place. -AFP

I'm no quitter, says defiant Wenger

Barring a miracle comeback against Bayern in the second leg, Arsenal will have **gone eight years without a trophy** at the end of this season and many fans believe the time has come for coach Wenger to go

LONDON: Arsene Wenger insists he has no intention of quitting Arsenal despite growing criticism of the Gunners' boss after the worst season of his 17-year reign in north London.

Wenger has been under fire from fans and pundits for much of the season, but the last week has been a new low for the Frenchman as his side crashed out of the FA Cup against Championship club

Blackburn and then slumped to a 3-1 home defeat to Bayern Munich that left their Champions League hopes in tatters.

Barring a miracle comeback against Bayern in the second leg, Arsenal will have gone eight years without a trophy at the end of this season and many fans believe the time has come for Wenger to go.

But the 63-year-old, whose team have been reduced to a desper-

ate scrap to finish in the Premier League's top four, says he is not about to walk away from the current difficulties because his desire to do the job burns as bright as ever. Asked at press conference yesterday if he had considered his position this week, Wenger said: "Never. Not one second. I don't think that spark has anything to do with your age. "It is just that's how you are and you're motivated

by how much you want to win and how much you are a winner. "If I go out now and play one against one with you, you will see I will beat you and at least if I don't manage to beat you, I will want to beat you. That will not change as long as I can move." Wenger also believes there needs to be a sense of perspective around what is regarded as achievement at the Emirates Stadium. -AFP

PREMIER LEAGUE

Benitez sets sights on adding to City pain

LONDON: Chelsea manager Rafael Benitez has warned Manchester City that his players have set their sights on climbing above the champions in the Premier League table.

Benitez's team will move within one point of second-placed City if they beat Roberto Mancini's men at Eastlands tomorrow and the Spaniard believes that could prove the springboard to a strong finish from the west Londoners.

Neither side goes into this weekend's clash in the most positive mood after traumatic seasons but Benitez sees signs Chelsea can take advantage of City's recent stumbles.

Mancini's club have gone three league games without a win, leaving them 12 points behind leaders Manchester United, and Benitez said: "We have a lot of respect because City is a great team but we have to go there with confidence.

"If we are close I think that we can fight for being in the top two. The priority is to win: if we win this game we will be closer but if we cannot we have to keep fighting. What I can see now is a team with confidence, we are confident we can beat City or anyone if we do things in the right way. We are creating chances in every game so I'm confident we can do it."

With Arsenal, Everton and Tottenham also having designs on qualifying for the Champions League next season, the race for the top four is likely to be a long one and Benitez admits he envisages the battle going right down to the wire.

"Our last game is against Everton so I'm sure that, until the end of the season, we will be winning games or losing games.

Chelsea travel to City on the back of a hard-fought 1-1 draw with Sparta Prague in the Europa League on Thursday that took them into the last 16 of the competition.

With City eliminated from the group stages of the Champions League, they have had more time to rest this week than their opponents. But Benitez refuses to dwell on the potential boost that gives City and he insists that by leaving out Frank Lampard and Ashley Cole against Sparta Prague, his squad remains fresh. "We have played more games than anyone in Europe," Benitez said. "But we knew that before the game (against Prague) so I rested some players so hopefully the players we use will be fine and we can keep the energy." -AFP

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- Tenders shall be placed in the tender box kept at Directorate of Quantity Surveying & Contracts (First Floor Room No. D1050), Muscat Municipality HQ, Darsait, before 12:00 noon on Sunday as per above mentioned date in the table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the tender being presented and no other marks.
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Ashwin, Clarke shine on Day one



JUBILANT: R. Ashwin celebrates the wicket of Australia's Matthew Wade in Chennai. Ashwin, who took his sixth five-wicket haul, ended with fantastic figures of six for 88 in 30 overs. -PTI

Clarke brought up his 23rd Test century off the second last ball of the day hitting left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja towards long-off to remain unbeaten on 103

CHENNAI: Captain Michael Clarke led from the front with a sparkling unbeaten century under pressure as Australia recovered from a precarious position to post a respectable 316 for seven on the opening day of the first cricket Test against India in Chennai yesterday.

Clarke brought up his 23rd Test century off the second last ball of the day hitting left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja towards long-off to remain unbeaten on 103 on a day which saw an engrossing battle between the bat and the ball.

Clarke negated all the good work done by off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (6/88) who took all but one among seven wickets that fell on the day at the Chepauk.

Clarke was well-complemented by debutant Moises Henriques (68) as the pair added 147 runs for the sixth wicket after Ashwin's terrific post-lunch spell saw the visitors being reduced to 153 for five.

The Tamil Nadu bowler finally broke the partnership by dismiss-

ing the impressive Henriques, trapping him leg-before much to the relief of his teammates.

Ashwin, who took his sixth five-wicket haul in Test matches ended with fantastic figures of six for 88 in 30 overs but should consider himself unlucky being robbed off Clarke's wicket due to the absence of Decision Review System (DRS).

The Australian captain was batting on 39 when he offered a simple bat-pad catch to Cheteshwar Pujara at forward short-leg but umpire Kumar Dharmasena turned down the vociferous appeal from the Indians.

The television replays clearly indicated that the ball had hit Clarke's bat before flying off to the close-in fielder. The rival skipper took advantage of the situation and did not look back as he took his team to a position of safety with other Indian bowlers looking pedestrian.

A lot was expected of Harbhajan Singh playing his 100th Test match but the experienced off-spinner

went off the boil after the first few overs giving away 71 runs in 19 overs. Debutant Bhuvneshwar Kumar's performance also left a lot to be desired. In all three sessions, the Australian batsmen maintained a decent run-rate despite losing wickets at regular intervals.

Opting the bat first, David Warner showed decisive footwork during the first couple of hours as he attacked the Indian spinners Harbhajan and Ashwin. Ed Cowan also looked confident although both the openers got a reprieve in the first hour.

Spin test

Cowan charged down the track and Dhoni missed a stumping chance while Warner's catch was dropped by Virender Sehwag at the first slip. The bowler on both occasions was Ashwin.

However, Ashwin had the last laugh against Cowan (29), who confidently charged down the track as Dhoni whipped the bails off in a flash.

Phil Hughes (6) didn't look comfortable at all during his brief stay and dragged a wide short delivery from Ashwin onto the stumps.

Warner however continued to attack as he completed his 50 off 77 balls in company of Shane Watson (28). The duo put on 54 runs for the third wicket as Australia went into lunch at 126 for two. The first hour in the post-lunch session turned out to be

very productive for India as Ashwin dismissed Watson, Warner and Matthew Wade in quick succession as the visitors suffered a mid-innings collapse.

Both Watson and Warner were leg before trying to play deliveries and were caught on the backfoot.

Warner made 59 off 93 balls with the help of six fours.

But it was Clarke, who responded to the crisis situation as he batted with a lot of authority. His footwork was assured and he decided to wait for the loose deliveries hitting as many as 11 fours and a six.

He drove well and also played the cut shot perfectly. The six off Ashwin over long-on was majestic as it brought up his half century. Clarke also completed 7000 Test runs on the day, when he reached a personal score of 11.

A lot of credit should also be given to Henriques, who showed maturity playing second fiddle to Clarke. He faced 132 deliveries and hit five boundaries in the process. He proved to be the ideal foil for someone like Clarke, who found the gaps with ease.

Any total in excess of 350 could prove to be challenging for the Indians as the ball is getting roughed up quickly on a bone dry surface.

With three potent quicks in the opposition ranks and two of them being exponents of reverse swing, the Indians will have to be at their best when they get a chance to bat today. -PTI

SAILING

ASIM takes control after fifth leg

DIBBA: Leg five of EFG Bank Sailing Arabia-The Tour, may have proved to be the decisive run, with Bertrand Pacés's ASIM winning her fourth consecutive offshore leg. With BAE Systems coming home in fifth place, ASIM now holds a 5.75 point lead, which may prove to be extremely difficult to overcome.

The second longest leg of the tour, between Al Hamra in Ras Al Khaimah and Zighy Bay in Oman, is the run that all crews look forward to, taking the eight Farr 30s through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's great seaways, between the Gulf of Arabia and the Gulf of Oman. After days of sailing along a low-lying shoreline, with the desert rolling into the sea, this leg was a stark contrast, rounding the highly mountainous Musandam Peninsula.

Following the decisive fifth leg of the gruelling 15-day, 760 nautical mile tour Issa Al Ismaili, director of events for race organiser Oman Sail, said: "Congratulations to team ASIM who, by claiming their fourth leg win have taken control of the third edition of the EFG Bank Sailing Arabia-The Tour with only two legs remaining. For all teams, arriving at Zighy Bay is a moment to cherish. Not only are the crews a significant step closer to finishing in the most competitive race in the history of the tour, having safely navigated the Strait of Hormuz, but arrival to Dibba is amongst the most spectacular stretches of sailing in the world."

Bertrand Pacés team on ASIM once again proved themselves to be the most experienced team and led for the duration of the race. But they came perilously close to losing, with two significant park-ups at dusk and at dawn.

The results of this leg were determined by this 'restart'. Behind ASIM, Al Thuraya Bank Muscat and TU Delft were the first out of the wind hole, closest to the land, while EFG Bank (Monaco) managed to extricate themselves from the offshore side of the group.

Aside from ASIM, the star performer of this leg was TU Delft. Al Thuraya Bank Muscat led the trio past the last headland of the course, but shortly afterwards the Dutch nosed ahead into second place. Further, there was a heart-in-mouth moment when they became entangled with a fishing pot just 200m from the finish line, but EFG Bank (Monaco), however, they were able to fight back after the second park up, to end up third. BAE Systems, lying in second place overall, ended up sixth place.



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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



INDIA BUDGET MAY TRY TO BOOST EXPORTS

India said next week's budget may widen a programme providing subsidised credit to exporters as the nation strives to pare a trade deficit that has hurt the rupee. >B4



Oman-Spain trade soars to OMR150m

Since the opening of the Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy in Muscat in October 2010 **more than 60 major corporations from Spain had visited Oman**

AFTAB H. KOLA
aftab@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: Trade volumes between Oman and Spain have soared in the last decade, tripling from OMR52 million in 2001 to close to OMR150 million in 2011. Speaking exclusively to *Times of Oman*, Sergio Vela Ortiz, head of the Spanish Economic and Trade Office in Muscat, said, "Oman and Spain enjoy excellent relations at all levels, laying the groundwork for strengthening trade and investment ties and for deepening the understanding between the two countries."

Since the opening of the Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy in Muscat in October 2010, Sergio noted that more than 60 major corporations from Spain had visited Oman.

Speaking on exports, Sergio asserted, "Oman's exports to Spain

“Oman and Spain enjoy excellent relations at all levels, laying the groundwork for strengthening trade and investment ties and for deepening the understanding between the two countries”

Sergio Vela Ortiz
Head of Spanish Economic and Trade Office



- Supplied picture

have risen by 312 per cent to reach about OMR100 million in 2011, compared with the previous year." Omani exports mainly comprise LNG and petrochemical products such as plastic and organic chemicals. Spanish exports to Oman mainly comprise industrial products such as tiles, tyres, lubricants, and plastic and electrical equipment, as well as automobiles, machinery, and boats.

Sergio observed, "Not only is Spain contributing to Omani development through bilateral trade but also an increasing number of Spanish companies are establishing branches in Oman to share their knowhow and proven quality. Such companies include Union Fenosa, a partner of Qalhat

Gas; Tecnicas Reunidas, which is involved in several oil and gas projects; Indra, which plays an important role in all commercial airport projects that require the development of an air-traffic management system; Assignia, which is collaborating on the Sohar Port project; and Cadagua, which is part of the consortium that recently won the contract for IWP construction in Gubrah to secure the provision of potable water in the Sultanate.

Tecna, of the Isolux Corsan Group, is also collaborating with Oman Gas Company in the extraction of LPG through the Salalah pipeline network. On Feb. 16, Ultra inaugurated a building at the new Oman International Airport, built by BECSA."

Promising framework,

On how Omani investments in Spain are also profiting from the stable and promising framework, he added, "These are mainly focused on the oil and gas infrastructure and on chemical companies." He noted that Oman is the second-largest investor in Spain, in terms of volume, among all the countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

Sergio explained, "Our mutual interest and relationship is checked every year by the Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy in Muscat. We are receiving a growing number of trade missions. Some of these are regular missions, similar to those organised by the Madrid Chamber of Commerce, while others are more specialised. We also receive trade missions dedicated to specific sectors such as the trade mission of the federal railway industry from Spain.

"During the year 2013, five or six trade missions will be organised to visit Oman, and one trade mission will visit Spain from Oman. The Spanish Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy is also working with some Omani Ministries and entities to explore opportunities for collaboration in the tourism sector and for the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)."

Sergio summed up by saying, "Oman's trade relations with Spain is among Spain's most recent partnerships, but the future roadmap for Spanish companies and their trade delegations in Oman seems to indicate that this partnership may well prove to be one of the most successful ties that either country has developed in recent years."

TOUCHSCREEN NOTEBOOK

Google challenges Apple with launch of high-end laptop

SAN FRANCISCO: Google unveiled a touchscreen notebook computer on Thursday designed for high-end users, throwing down the gauntlet to Apple and its MacBooks.

Google said its Chromebook Pixel computers blending tablet and laptop technology, boasting heavyweight Intel chips and screens tailored for rich graphics, were released in the United States and Britain, starting at \$1,299.

"People will give up a MacBook Air for this," Google Chrome senior vice-president Sundar Pichai said. A Pixel model featuring built-in connectivity to the Verizon mobile Internet service will hit the US market in April at a price of \$1,449.

The newly unveiled version can connect online with wireless hot-spot technology or cables.

"It's a great looking product," Om Malik of technology news website GigaOM said at the Pixel debut in San Francisco.

"But Google is facing a selling problem, they have to compete on price originally and build a developer base for a high-end product."

Google is hoping enthusiasts will forego price comparisons with competitors such as MacBooks or laptops built on Windows 8 software and focus instead on the Pixel's touchscreen feature and the massive terabyte of Google Drive online data storage included.

"It seems like a pretty hard sell," said Forrester analyst James McQuivey. "I hope they are not planning to make a lot of money off it."

While the Pixel seems aimed at



A Chromebook Pixel on display. — AFP

the MacBook market, it also faces fierce competition from touchscreen laptops based on Windows 8 software.

"It seems like more of a symbolic product release with Google trying to make a point that it is no longer just a low-end provider of devices," McQuivey said.

Analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group branded the Pixel move "a train wreck," arguing that notebook computers above \$600 have historically not sold well and that Apple even sells a slick MacBook Air model for \$999.

The booming popularity of tablet computers is also eroding the overall market for laptops.

"It just boggles the mind," Enderle said. "I have no clue what the hell Google was thinking."

The announcement adds a new dimension to the rivalry between the two tech giants, locked in a fierce battle over smartphones and tablets. — AFP

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to bear this irreparable loss.



MARKET

FISCAL 2013

HP to use innovations to increase revenues

WASHINGTON: Hewlett-Packard (HP), the troubled but biggest maker of personal computers, has promised 'disruptive innovations' after seeing its profit slip in the past quarter.

HP said on Thursday its net profit for its first fiscal quarter ending January 31 declined 16 per cent from the same period a year ago to \$1.2 billion.

But it also marked a rebound from the prior quarter's \$6.9 billion loss stemming from a massive write-down in the value of a British company accused of 'serious accounting improprieties'.

The most recent quarterly results were better than expected, amounting to a profit of 82 cents a share, and revenues also beat forecast despite a six percent drop to \$28.4 billion.

HP, which has been struggling amid a consumer shift away from PCs to tablets and other devices, is in the middle of a major restructuring program expected to trim

some 29,000 jobs.

Chief executive Meg Whitman said she expected to announce changes at the company as part of the reorganisation, but offered no specifics. "We'll be bringing a number of new programmes and disruptive innovations to market in the coming quarters, and we expect the benefits from our restructuring will accelerate through fiscal 2013," she said in a statement.

HP fended off a challenge from China's Lenovo at the top of the PC market in late 2012, according to the research firm Gartner.

But the company has acknowledged struggling in the shifting technology landscape.

An IDC report out Thursday said global tablet sales jumped 78 per cent in the past year, while desktop PC sales were down 4.1 per cent and portable PCs off 3.4 per cent. IDC said that counting all "smart connected devices," including PCs, tablets and smartphones.

- Bloomberg News

Microsoft joins Oracle over patent litigation

Companies including Google and Facebook have said **too many software patents are being used primarily to generate lawsuits** instead of contributing to new products and services

“

My biggest concern, and the concern of many other software companies, is that there's going to be a move to somehow reduce or diminish protection for software. There doesn't seem to be any rational reason for doing that

Dorian Daley
General counsel, Oracle

WASHINGTON: The top lawyers for Microsoft and Oracle say a United States debate over rampant patent litigation could endanger businesses that rely on such legal protections for their innovative software.

Companies including Google and Facebook have said too many software patents are being used primarily to generate lawsuits instead of contributing to new products and services. While agreeing on that point, Microsoft, the world's biggest software maker, and Oracle say some demands for change go too far in calling for strict limits or even the elimination of patents on software.

"My biggest concern, and the concern of many other software companies, is that there's going to be a move to somehow reduce

or diminish protection for software," Oracle general counsel Dorian Daley said in an interview in Washington yesterday. "There doesn't seem to be any rational reason for doing that."

Daley and her counterpart at Microsoft, Brad Smith, joined software and manufacturing executives meeting on Thursday with lawmakers and congressional staff members to defend patents for computer programmes.

"We have a patent system that has important strengths but it also has some significant weaknesses," Smith said in the same interview. "We need to fix what's broken but be careful so we don't break what's working. It's all about striking the right balance."

Thursday's Capitol Hill session was the latest in a series of

gatherings across the country as companies that create, sell or use software programs debate how Congress or the US Patent and Trademark Office should respond to the rise of patent litigation.

Serial lawsuits

Large and small companies are united in their ire at so-called patent assertion entities, sometimes derided as 'trolls', that claim to have invented aspects of widely used technologies like online shopping and file lawsuits seeking royalties from dozens or even hundreds of companies.

Of the more than 5,600 patent-infringement lawsuits filed in the US last year, more than 12 per cent were filed by just 10 companies over software, according to data.

In a February 1 interview, Su-

zanne Michel, Google's senior patent counsel, said there are "fundamental problems with software patents as they are being allowed today" with too many that are broad or vaguely worded.

"This is not about opposing all software patents; this is opposing a certain type of software patent," she said. "Google is advocating for really smarter software patents that are good for innovation."

Loser pays

Google, Microsoft and Oracle agree on some approaches, such as a proposal to make the loser in a patent lawsuit pay the winner's legal fees. They also support greater transparency at the patent office, more clearly identifying the real owner of a patent and requiring applicants to provide more specific information about their inventions.

Smith said that, by April 1, Microsoft will post information on the patents it owns and called on other companies to do the same.

Microsoft, Oracle and International Business Machines are among companies saying courts and the patent office are making progress as they implement a 2011 law that revised procedures for reviewing patents and curtailed some litigation. Oracle, said software products should be eligible for legal protection.

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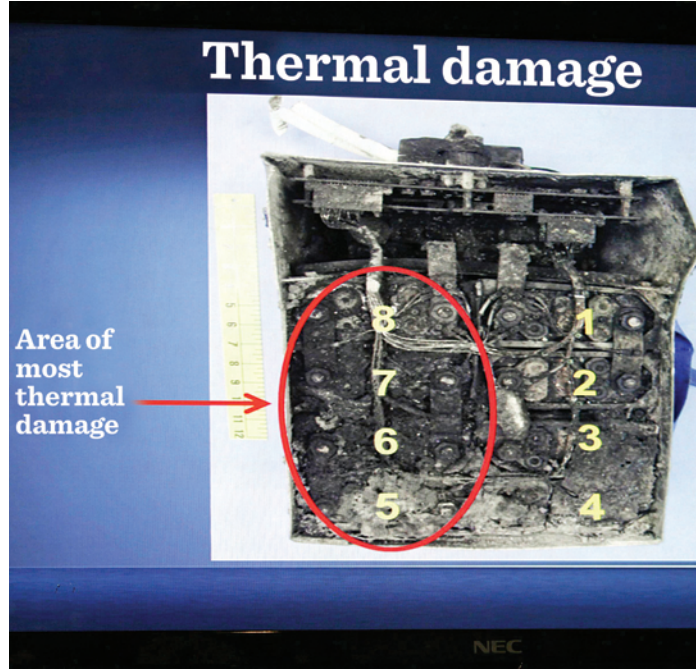
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United Airlines extends Boeing 787 grounding

United Airlines has 'tentatively' scheduled a 787 on its Denver route to Tokyo's Narita International Airport on May 12



THE PROBLEM LIES HERE: Damaged batteries are displayed during a Washington news conference on an investigation into the January 7 fire that occurred on a Japan Airlines Boeing 787 Dreamliner at Logan International Airport in Boston in this file photo. -Reuters

NEW YORK: United Airlines said on Thursday that it expected to keep its six Boeing 787s out of service until at least May 12, as the cutting-edge airplane remained grounded worldwide due to battery problems.

United, the only US airline with the 787 Dreamliner, just two days ago announced it would keep them on the ground through March 30.

United has "tentatively" scheduled a 787 on its Denver route to Tokyo's Narita International Airport on May 12, UAL spokeswoman Christen David said in an emailed response to an AFP query.

"We are taking the 787 out of our schedule through June 5, except for Denver-Narita," she said.

A person familiar with the case said the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) investigation of overheated lithium-ion batteries on the 787 was ongoing and schedule adjustments were necessary.

All 50 787s in service around the world have been banned from flight since January 16 after a battery fire on a parked plane and battery

smoke on another one forced an emergency landing. US and foreign investigators have reported progress in the probe of the lithium-ion batteries but have yet to pinpoint the cause of the problems.

Boeing is set to propose temporary fixes to the battery problems to US air-safety regulators and could have them back in the air in two months, *The New York Times* reported.

The *Times*, citing industry and federal officials, said Boeing had narrowed down the ways in which the lithium-ion batteries could fail, concluding they would be safe to use after making changes such as adding insulation between the battery cells. Boeing commercial

airplane division chief Raymond Conner will unveil the proposals in a meeting with FAA chief Michael Huerta, according to the *Times*. Federal officials told the newspaper the aircraft could be back in the air by April if the fixes are approved.

Schedule adjustments

A Boeing spokesman said the aerospace giant was aware of United's 787 schedule adjustments and reiterated the company's regret about the impact of the groundings on its customers. Asked about the media reports that Boeing intends to submit a proposed battery fix to the FAA, the spokesman declined to comment. — AFP

EUROPEAN UNION

EU predicts recession again

BRUSSELS: The eurozone is starting at another full year of recession in 2013 with unemployment likely to surge above the 20-million mark with France in particular overshooting fiscal targets, the EU warned yesterday.

Economic output across the 17-state currency area — home to about 340 million people and a global rival to the United States, Japan and emerging giants — is set to shrink by 0.3 per cent this year after a 0.6-per cent contraction last year, the European Commission said.

Millions more people are set therefore to lose their jobs, with already record unemployment expected to rise markedly right into 2014.

National governments face a tricky balancing act getting their finances in order and meeting EU spending thresholds to avoid fines in what Brussels sees as an undesirable consequence that would further worsen Europe's overall outlook.

France can expect some leeway from Brussels to avoid overly-tough austerity cuts and reforms such as those imposed on bailed-out Greece, analysts said, given the risk of social unrest and aggravating the recession. But the margin may not be so great for fear of storing up friction with Germany, the arch disciplined eurozone powerhouse, already set for 0.5-per cent growth in this, a pivotal general election year.

"We must stay the course of reform and avoid any loss of momentum," the EU's economic affairs commissioner Olli Rehn said, arguing that the drag on growth and spike in joblessness was a natural consequence of "the ongoing rebalancing of the European economy."

The EU's winter economic forecast said there would not be a return to growth for the debt-laden monetary union until 2014, when the expansion would measure 1.4-per cent from the trough hit this year.

As a result, the eurozone unemployment rate would hit 12.2 per cent for 2013 after 11.4 per cent last year — which left the number of people unemployed already at nearly 19 million. — AFP

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Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Times of Oman
Chairman of MPPH Group

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family to bear this irreparable loss and grant eternal
peace to the departed soul

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(General Secretary)
Pakistan Social Club-Oman

CONDOLENCES

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MARKET

BRIEFS

Commercial bank deposits rise 12.7% in December

MUSCAT: The total deposits, in Omani rials as well as foreign currency deposits of commercial banks, increased by 12.7 per cent to OMR14.17 billion in December 2012 from OMR12.57 billion in December 2011, according to a monthly bulletin issued by the Central Bank of Oman. Private sector deposits with commercial banks increased by 12.3 per cent to OMR9.02 billion in December 2012 from OMR8.03 billion a year ago. The public sector deposits with commercial banks increased by 17.3 per cent to OMR3.95 billion, while deposits of public enterprises declined by 1.1 per cent to OMR969.2 million during the same period. The increase in deposits and loans availed by the commercial banks led to a remarkable increase in money supply. Broad money (M2) increased by 10.7 per cent to OMR10.91 billion in December 2012 compared to OMR9.85 billion in December 2011. Narrow money (M1), comprising currency held by the public and local currency demand deposits, expanded 13.9 per cent.

Forum on Oman's position in Islamic banking tomorrow

MUSCAT: Thompson Reuters, in collaboration with the Capital Market Authority (CMA), will organise a forum on 'Oman's position in Islamic banking', tomorrow. It aims at enhancing communication among Islamic banks experts in a bid to promote the sector in the Omani market. The forum will discuss the Sultanate of Oman's position as a preferred destination for Sharia-compliant investment and the issuance of sukuk, as well as the requirements for Oman's entry into the Sharia-compatible global financial services sector market. Experts and scholars in the field of Sharia-compliant financial services will take part.

Seminar on social insurance systems, pension from today

MUSCAT: A two-day technical seminar on 'Protective means and initiatives to protect the social insurance systems and pension', organised by the Public Authority for Social Insurance, in collaboration with the International Society for Social Security will commence today at Grand Hayat Muscat. The opening ceremony will be sponsored by Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Planning. Social insurance and pension professionals will take part in the seminar with the aim of providing healthy environment that enriches the insurance work. The seminar will discuss practical tools used by social insurance and pension institutions in the different countries to manage pension and insurance systems in a way that ensure their sustainability and ability to meet their future obligations.

Central Bank of Oman issues CDs worth OMR180m

MUSCAT: Certificates of deposit (CDs) tender was held at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) this week. The total amount allotted for issue No. 805 was OMR180 million. A bulletin issued by CBO stated that the average interest rate of these certificates was 0.13 per cent, whilst the maximum accepted interest rate was 0.13 per cent. The tenor of these certificates is 28 days. The maturity date is March 20. The certificates of deposit issued to licensed banks by the CBO as a monetary policy instrument aimed at absorbing excess liquidity at the banking sector in particular and maintaining stability of the interest rate and the money market in general. The repo rate from February 20 to 26 is 1 per cent. - ONA

India budget may offer sops to bolster exports

Next week's budget is expected to widen a programme providing subsidised credit to exporters as New Delhi strives to pare a trade deficit that has hurt the currency

NEW DELHI: India said next week's budget may widen a programme providing subsidised credit to exporters as the nation strives to pare a trade deficit that has hurt the rupee.

"We have made an additional request for incentives," commerce secretary S. R. Rao said in an interview in his office in New Delhi on Thursday.

The expansion of the so-called interest subvention policy, which gives some exporters a 2 percentage points discount on bank lending rates, could be announced in the February 28 budget if the finance minister agrees, Rao said.

India's shipments slid for most of 2012, hurt by an uneven United States expansion and the recession in the euro area. A record deficit in the nation's current account, the broadest measure of trade, has contributed to a 9.6 per cent drop in the rupee against the dollar in the past year.

The central bank has signalled the gap may also limit room for interest-rate cuts.

"The request for new products to be included in the subvention scheme is to ensure competitiveness," Rao said.

"The factor cost is prohibitive because of high rate of interest. We are trying to cushion that."

The government prolonged and widened the interest-subsidy program in December last year, part of a series of economic policy changes since mid-September to revive an economy expanding at



BIG BOOST REQUIRED: India's shipments slid for most of 2012, hurt by an uneven United States expansion and the recession in the euro area. A record deficit in the India's current account has contributed to a 9.6 per cent drop in the rupee against the dollar in the past year. - Bloomberg News

the weakest pace in a decade.

The rupee has appreciated 1.8 per cent since then. It was little changed at 54.47 per dollar in Mumbai. The BSE India Sensitive Index of stocks rose 0.1 per cent.

Rupee depreciation

The longer-term depreciation in the rupee has failed to help exporters, who prefer a stable currency, Rao said.

The current-account shortfall swelled to \$22.31 billion in the quarter ended September 30, the widest in Reserve Bank of India data beginning 1949.

"The dramatic fall in exports is leading to weakness in the rupee despite strong foreign institutional investor inflows," said Jagannadham Thunuguntla, a strategist at SMC Global Securities in New Delhi. "If exports don't pick up and if the equity markets experience a bear run, it could be a double whammy for the rupee, which could depreciate to 57 or 58."

Reserve Bank of India governor Duvvuri Subbarao said last week the "external sector is very vulnerable," adding the current-account gap may widen to a record in the year through March 2013.

Oil and gold

Imports of crude oil and gold have fanned the trade shortfall. The government has raised taxes on imports of the metal, and partially freed diesel prices from state control last month to allow higher tariffs.

Rao said officials are trying to promote exports to markets such as Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, the Far East, the Commonwealth of Independent States and South Asia.

The announcement of any widening of the credit-subsidy programme may also come outside the budget, Rao said.

United States economy

Signs of recovery in the United States economy may help exports, he said. Shipments climbed 0.8 per cent in January from a year earlier, the first advance in nine months.

"Overall, merchandise exports are not doing well, but service sector exports are doing well, so that will provide some measure of support to the rupee," Rao said.

Finance minister Palaniappan Chidambaram faces pressure to curb spending after vowing to

pare India's budget deficit to 4.8 percent of gross domestic product in the year through March 2014, from a goal of 5.3 percent this fiscal year. Rao declined to specify the cost of widening the subsidized-credit programme.

Commerce minister Anand Sharma said in December the program applies to all small- and medium-sized enterprises, and has been extended to engineering goods such as hand tools, electrical machinery and boilers. Certain exports through the Export-Import Bank of India will also qualify, he said.

Government-spending curbs as Chidambaram strives to avert a credit-rating downgrade may make India more dependent on exports and business investment to revive growth. GDP will climb 5 per cent this fiscal year, the weakest pace since 2002-2003, says the statistics agency. - Bloomberg News

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INDIAN CURRENCY

Rupee gains on slowing inflation

MUMBAI: India's rupee rallied the most in more than three weeks on optimism slowing inflation and prospects of an economic revival will attract capital inflows.

The currency rose 0.5 per cent yesterday to 54.19 per dollar in Mumbai, after touching 54.63 on Thursday, the weakest level since January 17, according to data.

The Dollar Index, which tracks the greenback against six major trading partners, retreated from a five-month high touched

on Thursday. The currency rebounded from a one-month low as Brown Brothers Harriman said investors should consider purchasing the rupee as India's economic fundamentals are improving.

Inflation slowed to a three-year low of 6.62 per cent in January and the Reserve Bank of India cut interest rates last month for the first time since April.

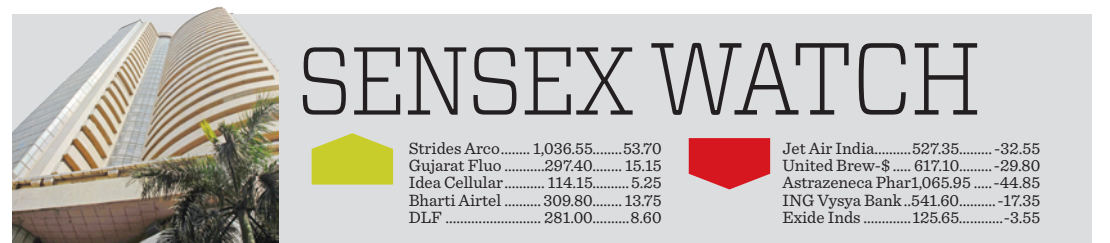
The rupee slumped the most in six weeks yesterday after min-

utes from the Federal Reserve's last meeting issued February 20 showed several officials prefer varying the pace of buying bonds, raising concerns fund inflows into emerging markets will slow.

The rupee's one-month implied volatility, a gauge of expected moves in the exchange rate used to price options, rose 45 basis points, or 0.45 percentage point, to 9.50 per cent this week.

The rate climbed 10 basis points yesterday. - Bloomberg News

INDIA STOCKS



Stocks dip, volumes fall

MUMBAI: Indian stocks fell for the fourth week. Consumer companies and lenders led the decline.

The S&P BSE Sensitive index, or Sensitive, dropped less than 0.1 per cent to 19,317.01 at the close, with volumes 3 per cent below the 30-day average.

The gauge lost 0.8 per cent this week, the longest stretch since the period ended on May 18. ITC, the country's largest cigarette maker, slid 1.6 per cent. Mortgage lender HDFC fell 1.9 per cent after Goldman Sachs cut its recommendation on the stock.

Finance minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, who presents the federal budget next week, faces pressure to curb spending after vowing to pare India's budget deficit to 4.8 percent of gross domestic product in the year ending March 2014, from a goal of 5.3 per cent this fiscal year.

The economy will grow 5 per cent this year, the least since the 4 per cent increase in the 2002 to 2003 period, the statistics office said on February 7. Data last week showed factory output fell for a second month in December.

"The market is delicately poised before next week's big event," Jitendra Panda, head of broking at Capital First, said in a phone interview yesterday.

"It will be a deficit budget, which may raise taxes and revenue. If subsidies rise, it will pressure inflation and limit the scope for more interest-rate cuts this year.



Rate-sensitive stocks such as banks are under pressure due to that concern."

The Sensitive has fallen 3.9 per cent from a two-year high set on January 25 as net incomes at the biggest companies disappointed investors. Earnings at 43 per cent of the 30 index firms trailed estimates in the three months ended December, compared with 40 per cent in the previous two quarters, data shows.

ITC fell 1.6 per cent to Rs292. Hindustan Unilever, India's biggest household products maker, tumbled 2.7 per cent to Rs455.

HDFC dropped 1.9 per cent to Rs799, the steepest drop since January 11. Goldman Sachs cut the stock to sell from neutral and lowered the price estimate by 6.3

per cent to Rs740 citing increasing competition. HDFC Bank, the top lender by value, lost 1 per cent to Rs659.

Tata Motors, the owner of Jaguar & Land Rover, slid 1.6 per cent to 293, the lowest level since February 21.

Bharti Airtel, India's biggest mobile services company, surged 4.5 per cent to Rs309, the most since January 15, after the New Delhi High Court reserved an order on renewal of licenses held by the company and Vodafone.

Overseas funds bought a net \$212 million of Indian stocks yesterday, after the first net outflow this year on February 19, taking this year's net purchases to \$8.2 billion, a record for the period, data shows. - Bloomberg News

NEW FEATURES

Sony unveils PlayStation 4 in bid to revive video-game sales

TOKYO: Sony unveiled the PlayStation 4, its first video-game console in seven years, introducing new cloud and social-media features as chief executive Kazuo Hirai seeks to reignite sales.

Andrew House, chief executive of Sony's PlayStation unit, announced the product on Thursday at an event in New York. Consumers will be able to see what friends are playing and take over games in progress from others, and will eventually be able to stream older titles. The console will go on sale for the year-end holiday season.

The PlayStation 4 makes its debut amid an industry shift toward mobile play on smartphones and tablets, raising the question of whether gamers will shell out several hundred dollars for a new device. The console will allow self-publishing, mimicking the open architecture of smartphones that encourages smaller developers to create titles for the growing ranks of casual players.

"This enhanced PlayStation

experience is simply not revolutionary to overcome big disruptions facing the industry," Amir Anvarzadeh, a Singapore-based manager for Asia equity sales at BGC Partners, said in an e-mail. "Sony's heavy emphasis on the social aspect of PS4 seems a bit too ambitious to deliver on."

Sony and Nintendo

Mobile games and those downloaded to computers are taking a bigger portion of sales at the expense of traditional gear. United States revenue from those titles rose 16 percent last year to \$5.9 billion, according to Port Washington, New York-based researcher NPD Group. Sales of the \$60 packaged titles for consoles fell 21 per cent to \$8.9 billion.

Sony is working to combat mobile devices with hardware and software that will make games available to play or share at the press of a button on a console, the PlayStation Vita portable player or even a smartphone. Announc-

ing the product now gives the company a head start in building awareness. Old game discs won't play on the new system, said Richard Doherty, head of research at Envisioneering Group.

Sony's American Depository Receipts fell 2.7 per cent to \$14.08 in New York trading. Its German shares fell 3.7 per cent to €106.3. Nintendo, which released its new Wii U console in November, advanced 1.4 per cent to ¥8,860 in Osaka.

The new console "is unlikely to deliver sufficient cash flow to turn around the company's credit profile," Fitch Ratings, which has a BB- rating for Sony's long-term debt, said in a report yesterday.

The new PlayStation will include social-gaming features that let players tag and share videos and watch what others are doing at the same time, says Mark Cerny, the lead architect, who demonstrated the new controller, which includes a touchpad and 'share' button. - Bloomberg News

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Fat chance of slimming

Dieters who eat **high-fibre foods** consume more calories



Food manufacturers and agencies have consistently misled consumers over many years about the number of calories contained in food, nutritional experts say. Calorie-counting people trying to lose weight do not realise that the official system for assessing the caloric value of food is seriously flawed and incapable of providing accurate estimates of the amount of energy in a product, they said. Food companies for instance do not take into account the caloric value of fibre in food with the effect that some high-fibre foods which are sold as low in calories may actually contain, in the extreme, up to 25 per cent more calories than the label suggests.

It means that some high-fibre foods targeted at people on a diet are actually more fattening than people are led to believe, said Geoffrey Livesey, an independent nutritionist based in Britain who has advised the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

"The problem is the system did not consider fibre, but it has a big impact on the variance of energy content in food. What the old system gave us is a very general calorific value," Dr Livesey said.

"In Britain, we have not assigned a value for fibre, so calorie counts have normally been lower - on average around five per cent of energy in food is fibre," Dr Livesey told the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Boston.

"So consumers have been eating more calories than they thought they were, particularly if the food was high-fibre. When people eat muesli, it is a healthy food but they are often putting on lots of weight," he told the meeting. Consumers have been unknowingly consuming extra calorie in high-fibre food for decades because the system for assessing calories goes back to the 1970s and even earlier. It means that if people follow the daily recommended intake of 18 grams of fibre, they could be consuming more than 250 extra



calories each week without realising it, Dr Livesey said.

Under new European guidelines, overseen by the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency, food companies are being asked to make more accurate assessments of calories but it is unclear how many are doing so, he said.

It is not only the presence of fibre that has upset the calorie estimates. Scientists have known for many years that the calorie counts on food labels do not take into account the energy expended by the body in eating and digesting a particular type of food, said Richard Wrangham of Harvard University.

Government assessments about the amount of energy in food assume that the caloric value is the same whether the food is

cooked or raw, but scientists know that raw food provides fewer calories because the body expends energy breaking it down, Professor Wrangham said.

"We are talking about at least a difference of between 10 and 30 per cent. So eating raw food is a good way to lose weight, but you need to be careful about it long-term and it would not be advisable in children," he said.

"There is a lot of misinformation around calories, and it is crucial for the consumer, whether they are on a diet or not, to have the correct information about what they eat," he told the meeting.

"These problems have been recognized by specialists for many years but have been regarded as insufficiently important to warrant a change in the way that food value is assessed. As a result the public is given erroneous information about the energy value of many foods," he added. "The public is thus misled."

Counting calories

Calorie counts on food labels are based on a system developed by Wilbur Olin Atwater, a late-19th-century American chemist. Under the Atwater system, carbohydrates and protein average 4kcal per gram, while fat provides 9 kcal per gram. Fibre was assumed to pass through the body without being digested, but soluble fibre and other constituents of fibre can be broken down in the gut to release energy. In some respects, the Atwater system overestimates the number of calories provided in food by not taking into account the energy needed to break the food down during digestion.

The Atwater system is more accurate when considering the calorific value of highly digestible food, such as white bread. But it is less accurate with other kinds of high-fibre food, such as wholewheat pasta and dried figs. —Steve Connor/ The Independent

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ACES ON BRIDGE

Realising the roses are malodorous

North	♠ 7 2	♥ 9 4	♦ 8 6 5 3	♣ A K Q J 10
West	♠ 9 8 6 5 4	♥ 8 6 5 3	♦ A 10 4	♣ 3
East	♠ J 10 3	♥ A 7 2	♦ K J 9 2	♣ 9 6 2
South	♠ A K Q	♥ K Q J 10	♦ Q 7	♣ 8 7 5 4

Dealer: South
Vulnerable: Both

South West North East
1 NT Pass 3 NT All pass

Opening lead: ♠ 9

ERMA Bombeck said, "My theory on housework is, if the item doesn't multiply, smell, catch fire or block the refrigerator door, let it be. No one else cares. Why should you?"

At the bridge table, if someone makes a smelly play, even if the cards do not instantly catch fire, you should care. Try to work out what is happening and what you can do to stop your opponent's score from multiplying.

In this deal, South is in three no-trump. West leads the spade nine. How should East plan the defence?

North was right to jump to three no-trump. With no singleton or void and insufficient points to think about a slam, just go for the nine-trick game.

South starts with eight top tricks: three spades and five clubs. He needs to get a heart trick, but if the opponents take their heart ace and shift to diamonds, they might be able to take four tricks there for down one.

Declarer's best shot is to win the first trick with his spade king, cross to the dummy, and call for a heart.

If East is napping and plays low, South gains his ninth winner and can claim. However, East should notice things are looking bad for his side. The spade-nine lead was top of nothing, marking declarer with the three high spades. Given dummy's club winners, he is almost home. South is surely trying to sneak his ninth trick.

East must dive in with his heart ace and shift to the diamond two. Here, that works perfectly for the defense.

— By Phillip Alder

CINEMA SCHEDULE

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CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 3 YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE CINEMA • BOX-OFFICE COUNTER OPENS 30 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE SCREENING OF THE FIRST SHOW

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A Good Day To Die Hard (Action/Crime/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 140
Cast: Bruce Willis, Jai Courtney and Sebastian Koch
3:15, 7:30, 9:30 & 11:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 167
Cast: Dwayne Johnson and Susan Sarandon
5:15pm

Bullet to head (Action/Crime/Thriller) (15+) CP No: 95
Cast: Sylvester Stallone, Jason Momoa and Christian Slater
2:30pm

Gambit (Comedy/Crime) (12+) CP No: 137
Cast: Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman
4:30pm

Lincoln (Biography/Drama/History) (PG) CP No: 218
Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis, Sally Field and David Strathairn
6:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 167
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Susan Sarandon and Jon Bernthal
9:30 & 11:45pm

Beautiful Creatures (Drama/Fantasy/Romance) (12+) CP No: 175
Cast: Alice Englert and Emma Thompson
2:30 & 7:15 pm

On The Road (Adventure/Drama) (15+) CP No: 53
Cast: Sam Riley, Garrett Hedlund and Kristen Stewart
5:00pm

6 Bullets (Action/Crime/Thriller) (15+) CP No: 166
Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Joe Flanigan and Anna-Louise Plowman
9:30 & 11:45pm

CITY CINEMA, RUWI
Telephone: 24607360

Zila Gaziabaad (H) (Thriller) (PG) CP No: 187
Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi and Vivek Oberoi
3:30, 6:30, 9:30pm

Kai Po Che (H) (Drama) (PG) CP No: 181
Cast: Amit Sadih, Sushant Singh Rajput and Raj Kumar Yadav
3:30, 6:30, 9:15, 10:30pm

Special 26 (Hindi) (Drama) (U) CP No: 106
Cast: Akshay Kumar, Kajal Aggarwal and Jimmy Shergill
3:30, 6:30, 9:30pm

CITY CINEMA, SUR
Telephone: 25545544

A Good Day To Die Hard (Action/Crime) (12+) CP No: 153
Cast: Bruce Willis and Jai Courtney
3:30 & 9:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 171
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Susan Sarandon and Jon Bernthal
7:30 & 11:30pm

Zila Gaziabaad (H) (Thriller) (PG) CP No: 190
Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi and Vivek Oberoi
3:30 & 10:30pm

Romans (M) (Comedy/Thriller) (PG) CP No: 183
Cast: Kunchacko Boban and Biju Menon
7:30pm

CITY CINEMA, SOHAR
Telephone: 26840312/26843510

A Good Day To Die Hard (Action) (12+) CP No: 151
Cast: Bruce Willis and Jai Courtney
3:15, 9:30 & 11:30 pm

Beautiful Creatures (Drama/Fantasy/Romance) (12+) CP No: 181
Cast: Alice Englert and Emma Thompson
5:00 & 7:15pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 170
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Susan Sarandon and Jon Bernthal
3:15, 9:30 & 11:30pm

6 Bullets (Action/Crime/Thriller) (15+) CP No: 163
Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme and Joe Flanigan
3:00 & 6:15pm

Kai Po Che (H) (Drama) (PG) CP No: 186
Cast: Amit Sadih, Sushant Singh Rajput and Raj Kumar Yadav
3:00 & 6:15pm

Romans (M) (Comedy/Thriller) (PG) CP No: 182
Cast: Kunchacko Boban and Niveditha Thomas
7:30 & 10:30pm

Zila Gaziabaad (H) (Thriller) (PG) CP No: 188
Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi and Vivek Oberoi
3:30, 7:30, 10:30pm

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A Good Day To Die Hard (Action/Crime) (12+) CP No: 153
Cast: Bruce Willis, Jai Courtney and Sebastian Koch
3:30, 9:45 & 11:45pm

CP No: 140

Beautiful Creatures (Drama/Fantasy/Romance) (12+) CP No: 174
Cast: Alice Englert, Viola Davis and Emma Thompson
5:15 & 7:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 168
Cast: Dwayne Johnson and Susan Sarandon
11:30am, 1:30, 9:30 & 11:30pm

Gambit (Comedy/Crime) (12+) CP No: 147
Cast: Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman
3:00pm

On The Road (Adventure/Drama) (15+) CP No: 178
Cast: Sam Riley and Kristen Stewart
3:00pm

6 Bullets (Action/Crime/Thriller) (15+) CP No: 165
Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme and Joe Flanigan
7:15 pm

FLAZA 3 (GOLD CLASS)
Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 168; 4:00pm

Lincoln (Biography/Drama/History) (PG) CP No: 218; 6:30pm

Gambit (Comedy/Crime) (12+) CP No: 147
Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis and Sally Field
9:30 & 11:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 140
Cast: Bruce Willis and Sebastian Koch
9:30 & 11:30pm

CITY CINEMA, BURAIMI

A Good Day To Die Hard (Action/Crime/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 153
Cast: Bruce Willis and Sebastian Koch
3:30, 5:30 & 9:30pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 169
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Susan Sarandon and Jon Bernthal
7:30 & 11:30pm

6 Bullets (Action/Crime/Thriller) (15+) CP No: 164
Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Joe Flanigan and Anna-Louise Plowman
3:30 & 11:30pm

Zila Gaziabaad (H) (Thriller) (PG) CP No: 189
Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi and Vivek Oberoi
5:30 & 8:30 pm

Suitch (Action/Drama/Thriller) (12+) CP No: 169
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Susan Sarandon and Jon Bernthal
3:30pm

Romans (M) (Comedy/Thriller) (PG) CP No: 184
Cast: Kunchacko Boban, Biju Menon and Niveditha Thomas
7:30 & 10:30pm

RUWI | SHATTI | SOHAR | SUR | BAUSHER | BURAIMI www.citycinemaoman.net

BAHJA CINEMA

6 Bullets (Action / Crime / Thriller)
Jean-Claude Van Damme, Joe Flanigan, Anna-Louise Plowman
Timing: 2:00, 6:00 & 11:55pm
CP No: 179 (15+)

Beautiful Creatures (Drama / Fantasy / Romance)
Alice Englert, Viola Davis, Emma Thompson
2:00, 4:30 & 9:30pm
CP No: 176 (12+)

On the Road (Adventure)
Sam Riley, Garrett Hedlund, Kristen Stewart
7:00 & 11:55pm
CP No: 177 (15+)

Mama (Horror / Mystery)
Jessica Chastain, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Megan Charpentier
8:00 & 10:00pm
CP No: 156 (15+)

Bullet to the Head (Action / Crime / Thriller)
Sylvester Stallone, Jason Momoa, Christian Slater
4:00pm
CP No: 116 (15+)

Film Information - 24540856 / Advance Booking - 24540855
Website: www.bahjacinema.net

STARS CINEMA

Film information
24791641
24786776

Romans (Malyalam) (PG)
Cast: Kunchako Boban, Niveditha Thomas
3:30pm (Cinema-Main)
6:45, 9:45pm (Cinema-2)

Mirchi (Telugu)
Cast: Prabhass, Richa & Anushka Shetty
3:45pm (Cinema-Main)
6:45, 9:45pm (Cinema-2)

Lokpal (Malyalam) CP No: 139
Cast: Mohan Lal, Manoj K, Jayan & Kavya Madhavan
3:30pm, 6:30pm & 9:30pm (Cinema-3)

David (Tamil)
Cast: Vikram, Jeeva, Tabu & Lara Dutta
6:30 & 9:30pm (Cinema-4)
CP No: 115

For More Information
24789032, 24786776
Website: www.isurf.co.om

WITH LOVE

HANSEL JUJO
February 23, 2010

SNEHA BHANDARI
February 23, 2005

ANTONIO THOMAS BIJU
February 23, 2003

MOHD FAIZAN
February 21, 2012

ADITYA RUPESH
February 21, 2011

Send us a colour photograph of the child (below 15 years) whose birthday you are celebrating, along with his/her full name, date of birth, address, telephone number and parents'/your name to Times of Oman, With Love, PO Box 770, PC 112, Ruwi or through e-mail to extra@timesofoman.com

SUDOKU

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

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

— Seven Galaxies

Previous puzzle Solution

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

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13					14	
15				16					17	
		18		19			20			
21	22			23	24					
25			26	27			28	29	30	31
32		33	34		35			36		
37				38			39		40	
			41	42			43	44	45	
46	47	48					49			
50				51	52			53		54 55
56				57				58		
59				60				61		

- ACROSS**
- Burlap fibre
 - Four Corners state
 - Best medicine?
 - Remote
 - Prefix for second
 - Yes, in Yokohama
 - Heard the alarm
 - Soften (2 wds.)
 - Mountain refrain
 - Get more out of
 - Squander
 - Pliny's bear
 - Stammering sound
 - Mountain lion
 - Big black dogs
 - Contract proviso
 - Eighteen-wheeler
 - Slant
 - Mystery writer — Paretsky
 - Deep cut
 - Shoe width
 - Mild onion
 - Hockey infraction
 - Quivering tree
 - Red-waxed cheese
 - Vied for a hammerlock
 - Green vegetable
 - moment's notice
 - Took a good look
 - By Jove!
 - Shaggy beast
 - Bank on
- DOWN**
- Mandible
 - Pilot's sighting?
 - Movie shots
 - Build
 - Till
 - '— Te Ching'
 - Abby's sister
 - Weed whackers
 - Quaker pronoun
 - Ordinances
 - Film
 - Mergers and buyouts
 - With it
 - Rains on
 - General vicinity
 - Boat made of skins
 - Cleaning cloths
 - Natural impulse
 - Gold Rush st.
 - High-fiber food
 - Festoon
 - B&O, e.g.
 - Steers and rams
 - Lay low
 - Sign up for
 - Party desserts
 - PR concern
 - 'Hi-yo, Silver, —!'
 - Mlle. in Barcelona
 - Max out
 - Dust devil
 - Wood ash product
 - Sushi bar bit
 - Rushinuous substance
 - Journal VIPs

Answer to previous puzzle

T	A	M		A	N	N	E		R	A	P	S
A	M	Y		D	Y	E	S		O	R	E	O
S	A	N		M	E	D	A	L	L	I	O	N
K	H	A	K	I				A	L	A	N	
				G	N	P		R	Y	E		
G	A	R	B		A	P	E		D	A	N	A
O	D	E		T	E	M		L	E	S		
P	A	N	S		T	A	I		I	T	C	H
				M	R	I		T	D	S		
				N	E	E		A	T	O	M	S
F	A	L	L	S	F	L	A	T		D	I	T
I	T	L	L		L	O	B	E		D	N	A
R	O	S			O	W	E	D		S	E	T

MARMADUKE

"So that's where all the grated cheese went."

KIDSPOT

KidSpot by Dick Rogers

Pirate Cove Captain Cook wants to dig up the treasure chest. He will need a pick, a compass, a shovel and a map. Pick a path that passes over only those things he needs. He can't take more than one of each.

HEALTH CAPSULE

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF FLUORIDE POISONING?

I've gotta break the habit of SWALLOWING MY TOOTHPASTE!

EARLY SYMPTOMS OF ACUTE FLUORIDE POISONING INCLUDE GASTRIC PAIN, NAUSEA, VOMITING AND HEADACHES. ANOTHER CONCERN IS CHRONIC FLUORIDE TOXICITY OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. THE FIRST SYMPTOMS OF CHRONIC FLUORIDE TOXICITY IS MOTTLING OF THE TEETH. Health Capsules is not intended to be of a diagnostic nature.

BIG HATE

PETER, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LEARN ABOUT THE GREAT GAME OF ICE HOCKEY!

BUT I LOATHE SHPORTSH.

HOCKEY'S NOT JUST A SPORT, IT'S A WAY OF LIFE! HERE, TAKE THIS.

WHAT ISH IT?

IT'S YOUR STICK, OBVIOUSLY! YOU USE IT TO PASS THE PUCK! TO SHOOT THE PUCK!

...AND, IN SPECIAL CASES, TO CLOCK PEOPLE UPSIDE THE HEAD.

GOOD HEAVENSH.

BORN LOSER

IT'S NOT FAIR THAT YOU MOCK ME FOR MY ERRORS IN FRONT OF THE OTHER EMPLOYEES!

YOU DON'T THINK I CONTROL THE MARKET ON MISTAKES IN THIS OFFICE, DO YOU?

IF INCOMPETENCE COULD BE SOLD LIKE HAMBURGERS, YOU WOULD HAVE GOLDEN ARCHES OVER YOUR DESK!

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12.25pm	Sunset	6.06pm
Asr	3.44pm	Sunrise (Tomorrow)	6.34am
Maghrib	6.12pm		
Isha	7.22pm	High tide	8.34pm 7.30am
Fajr (Tomorrow)	5.18am	Low tide	1.34pm 2.16am

FINI-T-ALL



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Quality Electrical Products

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YOUR BIRTHDAY

BORN today, you enjoy working with others, helping them, and giving them a leg up when they need it — and you're not the kind to insist on any kind of credit for your labours, but rather you consider success to be reward enough. You are not one to be entirely selfless, however. You are always on the lookout for those opportunities that you can take advantage of to secure your own place in history — and indeed, you want to be remembered for what you accomplish! You are positive and forward-thinking, and able to make the impossible possible.

When it comes to friends and loved ones, you prefer to surround yourself with one or two rather than a large group; you are able to interact better in one-on-one situations, and having a few close friends allows you to do this better than any large flock! You try to be friendly to all — but friends with only a few.

Also born on this date are:
Peter Fonda, actor; Naruhito, crown prince of Japan; George Frederic Handel, composer.

PISCES
[Feb. 19-March 20]

You may have a hard time making up your mind today, as the choices you are presented are attractive from all sides.

ARIES
[March 21-APRIL 19]

You're in the mood for a little mischievous fun today, but take care you don't take someone by surprise with unbridled aggression.

TAURUS
[APRIL 20-MAY 20]

You cannot afford to be held responsible for something that you didn't do; make sure the authorities know the truth!

GEMINI
[MAY 21-JUNE 20]

What comes your way can be used in a productive fashion eventually, but first you'll be hard-pressed to come up with a productive plan.

CANCER
[JUNE 21-JULY 22]

Those around you are not likely to believe that you can do what you say — until you do it. Then, you'll have everyone's eager support.

LEO
[JULY 23-AUG. 22]

You may be invited to take part in something that you don't entirely trust to be good for you — now or in the long run. Steer clear!

VIRGO
[AUG. 23-SEPT. 22]

A rivalry may develop today between you and someone who was only recently one of your most supportive teammates.

LIBRA
[SEPT. 23-OCT. 22]

Efficiency is the key today, and if your efficiency suffers, your productivity will follow suit. You can't afford a slump right now!

SCORPIO
[OCT. 23-NOV. 21]

A message from out of the past has you wondering how you could have gone astray — but have you? It's only a matter of perspective.

SAGITTARIUS
[NOV. 22-DEC. 21]

The questions you are asked today may compel you to ask a few yourself — and the answers you seek may not be entirely pleasant to you.

CAPRICORN
[DEC. 22-JAN 19]

Accepting what comes your way today is the key to remaining calm and collected. Fighting the inevitable is the path to discontent.

AQUARIUS
[JAN. 20-FEB. 18]

Someone may claim to know a great deal about you today, but he is only likely to reveal more about himself than about you.

WEATHER

Mainly clear skies over most of the Sultanate with chances of morning low clouds along Oman sea coasts and chances of dust rising winds over deserts and open areas.

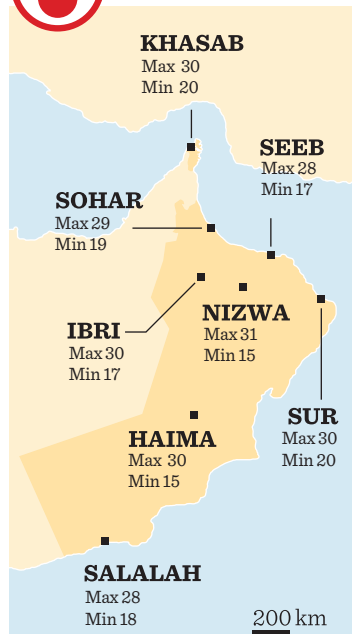
EXPECTED WIND: Over most of the Sultanate it will be northwesterly light to moderate occasionally fresh.

SEA STATE: Slight to Moderate along most of Oman's coasts with maximum wave height of 1.5 metres.

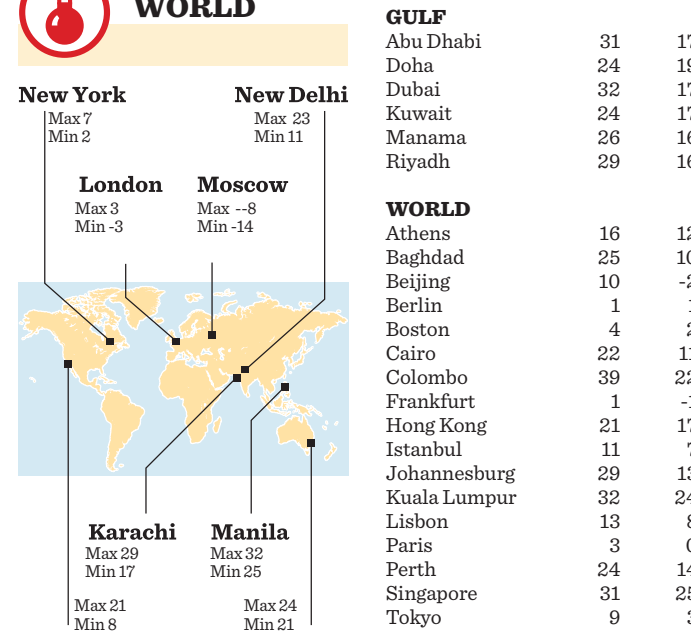
SURFACE VISIBILITY: Good over most of the Sultanate becoming moderate due to dust rising winds.

THE NEXT 48 HOURS OUTLOOK: Mainly clear skies over most of the Sultanate.

OMAN



WORLD



LONG DISTANCE BUS TIMINGS (OMAN NATIONAL TRANSPORT COMPANY SAGC) *SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FROM MUSCAT (RUWI)				TO MUSCAT (RUWI)			
Dept	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days	Dept	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days
QURIYAT - SUR - JAALAN (Route 36)							
15:00	Quriyat	16:30	Daily	05:30	Sur	06:45	Daily
15:00	Sur	18:00	Daily	05:30	Quriyat	08:30	Daily
15:00	Jaalan	19:30	Daily	05:30	Ruwi	10:00	Daily
TO AL BURAIMI (Route 41)							
06:30	Sohar	08:50	Daily	07:00	Sohar	08:55	Daily
06:30	Buraimi	11:00	Daily	07:00	Ruwi	11:40	Daily
08:00	Buraimi	14:30	Daily via Ibr	13:30	Ruwi	20:20	Daily via Ibr
13:00	Sohar	15:45	Daily	13:00	Sohar	14:55	Daily
13:00	Buraimi	17:40	Daily	13:00	Ruwi	17:40	Daily
16:00	Sohar	18:35	Daily	13:00	Sohar	19:20	Daily
16:00	Buraimi	20:20	Daily	17:00	Ruwi	22:15	Daily
TO SINAW (Route 52)							
17:30	Sinaw	20:50	Daily	07:00	Ruwi	10:25	Daily
To Yanqul (Route 54)							
14:30	Nizwa	16:50	Daily	06:00	Nizwa	08:40	Daily
14:30	Yanqul	19:30	Daily	06:00	Ruwi	11:00	Daily
TO IBRI (ARAQI) (Route 54)							
08:00	Nizwa	10:20	Daily	15:40	Nizwa	17:55	Daily
08:00	Al Araqi	12:30	Daily	15:40	Ruwi	20:20	Daily
TO SUR (Route 55)							
07:30	Sur	12:00	Daily	06:00	Ruwi	10:45	Daily
14:30	Sur	18:45	Daily	14:30	Ruwi	19:00	Daily
TO FAHUD - YIBAL (Route 62)							
06:30	Fahud	10:30	Daily	12:30	Fahud	13:15	Daily
06:30	Yibal	11:15	Daily	12:30	Ruwi	17:30	Daily
TO MARMUL - SALALAH (Route 100)							
07:00	Salalah	20:00	Daily	07:00	Ruwi	19:50	Daily
10:00	Marmul	20:30	Daily	10:00	Marmul	13:15	Daily
10:00	Salalah	23:30	Daily	10:00	Ruwi	22:30	Daily
19:00	Salalah	07:40	Daily	19:00	Ruwi	07:30	Daily
TO MARMUL (Route 101)							
06:00	Marmul	16:50	Daily	06:00	Marmul	16:30	Daily
SALALAH TO DUBAI (Route 102)							
15:00	Dubai	07:00	Daily	15:00	Salalah	07:00	Daily
TO DUBAI (Route 201)							
06:00	Sohar	08:30	Daily	07:30	Sohar	10:50	Daily
06:00	Dubai	11:30	Daily	07:30	Ruwi	13:40	Daily
13:00	Sohar	15:30	Wed,Thur	13:00	Sohar	16:15	Thur-Fri
13:00	Dubai	18:30	Wed,Thur	13:00	Ruwi	19:10	Thur-Fri
15:00	Sohar	17:35	Daily	15:30	Sohar	18:45	Daily
15:00	Dubai	20:55	Daily	15:30	Ruwi	21:35	Daily
TO DUBAI VIA FUJIRAH & SHARJAH (Route 204)							
Dept	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days	Dept	Destination	Arrival Time	Operating Days
07:00	Fujairah	11:45	Daily	16:00	Sharjah	16:30	Daily
07:00	Sharjah	13:30	Daily	16:00	Fujairah	18:15	Daily
07:00	Dubai	14:00	Daily	16:00	Ruwi	23:00	Daily

PHARMACIES
Recd the clock
Al Hashar Pharmacy, Ruwi: 24783334; Appolo Medical Centre, Hamriya: 24782966; Muscat Pharmacy, Ruwi: 24702542; Salah: 23291635; Atlas Pharmacy, Ghubra: 24503585; Ruwi: 24811715
Muscat Region
Apollo, Al Hamriya, Tel: 24787766
Muscat, A Seeb Market, Tel: 24421691
Muscat, Al Khwair, Tel: 24485740
Muscat, Al Hall South, Tel: 24537080
Dhofar Region
Muscat, Al Nahda Road, Salalah, Tel: 23291635

HOSPITALS
Al Amal Medical & Health Care Centre: 24485052
Atlas Hospital, Ruwi: 24811743/
Ghubra: 24504000
Al Musafir Specialised Medical Clinic: 24706543
Hatat Polyclinic LLC, Sohar: 24563641, Azabla: 24499269, Ruwi: 2683006
Al Raffah Hospital: 24618900/1/2
Al Massarat Clinic & Laboratory: 24566435
Al Makool Medical Coordination Centre: 24499434
Appolo Medical Centre, Hamriya: 24787766, 24787780
Capital Polyclinic: 24707549
Badr Al Samaa Polyclinic, Ruwi: 24799780/1/2
Midan Hospital, Seeb: 24420740
Ceregem National Bank: 24485633
Dr Harub's Clinic: 24563217
Elkhir Health Centre: 24565802
Emirates Medical Centre: 24604540
1st Chiropractic Centre: 24472274
Hamdan Hospital: 23212340
International Medical Centre: 24485633
Mina Hotel: 24711828
Muttrah Hotel: 24798401

ACCOMMODATION
Al Bahjah Hotel: 24424400
Al Bustan Palace: 24764000
Al Khuwair Hotel Apartments: 24478171
Al Madina Holiday Inn: 24596400
Al Maha International Hotel: 24494949
Al Fanar Hotel: 24712385
Al Falaj Hotel: 24702311
Al Qurum Resort: 24605945
Azabla Hotel Apartments: 24490979
Beach Hotel: 24696601
Bowshar Hotel: 24491105
Coral Hotel Muscat: 24692121
Crown Plaza Muscat: 24660660
Crystal Suites: 24826100
Golden Tulip Seeb: 24510390
Zaiba Hotel Apartments: 24411234
Haffa House Hotel: 24707207
Hotel Muscat Holiday: 24487123
InterContinental Muscat: 24680000
Majan Continental Hotel: 24592900
Marina Hotel: 24711711
Midan Hotel Suites: 24499655
Mina Hotel: 24711828
Muttrah Hotel: 24798401

Kims Oman Hospital: 24760100
24 Hrs Emergency: 24760123
Lama Polyclinic, Sohar: 26751128,
MBD: 24799077, Al Khuwair: 24478818
Magrabi Eye and Ear Hospital: 24568870
Muscat Private Hospital: 24583600
Wellcare Diagnostic and Treatment Centre, Al Khwair: 24477666
Al-Hayat Polyclinic LLC: 22004000
ROYAL OMAN POLICE
Emergencies and inquiries: 9999
General Directorate of Passport and Residence: 24569603
Directorate General of Customs: 24521109
Traffic violations inquiries: 24510228
Public Relations Admin: 24560099

ACCUMODATION
Kims Oman Hospital: 24760100
Nuzha Hotel Apartments: 24789199
Oman Dive Centre: 24824240
Park Inn: 24507888
Qurum Beach House Hotel: 24564070
Radisson Blu Hotel: 24487777
Ramee Dream Resort Seeb: 24453399
Ramee Guestline Hotel: 24564443
Ruwi Hotel: 24704244
Safer Hotel Suites: 24691200
Sheraton Oman Hotel: 24772772
Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa: 24776666
The Chedi Muscat: 24524400
The Treasurebox Muscat Hotel: 24502570

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: 24711128, 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: 24789485, Malaysian Airlines: 24580796, 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: 24712833, Shabon Air: 24816565, SriLankan Airlines:

24784545, Swiss International Airlines: 24796692, Thai Airways: 24705934, Turkish Airlines: 24703033

MUSEUMS
Bait Al Baranda: Corniche (seafront opp fish market), Open from Saturday to Thursday 9am to 1pm and 4 to 6pm
Natural History Museum: Al Khuwair, Tel: 24609857, Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm; Thursday: 9am to 1pm
Museum of Omani Heritage (former Omani Museum), Madinat Al Alam, Sat-Wed 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday - 9am to 1pm, Tel: 24600946
Armed Forces Museum: Bait Al Falaj, Tel: 24312651, Open from Sat to Wed: 8am to 1:30pm; Thurs 9-12pm and 3-6pm; Fri 9-11am and 3-6pm, Al Hoota Caves 24498258; Turtle Beach 9655066/96550707
Children's Science Museum: Shatti Al Qurum, Tel: 24603368, Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm
Oman-French Museum: near Muscat Police Station, Tel: 24736613, Open from Sat to Wed: 8am to 1:30pm, Thurs: 9am to 1pm
Bait Al Zubair, Muscat, Tel: 24736688, Al Saida St., Muscat museum@baitalzubairmuseum.com Open from Sat to Thurs: 9:30am to 6pm
National Museum Ruwi: Tel: 24701289, Open from Saturday to Wednesday: 8am to 1:30pm, Thursday: 9am to 1pm
Sohar Fort Museum: Tel: 26844758, Open from Saturday to Wed: 8 to 1:30pm, Thurs: 9am to 1pm
Muscat Gate Museum: at Al Bahri Road, Muscat open from Sat to Wed 8am to 2pm

AIRLINES

SATURDAY			SUNDAY		
FLT NO	ARRIVALS FROM	ETA	FLT NO	ARRIVALS FROM	ETA
WY676	JEDDAH	0005	9W530	TRIVANDRUM	1025
WY316	SALALAH	0126	9W540	COCHIN	2340
BG021	DACCA/CHITTAGONG	0130	A1907	MADRAS	2200
4H981	DACC	0136	A1973	DELHI	2125
PK225	KARACHI	0200	A1985	AHMEDABAD/BOMBAY	2310
QR770	DOHA	0350	BA073	LONDON-HEATHROW/ABU DHABI	2240
QR683	DUBAI	0355	LB682	DUBAI	0340
GF560	BAHRAIN	0425	EK866	DUBAI	0355
FZ041	DUBAI	0430	F7664	ADDIS ABABA	2020
MS330	CAIRO	0436	FY362	ABU DHABI	1000
TK779	ISTANBUL/BAHRAIN	0605	EY384	ABU DHABI	0330
WY442	MALPENA	0615	FY388	ABU DHABI	2240
WY686	RIYADH	0635	FZ041	DUBAI	0430
WY644	KUWAIT	0655	FZ043	DUBAI	0800
WY904	SALALAH	0700	FZ047	DUBAI	0810
WY222	MUNICH	0700	9B117	SHARJAH	1915
WY692	DAMMAM	0700	GF560	BAHRAIN	0425
WY668	DOHA	0700	GF564	BAHRAIN	1810
WY698	BAHRAIN	0700	GF566	BAHRAIN	2240
WY114	FRANKFURT	0720	IX337	CALCUT	1305
WY354	ZURICH	0745	IX549	TRIVANDRUM	1215
WY132	PARIS	0730	IXB17	MANGALORE/ABU DHABI	1415
WY602	DUBAI	0800	KL441	AMSTERDAM/DOHA	2125
FZ043	DUBAI	0800	LH618	FRANKFURT/ABU DHABI	2130
WY202	BOMBAY	0805	LX242	ZURICH/DUBAI	2320
WY102	LONDON-HEATHROW	0830	NL689	SIALKOT	0630
WY474	JALPAIGI	0830	OR149	KARACHI	1740
WY238	HYDERABAD	0845	OR184	DOHA	1740
WY422	BEIRUT	0910	QR166	DOHA	1010
WY730	ISLAM ABBAD	0910	QR169	DOHA	1010
9B113	SHARJAH	0915	QR170	DOHA	0350
WY268	LUCKNOW	0930	QR172	DOHA	2320
WY520	BANGALORE	0930	QR622	DOHA	0805
WY252	MADRAS	0930	TG507	BANGKOK/KARACHI	1835
EK866	DUBAI	0940	TK776	ISTANBUL/BAHRAIN	0900
FY382	ABU DHABI	0940	LL205	PARIS	2205
QR166	DOHA	1010	WY102	LONDON-HEATHROW	0830
9W530	TRIVANDRUM	1025	WY124	MUNICH	2315
WY352	JALPAIGI	1025	WY214	PARIS	0805
IX443	COCHIN	1050	WY144	MALPENA	2300
WY242	DELHI	1050	WY152	ZURICH	2120
WY104	DUBAI	1050	WY201	BOMBAY	1700
PK181	TURBAT	1145	WY202	BOMBAY	1700
WY302					

EXTRA

UNUSUAL AFTERLIVES

The gadgets that **refuse to die**

VHS



Invented by JVC, the VHS format became predominant in the 1980s and while DVDs, Blu-rays and streaming are far more popular today, JVC ceased production of stand-alone VCRs only in 2008. By then, it had sold more than 50 million of them.

Panasonic stopped selling VCRs in Japan in 2011, though production continues at factories in China and Slovakia and Panasonic makes VHS/Blu-ray players.

VHS remains popular among serious film fans. "In the 1980s, there was a wave of horror, action and B-movies released on VHS which have never made the leap to DVD," says Sam Ashurst, Total Film's deputy online editor and a self-confessed VHS nerd. "Sometimes the films were made so quickly and cheaply to fill the shelves at VHS stores that the negatives were not kept. In other cases the films were so bad no one would ever bother to re-release them but they have a kitsch appeal to completists."

Hollywood has also recently experimented with releasing limited-edition brand-new VHS tapes as promotional tools including Miami Connection and the horror anthology V/H/S. Whether they have real mass appeal is uncertain, however. A Facebook page called "I still use VHS tapes" has fewer than 200 Likes. Its administrator, Mike MacIntosh, says: "I find it's the nostalgia that always brings me back. For some reason it just feels better to have a black plastic brick play a movie for me instead of a disc."

CASSETTES



Time was when no self-respected music lover would be seen without their portable cassette player. Although the Walkman brand was Sony's, it became so ubiquitous with these audio devices following its 1979 release that all such tech was casually given this moniker. Today, MP3s rule the roost, but it was not until 2010 that Sony announced it was ceasing production.

Cassette players continue to be made, though, and there are lots of tape evangelists around. "Interest in cassettes has grown in recent years," says Stephen Mejias, writer for *stereophile.com*. "Cassettes are still being made, mostly by very small independent labels,

although a few of the larger indies, such as Domino, Sub Pop and 4AD, have recently joined the fold. Tapes are often extremely limited – editions in as few as 50 or 100 copies are not uncommon – and they're generally lovingly packaged." Beyond music, cassettes have been used for all sorts of, often kitschy, things from collage, sculptures and purses to USB thumb drives.

FLOPPY DISKS



In today's era of cloud computing, high-capacity blank CDs and DVDs and USB thumb drives, the floppy disk has inevitably gone out of fashion. They became commercially available in 1971, with most people remembering the cardboard 5.25in and blue 3.5in varieties. But while Apple dropped the disk drive from the iMac in 1998 and the likes of Hewlett-Packard stopped supplying floppy drives on business desktops in 2009, they are still in use today.

"System admins and engineers might need them when fixing older computers and retro fans would need them for games on older home computers," says Micro Mart editor Anthony Enticknap.

The idea of floppies also lives on with most people seeing them as save icons on productive software such as word processors.

MINI DISC



Launched in 1992, around 22 million units have been sold since but it will be scrapped next month. Sony says MiniDisc cartridges will continue to be sold. Some radio reporters still use them for news gathering.

FAX



With the first commercial telefax service launching in 1865 before even phones were invented, internet communication has largely taken over. Except in Japan, where millions still prefer to send documents this way (1.7 million machines were sold last year).

PLAYSTATION 2



The fourth PlayStation was announced yesterday, but the second console, which was launched in 2000, was not discontinued until January this year. In that time it became the world's most successful games console, having sold 150 million units. Games are still being made for it, including the recent FIFA 13.

SUPER 8 FILM



In 1965, Kodak introduced Super 8 film. Originally it was able to record only images but the capacity for sound was added in 1973. Kodak continues to sell Super 8 film today and there are film festivals which celebrate the format.

GAME BOY



When Nintendo's *Game Boy* was released in 1989, it was an instant success. It went on to sell nearly 120 million units until it was discontinued as late as 2003. As well as games, the machine was famous for its music output – the Tetris theme has been sampled and used in a variety of tunes by bands such as *Doctor Spin*. Although you will have to go to eBay to pick up a Game Boy today, musicians still love it. Matthew C Applegate, aka Pixel8, has created software called Music Tech for the *Game Boy*, which allows him to use the handheld as a real-time synthesiser.

"These wonderful devices were a huge part of our lives and we wanted them to shine again," he says. "*The Game Boy* was small, brilliantly designed and it produces amazing sounds. It was simply us adapting our toys into a means of expression." The *Game Boy* has eight inputs – up, down, left, right, select, start, A and B. Applegate mapped these to musical keys and plays what are called chiptunes "to shake nightclubs to their foundations".

PAGERS



In the late 1990s, pagers were common among those who did not want an expensive mobile-phone contract. Pay-as-you-go mobiles sent pagers on their way but they are still being made and used, primarily in hospitals – for now, anyway.

Research has shown that someone frequently paged can spend 20 per cent of their time looking for and waiting on phones. Peterborough City Hospital has ditched pagers – which were introduced into hospitals in the 1950s – and has been using a two-way, hands-free device which can be slung around the neck or worn as a badge.

Mary Day, matron for surgery and musculoskeletal, said: "One of the many advantages of using hands-free communications is the fact it increases direct patient time. I can still be caring for a patient and require some assistance from a therapist or another nurse. It reduces time spent finding that assistance or having to leave the patient to use the phone or answer my pager."

TYPEWRITER



Invented in the 1860s, typewriters became incredibly popular very quickly but computers caused them to go out of favour. Brother made the last UK typewriter in November 2012. They are still often used in Latin America and Africa, though, because they don't need power.

POLAROID CAMERAS



Polaroid announced it was scrapping its instant cameras and instant films in 2008, around 60 years after they came into being. In 2010, it came back with the Polaroid 300, however, and it still sells instant cameras, albeit digital ones, today.

COMMODORE 64



Some home computers from the 1980s, such as the Jupiter Ace, barely lasted a couple of years but the Commodore 64, which was launched in 1982, was not discontinued until as late as 1994.

Even then, it refused to die. In 2004, the C64 chip was inserted into a retro-style joystick and bundled with some classic games (selling 70,000 on the first day of sale). Today, enthusiasts continue to make games for the C64 and older titles can be played via the Virtual Console on the Nintendo Wii.

It has proved to be rather inspiring for musicians too. A decade ago, six computer-science students at the University of Copenhagen decided to form a band called *PRESS PLAY ON TAPE*. They play versions of C64 game music using real instruments, adding drums, bass and distorted guitars to the synthesiser and techno sounds of those classic computer tunes.

"The sound of the Commodore 64 sound chip is quite special," says guitarist Jesper Holm Olsen. "It is thin but powerful and raw all at once. It is also slightly hissy and distorted in a way that our parents hated but we learnt to love. The sound is still so distinct that fans of Commodore 64 music are able to recognise its sound chip anywhere it's being used, even if it is just for a small effect in a piece of modern pop." —David Crook/*The Independent*