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Murdoch unfit to run company, say lawmakers



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In brief

QATAR | Aviation

Airline to convert A330 jets to freighters

Qatar Airways, which last year took a big stake in a European freight carrier, will convert up to 20 of its Airbus A330 passenger jets into freighters, its chief executive, Akbar al-Baker, said at a Dubai travel show yesterday. **Page 10**

ARAB WORLD | Unrest

30 die as violence continues in Syria

The UN peacekeeping chief accused both the Syrian regime and its foes of violating a ceasefire accord, as nine members of the same family and 12 troops were among more than 30 people killed yesterday. **Page 19**

Today's Gulf Times includes the May issue of

SOCIETY

Society



Today's issue of Gulf Times includes the weekly 4-page "Dine Out" guide

Key win for Gharafa



Al Gharafa's Othman el-Assas fighting for the ball with UAE's Al Shabab Al Arabi player Jocel Da Silva during their AFC Champions League soccer match at the Al Gharafa Stadium in Doha yesterday. Al Gharafa revived their Asian Champions League hopes with a 2-1 victory over Al Shabab Al Arabi. Al Gharafa's first win in five matches took their tally to six points in Group D where Saudi giants Al Hilal are sitting pretty with nine after beating top Iranian side Piroozi 1-0 at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran. Piroozi are second in the group with eight points, while Al Shabab Al Arabi are fourth with just two from five matches. **Page 48**

Lucky fan to walk away with QR1mn at Emir's Cup final

One lucky fan will laugh all the way to the bank at the Emir's Cup football final on May 12. All he has to do is win a shootout competition, the Qatar Football Association (QFA) and sponsors Qtel announced yesterday.

Top QFA officials, Mohamed Mubarak al-Mohannadi and Khalid al-Kuwari, were joined by Hamad Mohamed Marzouqi from Qtel and Fatima al-Kuwari, for a press conference where the details of the prize were unveiled to the media.

Titled "Win a Million", the new prize will be won by a fan who purchases an Emir's Cup final ticket from one of the top four points - Villaggio, City Centre, Landmark or Katara - and then takes part in a long-range shootout during the halftime of the match.

However, prior to the final, some 50 participants must qualify for the Emir's Cup final by taking part in a shootout by May 11. Out of those 50, the top 10 lucky participants will be eligible to take part in the "shootout" in the final for a possible top prize of QR1mn.

The prizes will be handed over to the lucky winners at Qtel Towers on May 17. Fans can also win up to prizes



worth QR3mn during the Emir Cup final. The prizes include 15 Lexus cars, 20 bikes, 20 iPones and 20 BlackBerry phones can be won by the fans.

Cash prizes of QR2,000 (100 prizes) and QR 1,000 (500 prizes) will also be given to the lucky winners. Tickets to the final can be bought from all major shopping malls in Doha. Tickets can also be purchased at kiosks in Souq Waqif, Souq Haraj and Katara.

"This is the big event in Qatar and keenly followed by the fans. Like every season, we want to make this an en-

joyable gathering for young kids and their families," QFA secretary general Saad al-Mohannadi said.

"The football season ends with the final of the Emir Cup. We would like to thank our official sponsors," he added. Last week, Al Rayyan beat Al Sadd to win the Heir Apparent Cup final. More than 23,000 fans turned up to watch the final at Thani bin Jassim Waqif Stadium.

The prizes will be handed over to the lucky winners at Qtel Towers on May 17.

Contracts may replace 'sponsor' system

It is expected that the number of workers recruited to Qatar for infrastructure projects might go up to 1mn, but in phases

Qatar intends to drop the sponsorship system for expatriates working in the country, replacing it with a contract which will be binding on the employer and the employee, a senior official has said.

"As and when the new system comes into effect, a contract signed by the two parties (the employee and the employer) will be determining the rights and duties of both," said Hussein al-Mulla, undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour, in an interview to the local Arabic daily *Al-Arab*.

He did not give any time-frame for the introduction of the "contract" system.

"We have banned companies from holding the passports of any employee and this is a positive step towards developing the contract process. It affirms the intention to abolish the issue of sponsorship," he pointed out.

He explained that the mere word "sponsor" caused a myriad of troubles with international organisations.

"Consequently, we should eradicate this term and substitute it with a contract between the two parties guaranteed by the Ministry of Labour. They (international organisations) say the word sponsor conveys a picture of enslaving the worker more than anything else," he said.

"However, should the new system be implemented, the cancellation of the contract does not allow the foreigner to switch jobs automatically," al-Mulla said.

"A foreigner can resign to take up another, maybe more lucrative job. However, the resignation annuls the contract and the expatriate will have to go home and the new employer will draw up a new contract with him that will allow him to return to Qatar," he said.

He also affirmed that there was no justification whatsoever for any company to delay the salary of its employees. "This issue is of utmost importance and HE the Minister of Labour himself emphasises that workers must get their rights in the due time."

Al-Mulla expected that the number of workers recruited to Qatar for infrastructure projects might go up to 1mn, but in phases.

The official said that Qatar had submitted a suggestion to the GCC that a maid who absconded from her employer in Qatar should be banned from working in any member country. "This aims at curbing this phenomenon."

He said that new markets were being opened to recruit domestic workers, mostly African countries such as Tanzania and Kenya. "Eastern European countries have also agreed to send domestic workers to the state but Qatari families would not approve them because of the high cost."

"In most of our meetings with the International Labour Organisation, they inquire about the non-existence of labour unions that defend the rights of workers. Year after year the pressure is increasing on us," al-Mulla said.

He explained that there had been efforts to establish a Labour Committee to protect the interests of the workers, whether Qatari or expatriates. "However, the committee should be formed of Qatari only. Expatriates will have the right to vote but will not be nominated as members of the board," he added.

"We had a labour committee during the days of the oil companies. However, the situation in the Gulf is somewhat different now because Qatari rarely work as labourers," he said.

"The Labour Committee project is being carried out with the assistance of the Arab Labour Organisation, the International Labour Organisation and some Gulf trade unions. They came and studied the circumstances in Qatar."

The private sector is to be incorporated into this committee and it would function independently from the Ministry of Labour. The committee would have the right to receive the complaints of workers and address them accordingly. The project had been discussed by the cabinet and subsequently referred to the Advisory Council.

"We are now awaiting the Emir's approval for this project: HH the Emir is personally interested in this issue," al-Mulla said.

1,000-room Lusail Marina Towers 'to be ready by 2016'



Lusail Marina: artist's impression

By Pratap John
Chief Business Reporter

Lusail will be home to a luxurious world-scale property in four years with the Doha-based Katara Hospitality unveiling plans to complete the QR1.7bn Lusail Marina Towers by 2016.

The "extravagant" property, designed for a five-star status, will have more than 1,000 luxurious rooms comprising hotels, residence apartments, offices, recreational facilities, specialist boutiques and top-class restaurants.

The breathtaking "crossed-sword" facade of the towers, which are actually intertwined arched towers, replicates the Qatar seal and, integrated with landscaped gardens, rises from a podium giving the impression that the hotel is floating on the sea.

Giving details of the property at the ongoing Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai, Katara Hospitality chairman Sheikh Nawaf bin Jassim bin Jaber al-Thani said: "This stunning structure matches our ambition for Katara to become one of the

world's most recognised hospitality brand identities."

Katara Hospitality CEO Hamad Abdulla al-Mulla said: "The modern aesthetic of the Lusail Marina Towers complements the more traditional properties we have in our eclectic portfolio of hotels, which are great examples of classic architecture - such as the Peninsula Paris for instance."

Aiming to be operational well ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, the Lusail Marina Towers will be constructed in the Marina district of Lusail.

Naturally, the Lusail Marina Towers will be ideally located for travelling football fans, officials and professionals, as the Qatar Football World Cup arrives in a decade's time.

"And long after the dust of the World Cup has settled, the property will be a perfect getaway for Middle East leisure travellers looking for luxury accommodation as Qatar's landscape offers more for tourists every year," al-Mulla told *Gulf Times* in Dubai.

US, Afghanistan sign strategic partnership deal

Reuters
Kabul

US President Barack Obama arrived in Afghanistan last night to conclude an agreement charting future relations with the country, making the unannounced trip in darkness on the first anniversary of the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Shortly after he arrived, Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai signed the strategic partnership pact, which sets out a future US role in Afghanistan, including aid and advisers, while trying to reassure Afghans that they will not be abandoned when most Nato combat troops leave in 2014.

Obama's plane landed with shades drawn at Bagram Airbase, north of Kabul, where only months ago thousands of Afghans rioted after US troops accidentally burned copies of the Qur'an.

"The wages of war have been great for both our nations," Obama told Karzai.

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VCUQatar launches design entrepreneurship programme

By Bonnie James
Deputy News Editor

Hundreds of alumni and students from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar are expected to benefit from the Design Entrepreneurship Network (Den) which offers facilities including free studio space, business mentoring, exhibition and retail space and funding.

Den, launched yesterday in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, aims to support design-led innovation and start-up business ambitions delivering high value to partner organisations, communities and the region.

VCUQatar has partnered with Qatar Development Bank, The Bedaya Centre, Social Development Centre, Qatar Professional Women's Network, Silatech, Rhouda Centre, Injaz Qatar, as well as established VCUQatar alumni entrepreneurs to launch Den.

"VCUQatar has 320 graduates as of now and this number will reach 360 after this year's graduation ceremony next week," dean Allyson Vanstone said.

As of the fall 2011 registration, VCUQatar has a total of 244 students from 42 nationalities, including 228 Bachelor of Fine Arts students and 16 Master of Fine Arts students.

The BFA students comprise 119 Qatari (11 male, 108 female) and 109 expatriate (13 male, 96 female) students whereas the MFA students comprise five Qatari (all female) and 11 expatriate (five male, six female) students.

VCUQatar, the branch campus of VCU School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia, US, was established in Education City in 1998. "This is our 14th year in Qatar and the 11th group of grad-



Zuniga, Griffiths, Kaundal, Vanstone, Zeitler, and Gold at the Den launch yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shemeer Rasheed

uates," Vanstone pointed out.

Roger Griffiths, director of Design Entrepreneurship and Industry Affiliations at VCUQatar, explained that Den will help aspiring design entrepreneurs at a crucial time as they move from the identification and planning stage through to launch and implementation of their business.

Through Den's partner organisations, the beneficiaries can access training and development programmes, business planning advice, early stage funding, soft loans, personal development workshops and exhibition and retail space.

"As the network grows, we aim to attract students and alumni from other Education City campuses to build multi-disciplinary creative businesses in design, technology, media and the arts."

Den will offer hot-desking facilities at VCUQatar, furnished office and production facilities at various locations across Doha, one-to-one mentoring sessions, seminar series, networking events and guest speakers.

"Our Design Incubator and Partner Network aims to capture what is already happening in Qa-

tar - an eco-system where students from all programmes and all years can engage in new business creation or pursue a freelance career in design," Griffiths said.

The objective is to build a culture around entrepreneurship - the notion that aspiring young designers can and will be supported to pursue their passion and establish their own business in design.

"Opportunities here seem to be endless. Not a day goes by without our department receiving requests from national and international brands, with strong corporate social responsibility programmes who wish to work with our students."

"In just the last semester, we have worked with The United Nations, Interpol, Mannai Corporation, Shell, Qatar Museums Authority and Maserati.

"Our students already have that competitive advantage. Now is the time to build a creative industry for Qatar where products and services are designed in Qatar by Qataris and their non-national peers."

Griffiths was of the view that as Qatar diversifies its economy, an

indigenous creative services industry must be built - 'an industry built around micro-enterprises, many of which must be Qatari owned sole proprietorships, others will be expatriates in partnership with Qataris, to establish limited liability companies.'

VCUQatar's own Centre for Research and Design already employs alumni to apply their design skill sets on design problems.

"We are working with major companies and placing users at the centre of the design process in order to develop better products, services and systems."

"Our latest project for the Sidra's world class medical hospital has seen our alumni work with medical staff, patients, consultants and planners to produce a comprehensive range of apparel for all its staff and patients," Griffiths added.

Bedaya Centre's programme manager Elaine Gold, QDB's head of advisory Iqbal Kaundal, VCUQatar alumna Joanna Thread, a boutique for upcoming designers, spoke. QPWN's

Margarita Zuniga and Caroline Zeitler were also present.

Student store

The Design Entrepreneurship Network (Den), launched by Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar yesterday, will have a student store at Education City Student Centre.

"To begin with, there will be a 35sqm exhibition and retail space run by VCUQatar alumni and students," Roger Griffiths, director of Design Entrepreneurship and Industry Affiliations, said.

Den is also establishing partnerships with Doha's leading retailers who will provide space for the Network's beneficiaries to display and sell their creations.

"We will be working with Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, as part of commencing our collaborations with other institutions in Education City," Griffiths explained. Den will also be providing work space for its beneficiaries free-of-charge as part of its programmes.

In brief

Congratulatory cables sent

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HH the Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani have sent cables of congratulations to King Juan Carlos I of Spain on the successful surgery he underwent recently.

Indian boat tragedy victims condoled

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HH the Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani have sent cables to Indian President Pratibha Patil condoling the victims of a passenger ferry accident in Assam. More than 100 people, including women and children, drowned when an overcrowded passenger ferry capsized on Monday in Assam.

Darfur peace process reviewed

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ahmed bin Abdulla al-Mahmoud met the chairman of Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) and head of the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) Tijani Sissi. They discussed the peace process in Darfur and issues related to the follow-up of the implementation of the Doha agreement. The meeting was attended by Sudanese Minister of Health and LJM secretary general Bahar Idriss Abu Garda and a number of Qatari officials.

Meeting with ambassadors

HE the Chairman of the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah yesterday met Eritrean Ambassador to Qatar Ali Ibrahim Ahmed and South Korean Ambassador Chang See-Jeong. Key issues of mutual concern were discussed during the meetings.

Al-Attiyah meets vicar of N Arabia

HE the Chairman of the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah conferred with the Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia Bishop Camillo Ballin, who is currently visiting Doha. Key issues of mutual concern were discussed during the meeting.



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Qatar Coral launches twin towers at The Pearl-Qatar

Qatar Coral for Real Estate Development (Qatar Coral), a subsidiary of MAK Holdings, yesterday announced the launch of its twin towers, VB22 and VB23, at The Pearl-Qatar.

Set on a 2km beachfront, the two luxury developments with two distinct styles represent the quintessential marina lifestyle.

Speaking on the occasion, Ziad el-Khalil, executive director and deputy CEO at Qatar Coral, said: "We at Qatar Coral are in the business of building dreams of impeccable design and uncompromising quality and with the launch of VB22 and VB23, we hope to set new standards for contemporary living in Qatar. In other words, through VB22 and VB23, which promises to redefine luxury living for its residents, we are optimistic about achieving our vision of being one of the most admired companies in Qatar".

At VB22 and VB23, the apartments are created in a way that meets each owner's exacting standards. Contemporary finishes are brought to life with thoughtful design and attention to detail, integrating state-of-the-art technology and hi-tech security systems to ensure that the new homes offer fresh accents on safety and style.

"In other words, VB22 and VB23 offer contemporary residence at the heart of the most exciting destination in the State of Qatar. Finally, I would like to thank HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HH the Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and



The new VB22 and VB23 twin towers at The Pearl-Qatar.

leadership. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our esteemed partners - the Commercialbank of Qatar, United Development Company, MAN Enterprise Qatar, KEO International Consultants, and DG Jones for partnering with us for this dream project", el-Khalil added.

The towers feature residences with one to three bedrooms, luxury penthouses, high-quality chalets, common recreational and sports facilities, beachfront condominium living, pristine two-kilometre white sand beach, panoramic views, year-round water sports and access to marina club.



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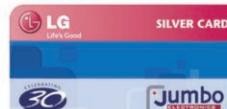
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First winning coupon drawn in FFC event

Shajahan Sulaiman (coupon number 0013488) is the lucky winner in the first draw of the Family Food Centre (FFC) chain's Nissan Patrol promotion, held at its Airport road branch yesterday. The picture shows a child holding one of the lucky coupons in the presence of Family Food Centre and Ministry of Business and Trade officials. There will be two more draws under the promotion, to be held at other FFC branches in the country.

Municipal Affairs Ministry installs kiosk at Landmark

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Urban Planning has installed a computer terminal at the Landmark Mall for the convenience of the public to register their requests pertaining to pruning of trees, drainage problems, rainwater clogging and pesticides, and complaints in general.

Two other similar kiosks will be set up soon, one each in Villaggio Mall and City Center, according to reports in the local Arabic press.

The terminal can be accessed either in English or Arabic by entering one's name, Qatar ID number, mobile phone

number and address. The details of the complaint or the service requested for will be transmitted to the concerned municipal zone for necessary action.

The director of information technology in the ministry, Khalaf al-Anzi, said in a statement that this service is already available on the iPhone and the ministry's website.

However, this facility in the malls will reach out to a larger and wider range of people.

He also indicated that if anyone notices a car abandoned on a street or public place, a photo of the vehicle can

be taken and transmitted through the iPhone app.

The ministry has in the past year introduced many electronic services, including the global positioning system (GPS) iPhone app which has been downloaded 13,000 times.

"Landmark Mall is ideally suited for such a service to the public because it is free of noise and crowd," said its manager Waleed Khoori in a statement.

Brochures in English and Arabic explaining how to avail the service are available at Landmark Mall, the reports say.

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Qatar Airways to resume Myanmar flights in October

By Pratap John
Chief Business Reporter

After a four-year absence from the route, Qatar Airways will resume operations to Myanmar in October.

The national carrier will also fly to two destinations in Iraq – Erbil (from May 23) and Baghdad (from June 7), Qatar Airways Group CEO Akbar al-Baker said in Dubai yesterday.

Qatar Airways flights to Yangon will again take off on October 3.

"With political reform taking place in Myanmar at a rapid pace, the interest in the South East Asian country has gathered momentum, both from a business and tourism perspective," al-Baker said at a press conference on the sidelines of the Arabian Travel Mart in Dubai.

The airline will launch flights to Kilimanjaro, its second gateway in Tanzania via Nairobi from July 25.

Beginning August 15, the airline will introduce its third destination in Africa – Mombasa in Kenya.

The airline's another key route that will come online in the next few months will be Perth in Australia, from July 3. To begin with, Perth will be connected to Doha three times a week, but will go daily at the peak of the holiday season in December.

Starting May 9, the airline's European expansion continues

with daily flights to the Croatian capital, Zagreb, operating via Budapest.

Further route launches are planned to Belgrade (Serbia), Helsinki and Zanzibar (Tanzania).

In line with the airline's strategy to increase frequency on existing routes to offer passengers more choice, Qatar Airways is also stepping up capacity to selected destinations in phases.

"We are entering new markets and strengthening our presence in established markets to provide a greater footprint"

In Asia, the Kuala Lumpur route will be served three-times daily from September, up from the recently-expanded capacity of 17 flights each week.

In Europe, the Doha-Milan route will be upgraded to double daily this month from the current 11 a week.

In December, the Doha-Paris route will have an additional two flights taking frequency up to 18 services a week.

"Today's announcement reflects the importance Qatar Airways places on expanding its portfolio of destinations and frequency on existing routes to provide passengers with more choice, more flexibility and more travel options," al-Baker said.

"We are entering new markets and strengthening our presence in established markets to provide a greater footprint."

Also in June, the Doha-Abu Dhabi route will go up to 42 flights each week with the introduction of a new daily service offering in total six daily flights.

Having introduced two extra weekly flights on the Doha-Cairo route last month to take frequency up to 11 each week, capacity will be stepped up further next month with the addition of one extra flight a week.

And in Africa, more capacity will be introduced on the double daily Doha-Dar es Salaam route from next month. With seven services operating via Nairobi, these will become non-stop to Dar es Salaam effectively providing more seats direct to the Tanzanian capital.

In March, Qatar Airways introduced frequency hikes to other destinations – namely London Heathrow, up from four to five flights a day; the Algerian capital Algiers from seven to 11 services each week; Muscat in Oman from 24 to 31 flights each week; and the Indonesian capital Jakarta from seven to 10 services a week.

On the potential impact of low-cost carriers on Qatar Airways, al-Baker said, "Low-cost carriers are only low-cost where it has competition. It is not a successful model in the Middle East."

He said the New Doha International Airport was set for inauguration on "12-12-12" (December 12 of this year).

"We look forward to the opening of the new airport, which will provide more facilities for our growing number of passengers," al-Baker added.

and strengthening our presence in established markets to provide a greater footprint. In particular, we are focusing on markets that are in need of extra capacity.

Qatar Airways has grown by some 22% in the first three months of this year with the national carrier hopeful of maintaining the positive trend in the months ahead, al-Baker said.

He said Qatar Airways maintained "consistent growth" in both passenger and cargo traffic, connecting some 113 destinations worldwide.

Three new destinations have already been added this year with many more to come before the year-end.

Qatar Airways has seen rapid growth in just 15 years of operation, currently operating a modern fleet of 109 aircraft to destinations across the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Asia Pacific.

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Qatar Airways Chief Executive Officer Akbar al-Baker, left, addresses a press conference at Arabian Travel Mart in Dubai on the airline's expansion plans. With him is Qatar Airways' Country Manager UAE Marwan Haber.

Major accolades for St Regis Doha

The St. Regis Doha received

two major accolades at this year's Middle East World Travel Awards, as Qatar's newest luxury destination continues to win international praise for its luxury and quality of service.

The St. Regis Doha was named as the "Middle East's Leading New Hotel," in a closely-fought category that saw the hotel emerge as the favourite new venue of the regional travel industry. It was also named "Qatar's Leading New Hotel for 2012" – a major achievement given the significant number of new venues opening this year.

With more than 2,000 organisations in the first round of voting for the awards, St. Regis Doha's success is a remarkable feat for a hotel that has only been welcoming guests since March 31.

The awards were presented at a gala ceremony hosted by the World Travel Awards at Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa, Dubai. More than 500 of the most important decision-makers in the region's travel and tourism sector attended the event, as well as international media.

"Today is a proud moment for the whole St. Regis Doha family, as we receive our first major awards in the first month of operation," said Tareq Derbas, general manager at The St. Regis Doha. "I would like to dedicate these awards to everyone who has worked so hard to make our open-



Tareq Derbas, general manager at The St. Regis Doha, accepting awards at a ceremony in Dubai.

ing season a success, and for the guests who have graced our hotel in the first month. We aim to offer our guests the 'finest address in Doha,' and we are delighted that the international travel trade has recognised its unique character and level of service."

Winners in the regional heats of the World Travel Awards progress to the Grand Final, which will take place at The Oberoi, Gurgaon, New Delhi, India on December 12.

Since opening its doors to its

first guest at the end of March, the St. Regis Doha has played host to leading diplomats and government officials, sporting luminaries, business executives and fans of luxury living from around the world. Guests who wish to experience the hotel and sample some of the enticing flavours can benefit from the ongoing opening offer, which is valid until June 30. Rates at The St. Regis Doha start at QR1,900 per night for a superior room, along with a host of special benefits.

Katara Hospitality lighting show

Katara Hospitality, formerly known as Qatar National Hotels (QNH), will celebrate its recent rebranding, through an "outstanding lighting show" at its premium properties in Doha such as The Ritz-Carlton, Sheraton and Marriott besides the company headquarters on the C-Ring Road.

The lighting show will be held in these properties until May 3, Katara Hospitality announced in Dubai yesterday.

"Katara Hospitality has embarked on a new journey," said its CEO Hamad al-Mulla.

"With a world-class brand and ambitious yet credible expansion plans, Katara Hospitality aims to become one of the leading hospitality organisations in the world. "Recreating the new brand elements through lights, the show embraces each venue, telling the story of our hospitality journey and projecting our aspirations for the future" al-Mulla added.

Shuttle service for shoppers



City Center Doha is offering its customers about 500 free parking slots at Al Faisali and Al Areen towers in the vicinity of the shopping complex. A fleet of zero-emission battery-powered Karwa buses will shuttle customers up and down. Shuttles will leave every six to seven minutes. A one-way trip does not exceed seven minutes. The shuttles will run from 10am until midnight all days except Fridays when the service will be from 3pm to midnight. City Center Doha and Mowasalat officials are seen at the launch of the service yesterday.

PICTURE: Shaji Kayarkulam

Paintings exhibition by two Indian artists

An exhibition of paintings by two Doha-based Indian artists will be held at Merweb Hotel in Al Sadd on May 4 and 5.

"Splash of colours"; as it is known, the event features paintings by Seetha Menon and Chaitra Somnath.

At a briefing recently, the artists said they are focusing on such themes as Qatari environment, landscapes and similar features

at the event which would be inaugurated by Secretary General of Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage Mubarak bin Nasser al-Khalifa.

Indian Ambassador Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa and senior community members will be present, said the two artists.

The part of the proceeds from the show will go to the local charities, they said. About 40 works will be on display.

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Donation drive for workers kicks off

Msheireb Properties, in partnership with Qatar Charity, is staging a national campaign to collect donations of everyday essential items for construction workers in recognition of their contribution to the construction of Qatar's infrastructure.

The 'Box Appeal' is the first campaign of its kind in Qatar, involving the public with collecting and donating items such as clothing and toiletries.

Taking place alongside International Workers' Day, the Box Appeal campaign debuted yesterday and runs for a whole month.

"Through this appeal, we hope to recognise the labour force in Qatar and highlight their essential and often unsung role in Qatar's ongoing development"

Dedicated donation boxes will be available at a variety of locations in Doha, including Qatar Charity offices, Msheireb Properties' headquarters, as well as dedicated kiosks at City Centre, Villaggio Mall and Hayat Plaza.

Residents who wish to take part in the campaign will be asked to collect the boxes and return them with daily essential items and toiletries. Campaign organisers will then ensure the boxes are distributed to construction workers across Qatar.

Items that can be donated include: caps, deodorants, toothbrushes, toothpaste, towels, combs, shampoo, soap, hand sanitizers and

Katara hosts fishing, diving competition

The Senyar Festival, a four-day traditional fishing and diving competition, starts today and ends on May 5. The competition is envisioned to establish a platform to revive one of the key elements of the Gulf's traditions, and is being hosted by Katara Cultural Village.

Participants will start the competition from three ports: Doha, Wakrah and Umseid heading to "fasht Ihdeid al bahr" which is opposite Khor Odeid. The competition will last until Saturday morning, which is when the teams will start moving towards Al Safiyah Island east of Doha to start their "Gaffal" trip going back to Katara's beach.

The Senyar organising committee has previously developed the rules and

regulations of the competition, and identified awards according to the size and weight of the fish and oysters caught. Awards for the first five winners are QR100,000, QR90,000, QR80,000, QR70,000 and QR60,000 respectively. In addition, participants who net the biggest fish and the biggest oyster get a QR80,000 award each.

Katara also has plans to hold a 'Al Gaffal' festival at Katara beach, which is expected to attract a large number of spectators. The Al Gaffal festival will include performances of traditional music and dances and will wrap up with an awards ceremony to honour all participants and winners.

Senyar kicks off with 20 teams, each composed of 10 members, adding up to a total of 200 participants..

Forum to mark Tagore anniversary

The Bangiya Parishad, Qatar, an expatriate cultural forum affiliated to the Indian Cultural Center is organising 'Tagore Forever' - a multi-lingual cultural event on Friday as part of its year-long celebrations to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Indian national poet Rabindranath Tagore. The event, to be held at the Doha Modern Indian School (DMIS), is scheduled to start at 6pm. It is the last in the series of the year-long celebrations of the expatriate forum to commemorate the great Indian poet, who was incidentally the first Asian Nobel laureate. The previous three events in the series had three different themes like



Msheireb Properties and Qatar Charity officials launching the 'Box Appeal' campaign.

Mozaic TV adds new Indian channels

Qtel has added two of India's leading channels, Zoom and Times NOW, to its Mozaic TV Asian basic package. Fans of Hindi and English entertainment will now be able to enjoy the latest breaking news, analysis, business updates and Bollywood movies with these channels. With a mix of news and Bollywood movies, Zoom and Times NOW is likely to appeal to a broad audience. Qtel's latest content partner, Times Television Network, has an audience of over 100mn across

India for its popular programmes. These include 'Times NOW', India's most-watched English language news channel, and Zoom, the world's number one Bollywood destination. The network is available in 28 other countries across the globe. 'Times NOW' has been the leading English news channel in India since 2006. Zoom offers the latest news from Bollywood, exclusive interviews, music, movies, and reviews. 'Times NOW and Zoom' are available at channel numbers 256 and 139 respectively.

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DPS-MIS team wins debate championship

Students representing 25 schools participated in the recently concluded fifth Qatar Schools Debating League National Championship at Qatar Academy, where a team from the DPS Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) emerged victorious.

The competition featured 132 students in 44 teams, as well as 67 judges, who had all received training at the QatarDebate Centre.

Officials said that the standard of debating throughout the competition was of high quality, and that the event showed how much the culture of debate has developed in Qatar.

Head of English programmes at QatarDebate said: "It is very obvious how many students have been debating for the past few

years and how much the quality of the debates improved because of this. Their advance research, preparation, and hard work came through in their speeches."

She praised the students involved in the final debate. "I am so proud of these students who have the courage to stand in front of a large crowd and argue for and against different motions," she added.

Motions for the competition included, 'This house believes that the state should pay parents to stay at home'; 'This house believes that national treasures should be returned to countries of origin'; 'This house would refuse to negotiate with kidnappers and hijackers'; and 'This house believes that PETA

(People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) should only accept vegetarians as members.'

The final debate, on the motion 'This house would abandon the use of nuclear power', featured DPS Modern Indian School Team 1, and Qatar Academy Team 2, while the top five were made up of Al Arqam Academy in third place, Qatar Academy Team 1 in fifth and Park House English School Team 1 in fifth.

Awards were presented by public affairs officer at the US embassy, Carolyn Clark, and Qatar Academy principal Michael Hitchman.

The best speaker award for the competition was presented to Safa Kashaf from Park House English School.



QatarDebate National Schools Championship featured 137 students in 44 teams.

Qatar Building Company showcases leading heavy machinery at Project Qatar 2012

Qatar Building Company is committed to making major contributions to Qatar's growth through participating in a wide range of social and sports events. This participation aims at meeting all requirements of its clients.

Qatar Building Company as a leading supplier of construction equipment to the Qatar market has been a major supporter of infrastructure development in the country.

The company is participating in this year's exhibition to showcase its leading construction sector expertise.

"Qatar Building Company has always been a major participant in Project Qatar since 2004," commented Mr. Bader Mustafawi, Qatar Building Company Commercial Manager.

"Project Qatar provides us an ideal opportunity to highlight the expertise we have in this area as well as reach out to our clients and our major agents. We are delighted to showcase a sustainable range of latest products that are ideally suited to the Qatar market."

He said that Qatar Building Company will demonstrate its products to help the public learn to operate these products.

"We at Qatar Building Company always believe that the client is our concern as they are the main pillar for any company seeking growth."

Qatar Building Company has participated in Project Qatar ever since the exhibition began in 2004.



He also said, "Qatar Building Company offers a wide range of unique heavy machinery with the latest technology. In addition, we provide our clients with high quality of after-sales services. We have our hotline receiving all inquiries with regard to the equipment maintenance to serve running projects. The company has fully equipped mobile workshops that offer services to our clients place any time."

He further said that project Qatar is an essential

exhibition as it attracts top companies to Qatar.

"Project Qatar highlights the latest products needed for Qatar's fast growing construction sector. The show provides unique and dynamic opportunities for buyers and suppliers to make contacts and drive future developments in Qatar's construction sector. It provides a massive exposure to prime regional agents, dealers, buyers and distributors looking to enter the Qatar market. Qatar has transformed to into a land of

opportunities for anyone involved in the construction sector, especially after Qatar's winning the organizing rights of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and after the steady growth it has shown over the years under the wise leadership of HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Heir Apparent."

Replying to a question about the benefits of participating in Project Qatar, Mr. Bader said, "Project Qatar is always important to us. It enables us to make direct connection with our clients."

He said that Qatar Building Company's pavilion includes 10 international companies engaging in vehicle and machinery field. He also said that Qatar building Company has entered into agreements with Al Beydha Trading Company for 36 Hyundai forklifts.

Mr. Bader concluded by extending his appreciation to the board members of Al Beydha Trading Company for their trust in QBC products.



Senior officials from OCS Group and Tadmur Holding at a press conference yesterday.

UK group, Tadmur form JV

OCS Group, the UK's largest family-owned international facility management company, has launched its first Middle East operation by entering the Qatar market.

The announcement was made by Chris Cracknell, chief executive officer, OCS Group, and Dafer Hallawa, chief executive officer, Tadmur Holding, UK group's joint venture partner in Qatar at a press conference yesterday.

Cracknell said that the collaboration will pave the way for over 80 sustainable facility management service offerings that uphold international standards to be made available in Qatar. "These services are set to serve multiple industry sectors," he added.

The official launch of OCS Qatar will take place at the British Embassy.

OCS's partnership with Tadmur Holdings brings the

number of countries that OCS operates in worldwide to over 30, marking the global company's presence in Europe, Australasia, the Americas, Africa, Asia and now in the Middle East region.

As Britain's largest family-owned international facilities service provider, established in 1900, OCS today is a \$1.bn company, headquartered in the UK and employing over 60,000 staff across the globe.

QFCHT launches campaign for workers' rights

Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking (QFCHT) launched a campaign on the theme "workers are partners in development" to mark International Workers' Day yesterday.

The campaign is in recognition of the active role of workers as the main driver of the sustainable development process in line with the National Action Plan 2010-2015 and the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The QFCHT campaign aims mainly at protecting the rights of workers and providing them with relevant consultations.

The campaign will continue until the end of this month in Industrial Area and Workers' Village.

The hub of the campaign will be QFCHT's office at the Labour Centre in Industrial Area. It will feature lectures in co-operation with the Department of Search and Follow-up of the Ministry of the Interior. Workers would be educated on their rights and duties, and how to avoid violation of law.

There will be also competitions, recreational activities and distribution of QFCHT's publications and brochures along with gifts to workers.

code directly from a Vodafone mobile.

Once subscribed to the Internet daily pack 2 customers will only get their 10MB and pay QR2 on days when they use Internet on their phone. The 10MB is valid until midnight on the day it is issued.

The new weekly and monthly packs will automatically renew each week or month provided customers have enough balance for the purchase and any unused MBs will expire.



The officials at the meeting venue.

Malaysian minister woos Qatar investors

The Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA) held a business lunch in honour of the visiting Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed.

The reception at the Renaissance Hotel was attended by members of his accompanying delegation and Malaysia Ambassador to Qatar Ahmad Jazri bin Mohamed Johar.

The Qatari officials, lead by QBA chairman Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, included QBA board member Sherida Jibrin al-Kaabi and QBA members Khalid Mannai, Siraj al-Baker, Nabil Abu Issa and Tariq Naja, who was present on behalf of Abdul Rida Mashadi, as well as deputy general manager Sarah Abdullah.

Both sides discussed bilateral relations between Qatar and Malaysia and spoke of ways to strengthen co-operation in various fields.

The Malaysian minister spoke of Qatar as the third largest trade partner for Malaysia in the Gulf region, where the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached \$4.43bn.

While Malaysia imports from Qatar raw

and processed petroleum products along with petrochemicals, Qatar imports electronic products, steel, wood materials, and food products from Malaysia.

Dato' Sri Mohamed said that a shopping mall displaying Malaysian products is currently under construction in Doha.

Sheikh Faisal spoke of developed relations between the two countries, stating that the presence of the mutual fund between the two countries with a capital of \$2bn will enhance and further support the investment opportunities.

Qatari investments in Malaysia include the real estate sector and manufacturing of furniture and Islamic banks and others.

Dato' Sri Mohamed invited QBA members to visit Malaysia to explore investment opportunities and business possibilities in various fields.

There are 15 Malaysian companies currently working in Qatar, in infrastructure projects, development and construction. More Malaysian companies are expected to operate in Qatar and participate in the projects related to hosting of the World Cup 2022.

Food fest at Holiday Villa



Holiday Villa officials and guests celebrate the start of a food festival during which Holiday Villa celebrates the delicacies of Perlis state in northern Malaysia. Every Thursday and Friday, patrons will be able to enjoy dishes like the famous Nasi Goreng Istimewa Perlis, a salted egg fried rice dish, jackfruit curry with Talang dried fish or Perlis styled Sour and Spicy Fish, locally known as Asam Pedas Rebus. "This is our first experience in pushing forward a northern cuisine and we are very excited to present the selection of authentic delicacies, carefully selected by the Crown Prince of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin," said Holiday Villa general manager Joey Chen.



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Barzan Well-Head Platform – 2 (without Topsides):

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Approximate Demobilization date: 30-April-2012

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RasGas advises all fishermen and mariners to be mindful of this installation and to avoid interfering with installation activities. RasGas assumes no responsibility for any associated damage or loss following this advertisement.

UDC staff graduate from language class

United Development Company (UDC) recently celebrated the graduation of its second batch of English language students from a course organised in collaboration with Language Bridges and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.

The objective of Language Bridges is to provide free basic English language classes to expatriate labourers working in Qatar. The classes are taught by student volunteers from the Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, who were trained by Professor Silvia Pessoa.

Over the course of eight weeks with two-hour sessions a week, the programme was designed to teach functional English that will enable the workers to communicate on their construction site, in an emergency, at the exchange counter when sending money back home and other everyday basic communication.

"I'm very proud of the 28 Carnegie Mellon students and their learners. Everyone has done an excellent job and have demonstrated that with commitment, hard work, and enthusiasm great things can be accomplished," Pessoa said.

The 104 graduates, all UDC employees, were joined by 65 successful students from last year's course at a



Students show off their certificates after the presentation ceremony.

special graduation ceremony sponsored by UDC alongside Carnegie Mellon University.

Language Bridges programme director Julie Zawadzki said that the results for the second year of the initiative confirmed its value and sustainability.

"Our volunteer teachers have been totally committed, flexible and often very creative in order to provide the best experience for their

learners. Language Bridges is a team effort and I'd like to thank everyone involved for their generosity in offering their time and skills, and unfailing support throughout," Zawadzki said.

UDC Human Resources general manager Rita Khairallah said the programme was a life changing initiative. "On behalf of UDC management, I want to thank Language Bridges and Carnegie Mellon for their

great initiative in improving people's lives in Doha. We are grateful to the volunteer teachers who were able to touch the lives of each of our employees forever. I think it is a great feeling to share the knowledge that we have with others and I am sure that they are all proud of their achievements."

A new batch of students from UDC will take the next Language Bridges programme in the coming months.



The Centerpoint team with their trophy.

Centerpoint crush Gulf Lights to lift cricket trophy

Centerpoint defeated Gulf Lights by 10 wickets in the final of the four-team cricket tournament hosted by the Doha chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) at New Ideal Indian School grounds recently. Besides the finalists, Doha Bank and

Ernst & Young were the other teams.

The principal sponsors of the tournament were Centerpoint, ExxonMobil, Doha Bank, Ernst & Young, Gulf Lights, Deloitte & Touche, Blue Salon and Doha Liwa.

The trophies to the teams were given away by Air-India manager Jagmit

Singh and Doha Bank's senior manager (Group Finance) Sanjay Jain.

ICAI Doha chapter chairman Venkat Rama Murthy thanked the teams, sponsors and members of his organisation and their families for making the tournament a "big success" despite adverse weather conditions.

Brief scores: Gulf Lights 115 all out (Jaishankar 14 n.o., Krishna Kumar 16, Sheji Valiyakath 3-12, Lakanathan 3-8) lost to Centerpoint 120 for no loss (Kamlesh 24, Deepu 19, Anand Vyas 14). Man of the match: Sheji Valiyakath; Man of the tournament: Pankaj Singhvi.

Kaplan impressed by Qatar progress

Palladium Group, a global strategy execution consulting firm, recently hosted Harvard Baker Foundation professor and co-founder of the Balance Scorecard and Activity-Based Costing, Robert Kaplan, on a two-day visit to Doha.

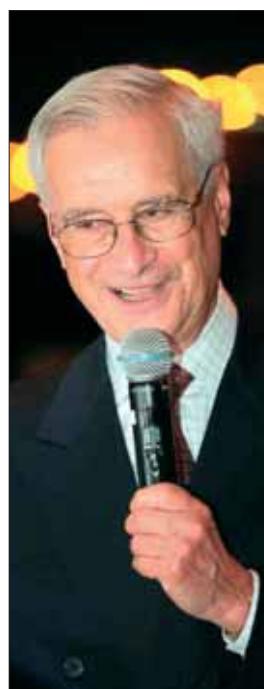
On his first visit to Qatar, Kaplan interacted with more than 40 government and business leaders, where Palladium managing director Joan Cabezas announced the establishment of a new office for Palladium Group in Doha to provide the country with a professional and dedicated team focused solely on the needs of the Qatari market.

Kaplan said that he was impressed by Qatar's national vision, while he feels that "still the main challenge is implementing the strategy and aligning all institutions towards achieving it."

In this context, he considered that the country has a great opportunity to use the financial benefits from non-renewable resources to build a sustainable future based on knowledge and information.

The professor, who is considered as one of the top twenty-five business thinkers in the world, explained that there is an emerging management trend in the region characterised by the development of strategy maps - a tool that was co-founded by him, and by "the paradigm shift in the risk management system after the financial crises".

He concluded that "every institution will have to create value to the community to succeed nowadays, and not just financial returns to the shareholders".



Kaplan ... impressed by Qatar's National Vision.

QATAR FUEL ADDITIVES COMPANY LIMITED QAFAC

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Limited Tender Committee of QAFAC invites qualified local suppliers to participate in the following tender in accordance with QAFAC tendering procedures.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Description	Collection Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	LTC/038/12	Supply of irrigation Pump Assembly (Radially Split) with electric motor, coupling & base frame (API/ANSI compliance)	Qrs. 200/-	Qrs. 12,000/-	20/05/2012

Interested companies are invited to collect the above tender documents as follows:

- **Collection Date** : From **Wednesday, 2nd May 2012** (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- **Collection Time** : 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- **Location** : Toyota Tower - Airport Road, 1st Floor, QAFAC Doha Office.
- **Tender Fees** : As shown above, **(Non-refundable)** can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office.
- **Validity** : Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Bid Bond** : Offers must include a Bid Bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Authorization** : Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 1. Official authorization on Company Letter Head,
 2. Proper Identification,
 3. Copy of Company's Commercial Registration.

Infrastructure creation 'to drive building boom in GCC'

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) is poised for a construction boom on account of massive infrastructure creation, according to a top official of Doha Bank.

"A combination of a shortage of affordable housing, stable interest rates, encouraging government policies which promote foreign direct investment in real estate sector, and an increasing expatriate population, is expected to result in high demand for housing in the short to medium term," Doha Bank Group CEO R Seetharaman said at Project Qatar 2012.

Referring to Qatar, he said the residential construction market will rise in the long term on the back of healthy growth in population and increasing economic activity. "Commercial office construction market will be oversupplied in the near-term, with several new developments nearing completion in the near future," he said, highlighting that major projects in Qatar include Lusail project, Barwa financial district and Barwa city.

The residential rental yields across Riyadh and Jeddah would increase mainly due to rising rental rates on the back of a shortage of new residential units, he said, adding the outlook



Seetharaman

due to fresh supply in the market which would impact the rental rates, he said. In UAE major projects include Al Falah, Al Baatin Park and Rainbow towers.

In Oman, Seetharaman said, an optimistic outlook prevailed in the residential construction markets on the back of increasing population and rising employment levels.

However, the commercial office properties market will continue to be marked by oversupply in the near term, he said, adding demand for residential properties would remain strong in the well-developed localities of Qurum, Shatti Al Qurum and Madinat Qaboos.

In Kuwait, the demand for private housing would be particularly strong in the long-term due to undersupply and commercial office properties segment would "suffer" from the current state of oversupply in the short to medium-term, he said. Khairan Residential City and Kuwait Investment Authority headquarters are some of the major projects in Kuwait.

He said the residential market of Bahrain would continue to see "substantial undersupply" while the commercial office construction will be "under pressure" mainly due to oversupply and subdued economic environment.

On the UAE market, he said the residential properties market of Dubai was currently facing an oversupply situation due to lack of investor interest in acquiring new property. "Though the Dubai market is expected to remain oversupplied in the near term, the residential real estate and construction market of Dubai is likely to outperform the commercial office markets," he added.

Abu Dhabi's residential market is expected to be "oversupplied" over the next two years

Al Muftah pavilion proves a major attraction at expo

Prominent Qatari business firm, Al Muftah Group has set up an imposing pavilion, featuring an array of the group's trading activities at the ongoing Project Qatar 2012 exhibition at Doha Exhibitions Centre.

The group's pavilion, set in green background, highlights the group's commitment to developing eco-friendly environs in the country and is one of the major attractions at this year's exhibition.

Al Muftah has showcased its latest products and services to the visitors. The company plans to leverage its long history of introducing many innovative solutions to the Qatari market in order to engage the leading international buyers and government agencies participating in the four-day event, which is believed to be the most talked about construction, infrastructure and property event in the GCC.

The participating Al Muftah divisions and their respective products include Al Muftah Automatic Doors (automatic doors and entrances made by Italian manufacturer Ditec), Al Muftah Elevators and Escalators (elevators and escalators made by Japanese manufacturer Fuji), Al Muftah Polymers (water tanks, road barriers and flower pots).

The others are Al Muftah Specialities (drywall systems and luxurious doors and windows made by German manufacturers Fermacell and Unilux, respectively), Al Muftah Cable Vision (CCTV cameras, servers and DVRs, intercom and nurse call systems, SMATV systems and computers), Al Muftah Tires and Lubricants (BKT-made off-highway tyre solutions and specialty tyres for industrial applications and



The Al Muftah pavilion at the Project Qatar 2012 exhibition.

construction equipment) and Al Muftah Fibreglass (FRP floating docks, FRP domes, sectional panel tanks, FRP car park covers, STP covers, manhole liners, FRP pipes and pipe fittings, and custom-designed FRP parts).

The Al Muftah pavilion also houses sections for Al Muftah Carpentry, Al Muftah Interiors, Anytime Fitness and Al Muftah Contracting Company's civil division.

According to Al Muftah Group managing director Ibrahim Almuftah, Project Qatar 2012 offers matchless opportunities for both exhibition participants and attendees, especially in the light of the

current economic and construction boom being experienced by the country.

"There's really no better place in the Middle East to hold this event than in Doha, and there's no better time to invest in Qatar's construction industry than right now," he said.

CGC displays expertise, innovative solutions

Qatar's prominent technology and engineering solution providers Consolidated Gulf Co (CGC) is participating in the ongoing Project Qatar international trade exhibition.

The 25-year-old ISOs and OHSAS certified company is demonstrating its technological expertise and customised solutions with its technical and sales personnel helping out customers at the venue to serve visitors and prospective clients. The company's latest portfolios, including audio visual solutions, LED displays, LED lighting, security and integrated solutions, life safety systems, fire alarm system, hardware and networking, GIS, CAD and 3D modelling, water and waste water treatment solutions, Tetra communications devices and vehicle tracking systems among others are on display.

CGC which is one of the most diversified and progressive companies in the country has activities spread across various domains, including extra low voltage, security, building automation, telecom, Cisco solutions, IT and ITeS, engineering, CAMS alarm system, BPO, consumer electronics, Nokia distributions and retail.

Headquartered in Doha, CGC's business interests span from Qatar to UAE,



The CGC stand.

Kuwait, India, Europe and the Americas. It has a 100 % owned subsidiary operating from the south Indian city of Hyderabad.

The company has delivered more than 2,000 technological and engineering projects and is currently engaged in several large and SMEs projects in Qatar, India and other overseas markets.

CGC Chief Operating Officer Anil Mahajan said "we bring a vast portfolio of cutting edge technological and engineering solutions and cost effec-

tive services to serve Qatar's growing industrial and construction needs. The company has already implemented over 60 audio visual solutions for conference rooms, boardrooms, auditoriums and clubs. We are providing AV solutions to several ministerial head offices, oil and gas companies, government entities, private establishments, medical and educational institutions, besides implementing monitoring facilities for security and data systems."

The company pavilion is in Hall 2, G81 at the Doha Exhibition Centre.

Malaysia seeks enhanced trade ties

Malaysia is hopeful of landing a number of opportunities in increasing its bilateral trade with Qatar in the coming years.

Speaking to journalists at a specially convened meeting at the Malaysian pavilion at the Project Qatar exhibition, Malaysia's Minister for International Trade and Industry Mustapha Mohamed said his country's trade with Qatar had shown a significant improvement in the last few years and the companies from Malaysia are hopeful of continuous patronage from Qatar businesses in future as well.

Mohamed was in Qatar as part of his visit to the region. The other country on his current sojourn is Oman where the minister is inaugurating a Malaysia promotion exhibition today.

While thanking the Qatar government for the patronage extended to Malaysian firms and products, the minister said his country's massive



Malaysia's Minister for International Trade and Industry Mustapha Mohamed speaks at a meeting at the pavilion.

participation at the Project Qatar exhibition reflected its keenness to boost business with Qatar in the coming years. The exhibition features an imposing Malaysian pavilion, with the participation of more than 60 companies from the Southeast Asian country. Speaking to *Gulf Times*, market-

ing manager of the Malaysia External Trade and Development Corporation (Matrade) Ahmadur Rahman said there has been a growth of nearly 15% in Malaysia's exports to the region in 2011 compared to the previous year. The growth recorded in Qatar is equally remarkable, he said.

** Please register if you wish to participate in the orientation meeting, according to the information below.*

To register: Registration is open during the period (Sunday 29/4/2012 To Thursday 10/5/2012)

School Canteens Unit, 7th Floor SEC Tower (Dafna),

Or Fax: 44044214, or e-mail: sh.alsayed@sec.gov.qa

For inquiries Tel: 44044213 - 44044392 - 44044393 - 44044394 - 44044395 - 44044396 to 44044397



المجلس الأعلى للتعليم

SUPREME EDUCATION COUNCIL

Invitation

To Hotels and major companies
For the supply of meals for schools

The Standing Committee of the school canteens at the SEC

Is pleased to invite you to attend:

"The orientation meeting of requirements of the SEC for the supply of meals for schools"

In preparation to include your hotel and company in the list of suppliers of healthy meals for students in schools.

**Reception marks Dutch Queen's birthday**

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Urban Planning HE Sheikh Abdurrahman bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani and Dutch ambassador to Qatar John Groffen cutting a cake to mark the birthday celebration of the Netherlands Queen at the Sheraton Doha on Monday.

Volunteers feted on return from Cambodia trip

Qatar-based non-governmental organisation Reach Out To Asia (Rota) yesterday hosted a reflection event for some 15 volunteers, parents and school officials to celebrate the success of its recent volunteer trip to Cambodia.

During the event, the volunteers showed pictures taken from their trip and recited testimonials telling the audience how the trip had changed their opinions about Cambodia and its people.

"This was Rota's third Volunteer Trip to Cambodia. Though previous trips were hugely successful, this year was especially rewarding because we were able to send our first all-female group of student volun-

teers to see Rota's educational and community development work for themselves, as well as experience the reality of life for young people in Cambodia," Rota director Essa al-Mannai said.

In collaboration with Rota's Cambodian partner, the Monithapana Foundation and under the sponsorship of Vodafone-Qatar,

the female volunteers from Al-Bayan Independent Secondary School for Girls, Al-Saiyilah Independent Secondary School for Girls and the Amna Bint Wahab Independent Secondary School for Girls travelled to Cambodia at the end of March.

During their nine-day visit, the all-female volunteer group hosted

workshops for some 150 students at the new Rota-funded and supported Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techu Hun Sen - Rota - Khsach Kandal General and Technical High School.

In addition, the volunteers raised funds to present the Phnom Penh Dubai Islamic School with learning materials, books and a photocopier, and helped distribute basic food supplies to 200 local families.

"The school in Cambodia was truly wonderful. The pupils could not have been any more polite and willing to share with us. In the end, I made many friends and I have remained in touch with them since arriving home. Thank you Rota, the

experience was everything I hoped for and more," one of the student Manal al-Mansoori told the gathering.

Al-Mannai added: "Without doubt, the different activities in Cambodia challenged the students to reflect on what Rota's mission to provide quality primary and secondary education really means, most importantly to witness how we put our 'education for all' mission into action."

More information about Rota's projects in Cambodia and 10 other Asian countries can be had on [www.reachouttoasia.org](http://reachouttoasia.org) or Facebook page, www.facebook.com/reachouttoasia.



The Rota volunteers with officials.



A picture from the event in Afghanistan

Rota opens schools in Afghanistan

QNA
Doha

and 600 lower secondary). In particular, education services are being emphasised for returnees, IDPs and communities prone to conflict in three provinces of Afghanistan (Kapisa, Ghazni, and Khost), specifically in areas where government education facilities do not reach.

Currently, the Mata Cheena Community School, located in Matun District, provides educational opportunities for 244 female students (44 secondary and 200 primary), while the Hassan Mohammad Community School in neighbouring Mandozi district ensures educational opportunities for approximately 100 female students (33 secondary graders and 67 primary graders).

"Investment in education is the best defence against poverty and suffering in Afghanistan. In partnership

with Care International, we are committed to providing a comprehensive community based learning environment that sets high standards for its students while strengthening families' abilities to be strong advocates for their children's education," said Rota Director Essa al-Mannai.

The inauguration ceremonies for the Mata Cheena and Hassan Mohammad community schools were held on March 25 and 26 respectively, and were attended by community members, district education officials, local authorities, Care representatives, parents, teachers, and students enrolled in the schools. During the ceremonies, project stakeholders at all levels voiced the importance of community support in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the newly-built schools.

Lecture by chief of statistics body at Carnegie Mellon

The Dean's Lecture Series at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar is hosting a public lecture today by Sheikh Hamad bin Jabor bin Jassim al-Thani, president of the Qatar Statistics Authority, on 'Qatar's National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the Involvement of Higher Education in the National Development Strategy.'

The lecture will take place at Carnegie Mellon's building in Education City from 12-1 pm, and is open to the public.

Sheikh Hamad was instrumental in the formation of the Qatar Statistics Authority in June 2007. He supervised the preparation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS); pioneered the 2010 National Population, Housing and Establishment Census; established the National Population Policy; and Qatar Information Exchange (Qalm).

Expat group to hold concert

Indian expatriate organisation, Maharashtra Mandal Qatar is organising a music concert on May 4 to mark the 52nd anniversary of the formation of the Indian state of Maharashtra.

The event will be held at Doha Cinema.

Maharashtra was granted statehood on May 1, 1960.

The live musical concert features playback singer Avadhoot Gupte.

Gupte is a winner of *Sa Re Ga Ma*, a popular television music show and is composer of a number of Hindi and Marathi albums.

Gupte's popular albums are *Aika Dajiba* and *Meri Madhubala*. He has rendered his voice to many a Marathi song.

Aspire LOGISTICS

State of Qatar ASPIRE LOGISTICS Announces the following

SN	Tender No.	Subject	Tender Bond	Tender Fees	Closing Date
1	AF/M/ASP3012/12	Comprehensive Maintenance of Un-Interruptible Power Supply (USP) at the Aspetar Data Centre at Aspire Zone	Qr. 5,000.00	Qr.300.00	May, 22nd 2012
1	AF/M/ASP3013/12	Comprehensive Maintenance of Precession Air Condition Unit (PAC) at the Aspetar Data Centre at Aspire Zone	Qr. 5,000.00	Qr.300.00	May, 22nd 2012

Tender documents for the above Projects are available for collection from Aspire Logistics offices (Tel No. 44476786) located at opposite to Aspire Park and near the Grand Heritage Hotel upon presentation of a formal letter of authorization on Company letterhead, duly signed and stamped, copy of the Commercial Registration and a stamped receipt for the non-refundable documentation fee (as mentioned above) which should be paid to Qatar National Bank, Account No. 0013-02515-052 (ASPIRE ZONE).

Tenders should be accompanied with a Tender Bond as stated above and in accordance with the specimen form attached with the tender document issued as a Bank Guarantee from one of the local Banks registered in Qatar valid for 120 days from date of opening of tenders.

Successful Tenderer will be required to submit a Performance Bond of 10% of the Contract Sum, which will remain valid till (7) days after completion of the Contract period.

The Closing time will be at 12:00 noon, on the closing date mentioned above, any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.

Tenders are to be submitted in **duplicate** (1 Original + 1 Copy) in a sealed envelope, addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee of Aspire Logistics, endorsed in Arabic and English and deposited in the Tender Box of Aspire Logistics opposite to Aspire Park and near the Grand Heritage Hotel.

Chairman of Tender Committee of Aspire Logistics

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER				
No.	Tender No.	Description	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Closing Date
1.	QCC/IT/OTD/NST/LA/04/12	Procurement of "San Storage for Q-Chem and RLOC"	91,000 (USD 25,000)	12:00 HRS ON 16-05-2012

• Tender Documents for the above supply can be obtained as follows:-

- Pay a non-refundable tender fee of **QR. 500/-** Payable to Q-Chem Bank Account (Procurement - Tender) - Account Number # 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank, Salam Tower Branch, West Bay and submit the original receipt for collection of tender documents as below.

- Date & Time of Issue : From 02/05/2012 to 06/05/2012 Between 8:00am and 12:00 noon.

- Contact : Receptionist

- Location : Q-Chem, 1st Floor, Salam Tower, Near Doha Sheraton Hotel, West Bay, Doha. (Tel. 44847111)

• Tenders must be accompanied by a Provisional Bank Guarantee (Tender Bond) issued by one of the Qatari Banks or by a Bank operating in Qatar and should be valid for **120 days** from the tender closing date.

• Offers should be valid for **120 days** commencing from the tender closing date.

• Tenders are to be delivered in a sealed envelope addressed to: **THE SECRETARY, TENDER COMMITTEE, QATAR CHEMICAL COMPANY LIMITED, P.O.BOX: 24646, DOHA, QATAR** and to be dropped in **1st FLOOR, SALAM TOWER, WEST BAY, DOHA, QATAR**, clearly indicating the Tender Number and other details as stipulated in the Tender Package.

Kuwait stateless protesters dispersed

Reuters
Kuwait

Kuwaiti riot police used batons and armoured trucks to disperse a group of about 200 stateless protesters yesterday, the latest rally by descendants of mainly desert nomads seeking improved rights.

Known in Arabic as "bidoon" and numbering up to 180,000 people, the stateless are denied citizenship under nationality laws in Kuwait, whose citizens are entitled to generous welfare benefits.

Kuwait has avoided any major spillover of the "Arab Spring" pro-democracy revolts onto its territory. But a deadlock between parliament and the government and accusations of graft by the ex-prime minister have stirred unrest.

Police over the past year have also broken up several marches of stateless demonstrators that attracted several hundred people in marginalised neighbourhoods near the capital. Gathering in a square on Kuwait City's outskirts after prayers in a nearby mosque, yesterday's demonstrators called on the country's ruler to grant them citizenship.

"We want this from your highness the emir, not the government, not the ministers," the mainly young men chanted as helicopters circled overhead.

Masked police dressed in black and wielding long batons charged the group and led away a handful of protesters.

Most of the other demonstrators ran into the surrounding residential areas crammed with squat corrugated metal houses lined by dirt roads.



Kuwaiti police arrest a man during a protest by stateless people yesterday.

Iran plot 'targeted Saudi envoy'

Three Iranians planning to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Cairo were arrested, the legal adviser of the kingdom's embassy is quoted as saying

Agencies
Riyadh

Egyptian security services foiled an Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Cairo several months ago, the legal adviser of the kingdom's embassy said in local dailies yesterday.

Egypt "arrested three Iranians planning to assassinate the ambassador, Ahmed Qattan," Al Hayat quoted Sami Jamal as saying.

"Egyptian authorities informed concerned parties at the Saudi foreign ministry of the details of the plot, but the Saudi side opted to keep silent on the matter," Jamal said. The arrests were made three months ago.

"Everybody was concerned that foreign parties would exploit demonstrations by some (Egyptians) outside the embassy (in Cairo) to attack members of the mission," Al Sharq daily quoted him as saying.

Questioned about the re-

ports, a spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, Ramin Mehmanparast, told reporters in Tehran that the allegation was "absolutely incorrect".

"Manufacturing such issues can only help divisions among Muslim countries and benefit the Zionist regime (Israel)," he said.

Riyadh on Saturday recalled its ambassador from Cairo after angry protests outside the Saudi embassy in Cairo over the arrest of an Egyptian human rights lawyer in the kingdom.

Saudi state news agency SPA said the Cairo embassy as well as the kingdom's consulates in the Mediterranean cities of Alexandria and Suez were closed.

In October, the US accused Iran of plotting to kill the Saudi ambassador to Washington. Iran has fiercely denied any involvement in the alleged plot.

Meanwhile, Riyadh's recall for consultations of ambassador Qattan may prove fleeting.

Egypt seems keen to have Qattan back, judging by government statements and reports in state-owned newspapers of Egyptians waving Saudi flags at the embassy calling for his return.

Yemeni killed in attack by gunmen

Reuters
Sanaa

Suspected Al Qaeda-linked gunmen killed a Yemeni man working for Total yesterday and wounded a Frenchman and another Yemeni employee of the French oil group, a Total security official said.

The attack took place as they were driving from an oil field in eastern Hadramout province to an airport in the town of Seiyun.

"They were on their way to Seiyun airport. They were 2km northeast of Seiyun when the car came under attack by five masked gunmen with rifles," the Total official said.

"We don't know the identity of the gunmen but we suspect it was Al Qaeda."

A year of political upheaval that eventually unseated former president Ali Abdullah Saleh has emboldened militants in Yemen where they have seized swathes of territory and carried out scores of attacks.

In a video posted yesterday, a Swiss woman kidnapped in Yemen in March said that she was being held by Al Qaeda and asked Swiss authorities to help her.

Yemen is a small crude oil producer but instability on its territory is potential risk to global trade because of its location on the Bab Al Mandab strait, a crucial trading route linking Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The Total official said the Yemeni who died was an escort soldier and had been sitting in the front passenger seat.

The Frenchman, who was seated in the back of the vehicle, received a gunshot to the leg.

BARWA REAL ESTATE COMPANY Q.S.C. DOHA - QATAR

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2012

In thousands of Qatari Riyals

	31 MARCH 2012 (REVIEWED)	31 DECEMBER 2011 (AUDITED)
ASSETS		
Cash and bank balances	1,978,503	2,626,385
Receivables and prepayments	971,463	1,058,969
Finance lease receivables	2,996,239	3,056,434
Due from related parties	2,905,978	2,809,742
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	5,271	4,137
Assets of a subsidiary held for sale	-	55,150
Advances for projects and investments	2,776,164	2,861,036
Available for sale financial assets	491,672	462,622
Trading properties	36,856,178	38,270,273
Investment properties	11,155,227	10,662,946
Investments in equity accounted investees	1,934,675	3,182,291
Property, plant and equipment	555,319	554,160
Goodwill	126,411	126,411
Deferred tax assets	-	76,083
TOTAL ASSETS	62,753,100	65,806,639
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
LIABILITIES		
Payables and other liabilities	3,580,245	5,080,044
Due to related parties	16,528,153	16,822,844
Liabilities of a subsidiary held for sale	-	62,939
Obligations under Islamic finance contracts	27,433,706	28,371,134
Liabilities for purchase of a land	2,404,939	2,486,437
Liabilities under derivative financial instruments	349,437	452,134
TOTAL LIABILITIES	50,296,480	53,275,532
EQUITY		
Share capital	3,891,246	3,891,246
Legal reserve	481,107	481,107
General reserve	4,639,231	4,639,231
Other reserves	(26,343)	(49,533)
Treasury shares	(4,119)	(4,119)
Retained earnings	3,001,078	3,097,740
Total equity attributable to the owners of the Parent	11,982,200	12,055,672
Non-controlling interests	474,420	475,435
TOTAL EQUITY	12,456,620	12,531,107
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	62,753,100	65,806,639

This interim condensed consolidated financial statements were approved and signed on behalf of the Board of Directors by the following on 30 April 2012.

HITMI ALI AL HITMI
CHAIRMAN

BUILDING QATAR'S FUTURE

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2012

In thousands of Qatari Riyals

	31 MARCH 2012 (REVIEWED)	31 MARCH 2011 (REVIEWED)
REVENUES AND GAINS		
Rental income	177,282	169,226
Income from consultancy and other related services	111,034	71,697
Profit on sale of properties	78,451	-
Profit on disposal of subsidiaries	194,660	410,897
(Loss) / gain on remeasurement of investment properties	(25,383)	420,083
Share of results from equity accounted investees	12,238	(253)
Income from banking activities	-	127,895
Other income	102,310	113,755
TOTAL REVENUES AND GAINS	650,592	1,313,300
EXPENSES AND LOSSES		
Operating expenses	(73,199)	(60,875)
General and administrative expenses	(135,030)	(297,477)
Impairment losses	(342)	-
Depreciation	(16,830)	(36,740)
Expenses from banking activities	-	(26,506)
TOTAL EXPENSES AND LOSSES	(225,401)	(421,598)
Net finance costs	(130,476)	(300,923)
Net profit before income tax	294,715	590,779
Income tax expense	(633)	(3,038)
NET PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	294,082	587,741
Attributable to		
Owners of the Parent	292,462	548,497
Non-controlling interests	1,620	39,244
	294,082	587,741
Basic and diluted earnings per share		
	0.75	1.41
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
Net change in fair value of available for sale financial assets	10,666	(17,386)
Net change in fair value of cash flow hedges transferred to profit or loss	7,180	8,768
Effective portion of changes in fair value of cash flow hedges	3,345	-
Exchange differences on translation of foreign operations	2,362	(4,870)
Other comprehensive income (Loss) for the period	23,553	(13,488)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	317,635	574,253
Attributable to		
Owners of the Parent	315,653	537,369
Non-controlling interests	1,982	36,884
	317,635	574,253


BARWA
ÖGJ

بنك قطر المستقبلي



CONFLICT

Troops, Palestinians in clashes at Gaza border

The Israeli army and Palestinians exchanged fire along the Gaza border yesterday in a series of clashes that wounded one person, the Israeli military and Palestinian security sources said. In a statement, the Israeli military said its forces had come under fire while "performing routine operational activities near the security fence in central Gaza". Security sources and eyewitnesses said Palestinians opened fire towards Israeli forces as they staged an incursion into Gaza and began clearing land along the border area in the early afternoon. Palestinian medical sources said Israeli forces opened fire again later in the afternoon in the same area, leaving one Palestinian wounded.

POLITICS

Ex-opposition leader Livni quits Knesset

Tzipi Livni, the former head of Israel's biggest opposition party Kadima, resigned from parliament yesterday, a month after she lost a primary battle for leadership of her centre-right faction. Speculation about Livni's political future swirled after she suffered defeat at the hands of her challenger Shaul Mofaz in elections held on March 28. In her resignation speech, Livni warned Israel was sitting "on a volcano". "The international clock is ticking and the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state is in danger," she said. Livni hinted she might remain in politics in some capacity. "At this stage I am leaving the Knesset, but I'm not leaving political life," she said.

SECURITY

Turkey travel warning for Israelis downgraded

Israel yesterday downgraded a warning for its citizens against travel to Turkey, citing an "updated assessment" of threats. The Israeli National Security Council had warned in March of an imminent danger of attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets in Turkey. In a statement yesterday, the council said it had "decided to downgrade the travel warning for Turkey to that of 'continuing potential threat', adding it was the lowest of four levels. "A continuing threat of terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets exists in Turkey," the council said, adding its Counter-terrorism Bureau "recommends avoiding non-essential travel to Turkey or, at least, to be especially alert and cautious."

SANCTIONS

UK retailer's settlement goods boycott slammed

Israel's foreign ministry yesterday criticised a major UK supermarket's decision to shun any supplier that sources from Israeli settlements, saying such action targets the whole Jewish state. "They say they are targeting settlement products but in fact they are targeting everything that is Israeli," foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told AFP. "The settlements are a pretext," he added. "The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement boycotts everything that is Israeli." The Co-Op, Britain's fifth largest food retailer, said on Sunday that it was extending an existing boycott of goods made in Israeli settlements to cover companies that source products from the settlements.

EXECUTION

Saudi beheads two for murder, stealing

Saudi Arabia beheaded yesterday two Bangladeshis convicted of killing and robbing a fellow citizen in the kingdom, the interior ministry announced. Nujum Abdulshirif and Abdulkhalid Hamza killed Mohammed Kabir, also Bangladeshi, the state news agency SPA reported quoting the ministry. They "suffocated him, beat him on his head using a thick stick, and strangled him" to death, the report said, adding they then stole Kabir's money and cell phones. The two men were beheaded in Jizan, in the kingdom's south. Their beheading brings the total number of executions in the kingdom to 23 so far this year, according to an AFP tally based on official reports.

Sudan alleges South widens 'aggression'

Khartoum says the South has "a plan to continue the war and disturb peace and security and stability along the border between Sudan and South Sudan"

AFP
Khartoum

Sudan warned its Southern neighbour yesterday over widening "aggression" as the South alleged fresh clashes despite an African Union peace initiative.

"The government of Sudan confirms that South Sudan and its army are working to widen the aggression and occupy some disputed points and areas by force," Khartoum's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Sudan cannot allow the occupying troops to impose their power."

The statement came more than a week after South Sudanese soldiers said they had completed a withdrawal from Sudan's main oil region of Heglig, which they occupied for 10 days in a move that coincided with Sudanese air strikes across the border in South Sudan.

Sudan's military said it forced the Southerners out of Heglig.

It was the most serious fighting in a month of border clashes and raised fears of wider war.

Allegations of clashes have continued even after the Heglig occupation ended.

In its statement, the foreign ministry said South Sudanese

troops on Monday occupied a disputed area on the border of Sudan's Darfur and South Sudan's Western Bahr El Ghazal state.

This came a day after the South took over another disputed point on the Darfur border, the ministry added.

It said the South has "a plan to continue the war and disturb peace and security and stability along the border between Sudan and South Sudan".

Each side denies backing rebels on the other's territory in a proxy war after failing to settle outstanding issues over contested territory, oil revenues and borders.

The South became independent last July after an overwhelming "yes" vote under a 2005 peace deal that ended a 22-year civil war.

Yesterday, the South's army said Sudanese troops and allied militias clashed with South Sudanese troops along the disputed border.

"Sudanese forces, militias and mercenaries attacked our positions in Hofra in the oil region of Unity state," Southern army spokesman Philip Aguer said.

It was not possible to independently verify the situation.

Southern troops "repulsed the attackers" and captured three trucks, Aguer said, adding soldiers were preparing for an assault believed planned by Sudan.

Last week the UN Security Council started talks on a resolution that could allow sanctions against Sudan and South Sudan

if they do not meet African Union (AU) demands to end their border clashes which began in late March.

The AU's security organ urged both sides to reach a deal within three months on oil and citizenship issues, pull forces from the contested Abyei region and agree on a demarcated border.

Among other measures, the road map sought an immediate cessation of all hostilities including aerial bombardments, withdrawal of troops from each other's territory and an end to backing for rebel groups.

Sudan on Sunday notified the AU that it agreed to the road map, the foreign ministry said in its statement yesterday.

On Saturday, the South's government said it was ready to pull its police out of Abyei to meet the AU demands.

The British embassy, meanwhile, said yesterday that it had met with one of its citizens allegedly detained by Sudan's army along the tense southern border and he was in good condition.

Chris Fielding, the Briton, has been held for at least three days along with Norwegian John Sorbo, South African Thabo Sivane and an unidentified South Sudanese.

The UN expressed concern after the governor of Sudan's White Nile state declared thousands of South Sudanese a security risk and ordered them to leave by Saturday the way-station of Kosti, south of Khartoum.

They have been encamped there waiting for transport to the South.



Palestinian protesters lie on the ground after being hit by pepper spray during clashes with Israeli troops outside Ofer military prison near Ramallah yesterday following a demonstration in support of prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Palestinians warn of wrath if jailed hunger strikers die

AFP
Ramallah

Palestinian Prisoners Minister Issa Qaraqa yesterday warned there would be a major backlash if any of the detainees on a mass hunger inside Israeli jails were to die.

"We will not accept our prisoners returning in coffins from the occupation's prisons," Qaraqa told a 3,000-strong crowd demonstrating in solidarity with the prisoners in the West Bank city of Nablus.

"If anything happens to any prisoner, the explosion will not stay inside prison walls but will extend to the outside," he said.

Around a third of the 4,700 Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails are currently on open-ended hunger strike, according to the Israel Prisons Service, which puts the number at 1,450.

Most have been refusing food for around two weeks, but eight of them are at an advanced stage of their hunger strike and two - Bilal Diab and Thaer Halahla - have gone 63 days without eating.

A doctor with Physicians for Human Rights who examined them on Monday found they were in danger of dying and were not receiving adequate medical care where they are being held in the Ramle prison infirmary near Tel Aviv.

"I appeal from Nablus to all human rights organisations in the world to act urgently to save the lives of Bilal Diab and Thaer Halahla who are in danger of dying," Qaraqa said.

"The enemy has to understand the message: any harm to the lives of the prisoners will lead to an escalation."

Meanwhile, 300 people gathered outside Ofer military prison near Ramallah in a show of support for the prisoners.

Clashes erupted between stone-throwing youths and the Israeli army, who fired teargas, rubber bullets and a foul-smelling liquid known as "skunk" to break up the demonstration.

A photographer was badly injured after being hit in the head by a stone thrown by a protester, an AFP correspondent said.

Tenders Notice



The Public Works Authority announces the following tenders:

Tender No	Subject	Amount of Tender Bond (QR)	Document Fee (QR)	Closing Date	*Companies Eligible to Tender
PWA/STC/003/12-13	Professional Consultancy Services for Accreditation of ASHGHAL Quality Laboratory To ISO/IES 17025:2005 QSD/11-12/S/12/S	50,000.00	500.00	14/05/2012	(1)
PWA/GTC/004/12-13	Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Roads Throughout Qatar- Contract 5 AA-R/11-12/M/006/G	1,200,000.00	2,500.00	29/05/2012	(1)
PWA/GTC/005/12-13	Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Roads Throughout Qatar- Contract 6 AA-R/11-12/M/007/G	1,200,000.00	2,500.00	29/05/2012	(1)
PWA/GTC/006/12-13	Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Roads Throughout Qatar- Contract 7 AA-R/11-12/M/008/G	1,200,000.00	2,500.00	05/06/2012	(1)
PWA/GTC/007/12-13	Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Roads Throughout Qatar- Contract 8 AA-R/11-12/M/009/G	1,200,000.00	2,500.00	05/06/2012	(1)

Companies Eligible to Tender:

- (1) Qatari Companies Only.
- (2) Joint Venture (JV) Companies which includes a Qatari Company having a minimum of 51% share holding of the JV.
- (3) Non-Qatari Companies.
- (4) Not Applicable.

Full Documents for the above mentioned Tender can be obtained from Contracts Department (CD) against a Non-refundable fee paid to PWA Account No. (0013-001813-052), Qatar National Bank together with a copy of the Company Registration and a Company Authorization letter.

Project document may be examined at Al-Faisali Tower, Ground Floor, Al Coniche before purchasing from PWA.

Each Tender must be accompanied by a Tender Bond, either in the form of a "Certified Check" or a "Tender Bond" issued by a Bank acceptable to the PWA; in the amount mentioned above (120 days). Any Tender received without the proper guarantee will not be considered.

The Tender shall be submitted in two separate sealed envelopes (technical and financial offer) and both envelopes must be enclosed in a third sealed envelope which shall bear the tender number, subject and closing date.

All Tenders shall be submitted in original and one copy or they will not be accepted.

Tenders shall be delivered at or sent to arrive not later than 1:00pm local Doha time on the closing date and deposited in the relevant Tender Box of concerned Tenders Committee's Chairman at PWA.

The successful Tenderer shall provide a Performance Bond in amount of ten (10%) percent of the Contract Price endorsed by an approved local bank in Qatar.

For further queries about any of the tenders above, please communicate in writing to the Contracts Department by Fax (+974) 4495077 or by e-mail to : contracts@ashghal.gov.qa

& For more information about PWA and its tenders, please visit our website : www.ashghal.gov.qa

Israel pushes plan for East Jerusalem hotel construction

AFP
Jerusalem

Israel has approved a further stage in plans to build 1,100 new hotel rooms in a settlement neighbourhood of annexed East Jerusalem, Israeli officials confirmed yesterday.

The hotel rooms are slated for construction in Givat HaMatos, an as-yet un-built neighbourhood on the southern flank of East Jerusalem, near the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

"The plans were presented to the Jerusalem district planning committee five years ago and approved for deposit then," interior ministry spokeswoman Efrat Orbach told AFP.

"This government insists on continuing settlement activity and destroying any prospect of reviving a serious and real peace process between the Israeli and Palestinian people," Orbach said.

"The publication of the deposit was done now by the project initiator, the Israel Land Authority. The current stage includes advertising in newspapers and affording 60 days for objections," she said.

After the 60-day period, the plans must either be approved or rejected by the committee before they can be validated ahead of the tendering process.

Palestinian negotiator



RasGas Company Limited

Notice to Mariners

Ras Gas Company Limited (RasGas) are undertaking Drilling Operations by the offshore Jack up Rig Enso 94 within Qatar's North Field Development:

Planned Location Co-ordinates

Drilling Rig (Enso 94) Barzan WHP-3 Co-ordinates:

Latitude : 26 Degrees 22 Minutes 18.14 Seconds North
Longitude : 051 Degrees 56 Minutes 25.28 Seconds East

UTM: 593,815.69m East Clarke 1880 spheroid, RGS (Qatar) 2,916,954.04m North Projection: UTM Zone 39 N; Central Meridian: 51° E

Approximate Mobilization date: 30 - April-2012

Approximate project duration: 300 days

RasGas advises all fishermen and mariners to be mindful of this operation and to avoid interfering with installation activities. RasGas assumes no responsibility for any associated damage or loss following this advertisement.



A handout picture released by the Syrian opposition's Shaam News Network shows people lifting the coffins of Ahmed Msalmeh and Mohamed al-Najjar during their funeral in Daraa yesterday.

30 dead in Syria after new UN ceasefire call

Despite an appeal by UN chief Ban Ki-moon, human rights monitors report no let-up in the violence

AFP
Damascus

Ten civilians killed by regime mortar fire and 12 troops slain in clashes with rebels were among 30 dead in Syria yesterday just hours after a new UN call for all sides to respect a troubled truce.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon said it was vital that government and opposition alike co-operate fully with a hard-won UN observer force as it fans out in its mission to shore up the ceasefire agreement that took effect on April 12.

And UN peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous went a step farther, accusing both sides of violating the putative truce.

Despite Ban's appeal, human rights monitors reported no let-up in the violence, a day after a series of blasts condemned by Ban as "terrorist bomb attacks" killed more than 20 people in the northwestern city of Idlib.

Nine members of a single family were among the 10 killed in regime bombardment of a village in Idlib province, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

A mortar round slammed into their home in Mashmashan village near the town of Jisr Al Shughur, the watchdog said, adding that four women and two children were among the dead.

Elsewhere in the same province, random gunfire killed a 13-year-old boy in the town of Maaret Al Nu'man.

In Deir Al Zor province in the northeast, 12 soldiers were killed in clashes with rebel fighters, said the watchdog.

In other incidents around the country, another seven people died.

Ban called on all sides to work with the UN observer mission as it expands from 30 now to a promised full complement of 300 in the coming days and weeks.

"While noting improvements in areas where UN monitors are deployed, the secretary general remains gravely concerned by reports of continued violence, killing and abuses in Syria in recent days," a statement said.

He called "for armed violence in all its forms by all parties to cease immediately and full co-operation of all parties with the work of UN Supervision Mission in Syria as it expands its presence on the ground."

For his part, UN peacekeeping chief Ladsous said Syrian troops have kept heavy weapons in cities, and that both the government and rebels have violated the truce.

He also said UN members have so far only offered 150 monitors for the 300-strong force and that Syria had refused visas for three proposed monitors.

"Regarding the heavy weapons, yes, our military observers do see a

number of APCs (armoured personnel carriers), for instance; they see a number of Howitzers and other military equipment in most places where they are," he said.

Syria has told the monitors that the armoured carriers have been disarmed but this has not been verified, Ladsous added.

Ladsous, a UN undersecretary general, also said government forces and opposition groups have broken the truce.

"The important fact is that violations do come from both sides," he said while refusing to say whether one side had committed more breaches.

"All the parties need to take further steps to ensure cessation of violence in all its forms," he said.

At the moment, two observers are deployed in Idlib city, a province bordering Turkey where rebel fighters of the Free Syrian Army have been active. There are none in Deir Al Zor.

Two observers have been deployed in three other protest centres—the flashpoint central cities of Hama and Homs, and Daraa prov-

ince, south of Damascus and cradle of the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's regime that broke out in March last year.

The other 22 remain based in the capital.

In Monday's violence, bombings rocked Idlib city and the Damascus suburbs, with the deadliest hitting security buildings in Idlib.

The official Sana news agency said "terrorists" were behind the attacks by "suicide bombers".

But the opposition Syrian National Council again accused the authorities of orchestrating the violence.

Meanwhile, an Islamist group that has claimed several bomb attacks in Syria said it was responsible for a blast in Damascus last week that targeted security forces and an Iranian cultural centre and wounded three people.

The Al Nusra front said one of its members had attached an explosive device to an army vehicle and that it detonated at the cultural centre in Marjeh Square, "hitting two targets in the process."

US targets foreign evaders of sanctions

The Obama administration announced yesterday that it will target foreigners who help Iran and Syria evade US sanctions and bar them from access to the US banking system.

The latest tightening of existing sanctions, announced in the form of a White House executive order giving the Treasury Department expanded authority, aims to stop foreign firms from completing banned transactions with Syria or Iran.

"Whoever tries to evade our sanctions does so at the expense of the people of Syria and Iran and they will be held accountable," said David Cohen, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence.

At a later briefing, a senior Treasury official who spoke on condition of anonymity said sanctions intended to halt Iran's nuclear programme and stop Syrian government aggression against its own citizens were working but were leading to new efforts by Tehran and Damascus to circumvent them.

"Both countries are seeking to use non-bank financial institutions—money service businesses, currency exchanges, trading companies and other entities to facilitate payments and transmit funds," the official said.

No specific foreigner or foreign-owned entity was named yesterday as a violator.

The Treasury official said the department would use the new authority

to "continue the steady, methodical and unflinching application of our sanctions programmes against Iran and Syria."

Pressed to explain how the new powers differ from existing sanctions rules, the official said Treasury will have "a more nimble and agile ability to go after persons who may be evading our sanctions". The department would be able to target foreigners who it now has problems prosecuting because they are not based in the US.

"It is only focused on foreign persons and entities," the official said, adding US citizens would be prohibited from any dealing with such foreign entities.

Voter registration



A woman marks a voter registration form with her fingerprint as she registers to vote in Libya's upcoming elections at a registration centre set up in a school in Tripoli yesterday. Registration for voters began yesterday as Libya prepares to hold its first free polls for a national assembly in June.

Egypt politicians differ on cabinet reshuffle prospect

AFP
Cairo

Politicians in Egypt offered conflicting views yesterday about whether the ruling military will reshuffle the cabinet before presidential elections due next month.

The Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been pressing the military junta to sack Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri's government and task it with forming a new cabinet.

On Sunday, the Brotherhood said Supreme Council of the Armed Forces chief Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi had promised parliament speaker Saad al-Katatni that he would carry out an imminent reshuffle.

And the Islamist-dominated parliament decided to suspend its sessions until May 6 in protest at the military's refusal to sack the government. But yesterday, senior Brotherhood

official Essam al-Erian said "there is nothing new; we are still waiting. The ball is in their court."

Erian said Katatni had received a call from a member of Egypt's ruling military council, saying the reshuffle was expected.

And Al Gomhuria, a state-run daily, said a reshuffle would occur, but only in a few ministries, including the foreign affairs portfolio.

But two ministers said there was no plan for a reshuffle.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Mohamed Attiya was quoted by flagship state-run daily Al Ahram as saying "the government of Kamal Ganzouri will remain in place until late June".

And Minister for Planning and International Co-operation Fayza Abul Naga was quoted by independent daily Al Shurq as saying "to my knowledge, there is no cabinet reshuffle. And if it does happen, the prime minister will announce it himself."

Death of Gaddafi oil boss in Vienna raises suspicions

Friends of Shukri Ghanem, whose body was found floating in the Danube River, doubt the official account of his death

Reuters
Vienna/London

The mysterious drowning of Muammar Gaddafi's former oil boss in Vienna has shaken friends and colleagues, who say they suspect enemies may have hunted down and killed the man who knew more than anyone else about the Libyan dictator's billions.

The body of Shukri Ghanem, who served for a time as Gaddafi's prime minister and ran the Libyan oil industry for years, was found floating in the Danube River on Sunday morning a few hundred metres from his home, fully clothed.

According to police he drowned, possibly having fallen into a heart attack while on an early morning walk. Preliminary autopsy reports show no sign of foul play.

Friends say he did not know how to swim, and they had warned him to be careful of enemies in his Austrian exile.

Ghanem, 69, was one of the most powerful men in Gaddafi's Libya—effectively controlling the purse strings of the government and the Gaddafi family—until he defected to the opposition in May last year as rebels bore down on Tripoli.

His decision to switch sides was a turning point in the uprising that eventually drove Gaddafi from power. The former Libyan leader was eventually caught by rebels and lynched.

Ghanem moved to a comfortable exile in Vienna, headquarters of Opec, where two daughters live with their families. He was still closely associated with Gaddafi's rule by Libya's new leaders and had ruled out returning home.

He would have had enemies among Gaddafi's opponents because of his years at the centre of power, as well as among the late leader's friends and kin because of his decision to defect.

"Given where he was, yes I think I would be worried. Without any doubt, I would have been very worried. In

fact I think he said at times he felt he was being followed. But that might have been his imagination, who knows," said the former Opec minister, who asked not to be identified.

"Friends doubted the official account of his death. 'I thought that was ridiculous. You don't go down to the Danube, have a heart attack and fall into the river,'" said a former oil minister of another Opec country who had remained a close friend of Ghanem.

His body was found at 8.40am, floating near a promenade on the Danube, an area lined with bars and restaurants, where Viennese gather in the summer to sunbathe and drink beer. Police say he had been in the water a few hours, since about dawn.

There is no rail along the water's edge, and it was not the first time a dead body had been found floating there. "We didn't know who it was. We thought it could have been someone who had too much to drink and fell into the water: that happened a few years ago," said Moussa Remebetiko, who has run a Greek restaurant there for 14 years.

Friends say he did not know how to swim, and they had warned him to be careful of enemies in his Austrian exile.

"The one who pushed him knows that he cannot swim."

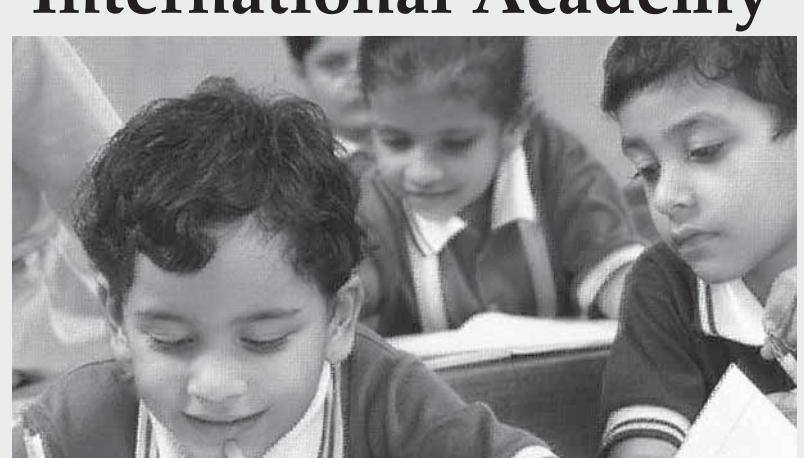
There were suggestions that Ghanem had health problems.

Nihal Goonewardene, a Washington-based friend of Ghanem's since graduate school in Boston, said Ghanem had told a houseguest on Saturday evening that he was not feeling well and left early on Sunday for a walk from which he did not return.

A few days before, he had told a friend that he had recently had a series of medical tests and was concerned about getting bad results, Goonewardene said.

For now, the family has said little in public. Ghanem's nephew, Loayi Ghanem, said an autopsy would be carried out today and the family hoped to bring the body back to Libya tomorrow. A man who answered the telephone at Ghanem's home said the family did not wish to speak about the incident.

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JUSTICE

Judge rejects immunity for Strauss-Kahn in civil suit

A New York judge rejected former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn's claim of diplomatic immunity yesterday, ruling a lawsuit filed by the hotel maid who accused him of sexual assault can move forward. Bronx Supreme Court Justice Douglas McKeon's decision ensures accuser Nafissatou Diallo can continue to press claims for monetary damages and prevents Strauss-Kahn from putting the May 14 incident fully behind him, even as he attempts to relaunch his career by giving speeches on the world conference circuit. Diallo, a maid at the Sofitel Hotel in midtown Manhattan, accused Strauss-Kahn of sexual assault in his luxury suite.

EXONERATED

Wrongly convicted man set free after 16 years

A Colorado man wrongly convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the rape and murder of a woman found strangled with a dog leash was exonerated on the basis of new DNA evidence and set free on Monday after spending more than 16 years behind bars. Robert "Rider" Dewey walked out of a courthouse in Grand Junction, Colorado, a free man after a judge found him innocent of the 1994 killing and said his exoneration marked a "historic day" for the state. "Mr. Dewey spent 6,219 days of his life incarcerated for a crime he did not do," Mesa County District Judge Brian Flynn said.

HEALTH

Chavez back in Cuba for cancer treatment

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was greeted by Cuban President Raoul Castro as he arrived yesterday on the island nation for his 11th round of cancer treatments since June. Chavez said his radiation therapy is in the end phase. He first underwent surgery in Cuba in June for a condition that was initially termed a "pelvic abscess." Chavez later conceded he had a tumour removed. He initially declared himself cured, but then returned to Cuba in February to have surgery for another cancerous tumour. He has received chemotherapy. He has yet to publicly declare what kind of cancer he has or what kind of prognosis he has been given.

MEDIA

One in seven American newspapers now digital

Nearly one in seven newspapers read in the US is now a digital one. The Audit Bureau of Circulations said that in the six months to March 31, some 14.2% of newspapers were read as digital editions, including smartphone and tablet computer versions. That marked a huge leap from a year ago when 8.66% were digital editions. The figures offer the first year-over-year comparison of newspaper circulation using a new system that aims to more accurately measure digital readership. Under this system, the *New York Times* showed a 73% surge in circulation to 1.58mn, with digital readership of 807,026 overtaking print circulation of 779,731.

ENTERTAINMENT

Irish love story Once leads with 11 Tony nominations

The Broadway musical version of the Irish love story *Once* about a Dublin busker and Czech piano player who share a passion for music and an impossible attraction to each other gained the highest number of Tony Award nominations announced yesterday. The intimate stage musical, adapted from the hit 2006 indie Irish film and featuring the Oscar-winning song, "Falling Slowly," gained 11 nominations, including nods for its main stars, Steve Kazee and Cristin Milioti. *Once*, was followed closely by musicals *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, a reinvention of the 1935 opera and *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Both of those shows gained 10 nominations.

Five held in plot to blow up bridge in Cleveland

Men arrested as part of undercover sting operation; no ties seen to foreign militants, bin Laden anniversary

Reuters
Washington

US authorities arrested five self-described anarchists in the Cleveland area for allegedly plotting to blow up a four-lane highway bridge over a national park, but had no ties to foreign terrorism, the US Justice Department said yesterday.

The group, ranging in ages from 20 to 37, were arrested overnight by the FBI after planting the explosives on the bridge. Three have been charged already with conspiracy and attempting to use explosive materials and the other two were expected to be charged later yesterday.

The FBI said the five arrested, identified as Douglas Wright, Brandon Baxter, Anthony Hayne, Connor Stevens and Joshua Stafford, were under continuous watch as part of an undercover operation and therefore the public was never in danger. The explosives, supplied by an undercover FBI agent, were inert.

"I want to stress ... at no time during this investigation was the public in danger," FBI agent Stephen Anthony told reporters in Cleveland. The bridge is about 15 miles south of Cleveland in an area popular with hikers and joggers.

The group initially came under scrutiny by authorities in October 2011 when the FBI learned that some self-described anarchists planned to attend a protest in Cleveland, according to an FBI affidavit unsealed yesterday.

An FBI informant saw four of the men going through the crowd expressing displeasure at demonstrators' unwillingness to engage in violent acts. The men wore masks and carried walkie-talkies, but he continued with the court.

At one point, Wright expressed concern that the undercover FBI agent who sold them what they believed was powerful C-4 explosives for \$900 was a police officer, but he continued with the court.

The group had no ties to foreign terror organisations and the plot was not connected to the anniversary of the death of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was killed in a raid by US forces a year ago in Pakistan, said a US Justice Department official who declined to be further identified.

The men were expected to appear in federal court in Cleveland yesterday.

The undercover operation is the latest of a number of sting operations undertaken by the FBI and Justice Department in an effort to thwart attacks by domestic and foreign militants.

Late last month, the group



This combination of handout booking photos provided by the FBI shows (left to right): Connor Stevens, Brandon Baxter, Douglas Wright, Anthony Hayne and Joshua Stafford. The five self-described anarchists were arrested in a plot to blow up an Ohio bridge but the public was never in any danger.

Obama politicising bin Laden killing: Romney

Reuters
New York

Republican Mitt Romney accused President Barack Obama of politicising the killing of Osama bin Laden as the first anniversary of the daring raid dominated US presidential politics.

Obama, a Democrat, has touted the death of the Al Qaeda leader as a crowning achievement of his national security policy and his campaign has tried to raise doubts about whether Romney would have made the same gutsy decision to send an elite special forces team into Pakistan to kill bin Laden.

Romney was in New York to mark the bin Laden anniversary by reminding Americans of its connection to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that killed 3,000 people and triggered the US war in Afghanistan. He was to appear with then-New York Mayor

Rudy Giuliani at a New York fire station.

"I congratulated the president and the intelligence community, as well as SEAL Team 6 ... So I acknowledged the success and think he has every right to take credit for commanding that attack," Romney told CBS' *This Morning*.

At the same time, said Romney, "I think it was very disappointing for the president to make this a political item by suggesting that I wouldn't have ordered such a raid. Of course I would have. Any American, any thinking American, would have ordered exactly the same thing."

Obama backers were quick to point to remarks Romney made in his 2008 race for president when then-candidate Obama said he would go after "high-value terrorist targets" within Pakistan with or without the approval of Pakistan's president, Romney said he did not agree.

"I do not concur in the words

of Barack Obama in a plan to enter an ally of ours. ... I don't think those kinds of comments help in this effort to draw more friends to our effort," Romney told reporters on the campaign trail in August 2007.

Romney said at the time that US troops "shouldn't be sent all over the world." He called Obama's comments "ill-timed" and "ill-considered."

Romney has come under heavy criticism from the Obama campaign since becoming the presumptive Republican presidential nominee last month.

Both sides are engaging in brutal campaign tactics to try to get a leg up on the other in a race that is already extremely close and figures to be for the next six months until the Nov. 6 election, when voters will decide whether to give Obama a second term or install Romney as the new leader.

The Obama campaign opened a new front against the former Massachusetts governor and the party's presumptive nominee, but said that "all of us

Gingrich suspending presidential campaign

White House hopeful Newt Gingrich bade farewell to the 2012 presidential campaign yesterday, using a video posted on his website to pre-empt an official announcement set for today.

In his message to supporters, the former speaker of the House of Representatives said he wanted to "give you an insider advanced notice that today I'll be officially suspending the campaign as part of a press event" in Virginia.

"We're still faced with a tremendous crisis of our country's future," he added. "A re-election of Barack Obama would be a genuine disaster." Gingrich, 68, did not mention by name his Republican rival Mitt Romney, a former Massachusetts governor and the party's presumptive nominee, but said that "all of us

have an obligation, I think, to do everything we can to defeat Barack Obama" in November. Gingrich's spokesman acknowledged last week that the writing was on the wall for the embattled candidate after Romney swept all five of the state contests that were held on April 24.

With Republicans rallying behind Romney, the "super" political action committee aligned with his campaign has scrubbed the many negative ads that attacked rivals Gingrich and Rick Santorum, the former Pennsylvania senator who bowed out last month.

The group Restore Our Future, which backs Romney, yesterday had just two ads on its YouTube feed, both pro-Romney videos.

television ad to run in the battleground states of Virginia, Ohio and Iowa.

It accuses Romney, a former private equity executive, of backing policies that would lead to the outsourcing of American jobs overseas.

"As a corporate CEO, he shipped American jobs to places like Mexico and China," the ad's voiceover says.

In response, the Romney campaign accused Obama of seeking to take attention away from his handling of the US economy, still struggling with 8.2% unemployment.

"With the worst job creation record in modern history and the slowest economic recovery since the Great Depression, President Obama is trying to distract Americans from the real issues with a series of sideshows," said Romney spokeswoman

Amanda Henneberg. The Obama campaign is seeking to raise doubts about how Romney would deal with the US economy, faced with polls showing Americans believe Romney would handle economic affairs better than the president.

Where Romney lags Obama is on personal likability, a point that his wife, Ann Romney, attempted to address in the CBS interview.

"He's funny," she said. "I still look at him as this, this is the boy that I met, in high school, when he was pulling all the jokes, and really just being crazy. Pretty crazy. So there's a wild and crazy man inside of him ... just waiting to come out," Ann Romney said.

Romney, seeking to bolster ties among conservatives who were suspicious of him throughout a long primary battle, is to meet with his last major conservative challenger, Rick Santorum, on Friday but an endorsement is not expected.



Occupy Wall Street participants gather to stage a May Day demonstration march at Bryant Park in New York yesterday.

Occupy protesters take to streets of New York

AFP
New York

Occupy Wall Street protesters took to New York's streets yesterday in the highlight of a plan to mount a "general strike" across the US.

Small groups of protesters held simultaneous demonstrations outside a string of Manhattan corporate institutions including the Time-Life building and McGraw Hill publishers in the Rockefeller Center neighbourhood.

Others were targeting Bank of America and HSBC branches, others Disney and *The New York Times*. "Prosecute the fraud" and "Jobs now" read two protest placards.

Protests appeared to be peaceful and AFP reporters witnessed only five arrests during early events. This was in contrast to previous Occupy marches that have typically ended in scuffles with the police.

The feeling within Occupy Wall Street is that people that created the collapse, namely bankers, were helped out, and the people affected by it like homeowners who got foreclosed upon... weren't helped."

Similar protests were announced across dozens of US localities and in countries ranging from Spain to Australia.

"While American corporate media has focused on yet another stale election between Wall Street-financed candidates, Occupy has been organising something extraordinary: the first truly nationwide General Strike in US history," the OWS movement said on its website occupywallst.org.

The day of action comes against the background of a rancorous presidential election campaign, but also tests the Occupy movement's ability to regain its flagging influence.

OWS appeared in New York for the first time last September, with activists taking over a square near Wall Street to protest against government bank bailouts, corporate salaries, and what they said was a hopeless economic landscape for ordinary people.

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However, after police across America ejected OWS protesters from public squares two

months later, the movement struggled to stay in the lime-light and to back up its claim to represent the mainstream public, or the so-called 99%.

In San Francisco, Occupy members cancelled a protest on the famed Golden Gate Bridge, an important transport link, but were targeting ferry services.

In Los Angeles, demonstrators were planning a co-ordinated "slow, city-paralysing, carnival-esque descent into the center of the city." Four separate groups of cars and bicycles were planning to converge from different directions to "light society's ills," the LA website said.

In Seattle, Occupy announced large-scale plans "to halt the flow of capital, reclaim a tool of resistance, and unify movements against exploitation, repression, and corruption."

The "general strike" would target "exploitation, repression, and corruption" according to the statement.



ENTERTAINMENT



Opera singer Mary Plazas poses with butterflies inside the Butterfly House at the Butterfly World Project in St Albans, on the outskirts of London yesterday. Plazas will play Madam Butterfly in Anthony Minghella's production of Puccini's tragic love story which opens at the London Coliseum on May 8.

PEOPLE

Iron Maiden singer pledges 1,000 new jobs to Wales

The lead singer of heavy metal rock band Iron Maiden, Bruce Dickinson, yesterday announced plans to open an aviation centre in south Wales that will bring up to 1,000 new jobs to the area. Dickinson, who has sold more than 85mn records worldwide, is also a commercial airline pilot and aviation entrepreneur. The singer said that his new company Cardiff Aviation will aim to provide specialist aviation support services which includes training and aircraft maintenance to clients such as Boeing. "We'd expect to create up to a thousand jobs within 18 months, based on the level of interest and commitment from aircraft manufacturers and operators," Dickinson said.

INVESTIGATION

Nine new arrests after rape victim named

Nine more people have been arrested as part of an investigation into the naming on Twitter of footballer Ched Evans' rape victim. Welsh police took three men and three women into custody after carrying out early morning raids yesterday in the Rhyl, Prestatyn, and Llandudno areas of North Wales. Later another woman was arrested at Broughton, Flintshire, and a man was seized at Colwyn Bay. A fifth man was also arrested at Abergavenny. North Wales Police detective sergeant Bob Halford said: "We continue to be proactive in this investigation and anticipate that further arrests will be made in the near future." The three men arrested in South Yorkshire last week are on police bail.

ABUSE

Woman admits to racist rant on Tube

A female London Underground passenger has admitted hurling racist abuse at fellow passengers after a video of her appeared on the Internet. Jacqueline Woodhouse, 42, directed an expletive-laden rant to passengers on the Central Line between St Paul's and Mile End stations on January 23. Police launched an investigation after a seven minute long video of the verbal assault was uploaded to YouTube, where it has since been viewed more than 200,000 times. At Westminster Magistrates' Court, Woodhouse of Romford, Essex, admitted causing harassment. The video clip begins with Woodhouse shouting and swearing in a thick Essex accent about "foreigners".

INFRASTRUCTURE

Minister approves £100mn road route

Work on the new £100mn dual carriageway between Larne and Belfast will begin next month after the roads minister approved a route. The nine-mile stretch of the A8 rubber stamped by Danny Kennedy will bypass the village of Ballymena. The improved link between the M2 motorway and the busy freight port will also skirt around the townland of Bruslee. The scheme will see the A8 upgraded from the Coleman's Corner roundabout near Ballyclare to just outside Larne. It will connect the parts of the A8 that are already dual carriage. Kennedy made his decision after considering a roads inspector's report on a proposed route and comes after a public inquiry on the plan.

Scanner to detect cancer in seconds tested

London Evening Standard
London

A new scanner which gives an instant diagnosis for life-threatening skin cancer is being tested at a London hospital.

Guy's and St Thomas' is the first hospital in Britain to introduce the test, which could save hundreds of lives. The £180,000 scanner works like a giant magnifying glass to detect cancer cells, making it easier to stop the spread of melanoma.

It also produces incredibly detailed images that reduce the need for biopsies which can leave patients with scars. Until now, patients with suspected melanoma had to have a small sample of skin removed and examined under a microscope.

In addition to possible scarring, patients also had to endure a wait of up to three weeks to discover if they had the life-threatening disease.

The number of British cases of skin cancer has more than quadrupled in the last 30 years, with melanoma the most deadly type, killing about 2,000 people here every year. The disease can start in existing moles and doctors warn that early detection is vital.

The new scanner, called a Vivoscope, is non-invasive and gives instant results.

Resembling an ultrasound machine, it works by producing instant images of skin layers up to a depth of two millimetres, using a high-powered but harmless laser.

The dermatologist places a small pad on the mole or affected area of skin. The laser is directed at the area and sends back scans which highlight any abnormal cells.

Emma Craythorne, the expert evaluating the scanner, said that the new test would reduce precautionary biopsies and provide an on-the-spot diagnosis.

The dermatologist said: "The majority of melanomas are thin because they are detected early, but we have a lot of people who are worried about any changes which causes them anxiety."

May Day protest



People stage a demonstration in Trafalgar Square in London yesterday. Students, trade unionists, pensioners and activists from the anti-capitalist 'Occupy' movement marched through the centre of London before congregating and staging a demonstration in Trafalgar Square to mark May Day.

Murdoch unfit to run company, say lawmakers

AFP
London

News Corporation chief Rupert Murdoch showed "wilful blindness" over the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal and is not fit to lead a major company, lawmakers said in a scathing report yesterday.

The parliament's influential culture committee said Murdoch's British newspaper division News International had misled lawmakers, adding that the 81-year-old tycoon and his son James should take corporate responsibility.

But the committee itself was divided, with four members from Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives refusing to approve the long-awaited report against six members from other parties who backed the findings.

"Rupert Murdoch is not a fit person to exercise the stewardship of a major international company," said the report, the result of hearings that started shortly after the *News of the World* shut last July.

"News International and its parent News Corporation exhibited wilful blindness, for which the companies' directors - including Rupert Murdoch and James Murdoch - should ultimately be prepared to take responsibility."

The report singled out three ex-Murdoch aides - former News International executive chairman Les Hinton, the *News of the World*'s final editor Colm Myler and legal manager Tom Crone - for deliberately misleading parliament.

The cross-party panel said it

was now for the House of Commons to decide on a punishment for those it thinks have treated the committee with contempt.

Broadcasting regulators said meanwhile they would consider the report as part of its probe into whether pay-TV giant BSkyB, which is part-owned by News Corporation, is still fit to hold a licence in Britain.

News Corporation said it was "carefully reviewing" the report and would "respond shortly".

"The company fully acknowledges significant wrongdoing at *News of the World* and apologises to everyone whose privacy was invaded," it said in a statement.

Hinton, who resigned as head of News Corporation's Dow Jones unit last year, said the committee's findings were "unfounded, unfair and erroneous", while Myler, who is now editor of the *New York Daily News*, said he stood by his testimony.

Murdoch shut the *News of the World* in July 2011 as the phone-hacking scandal exploded with revelations that the tabloid had accessed the voice-mails of a murdered schoolgirl. Rupert and James, 39 - who quit as executive chairman of News International in February - both gave evidence to the committee on July 19.

The 121-page report released yesterday accused News International of instinctively trying to

"cover up rather than seek out wrongdoing and discipline the perpetrators".

"Corporately, the *News of the World* and News International misled the committee about the true nature and extent of the internal investigations they professed to have carried out in relation to phone hacking," it said.

While it did not directly accuse the Murdochs of misleading the committee, it had harsh words for the Australian-born tycoon.

"If at all relevant times Rupert Murdoch did not take steps to become fully informed about phone hacking, he turned a blind eye and exhibited wilful blindness to what was going on in his companies and publications," it said.

Murdoch's empire still comprises *The Sun*, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* newspapers in Britain, and the *Wall Street Journal* and *Fox News* in the US.

The report's effectiveness could however be hampered by the divisions on the committee. Conservative committee member Louise Mensch complained the report was "partisan", adding that she and her party colleagues could not back it as a whole because of the declaration about Murdoch being unfit to run a company. But Labour member and leading Murdoch critic Tom Watson, who was responsible for adding that clause, said it was disappointing there was no unanimous vote.

Police to guard voting booths at Tower Hamlets

London Evening Standard
London

Police officers are to be stationed at every polling station in Tower Hamlets after the Met launched an official investigation into allegations of electoral fraud.

Officers will man all 70 polling locations in the borough tomorrow alongside borough enforcement officers to prevent voter intimidation.

The measures come as the Met launched an investigation into "unprecedented" evidence of voter fraud in the key London borough less than 48 hours before the mayoral polls open.

Police sources yesterday admitted the measures were unusual.

Concerned councillors have called for election security to be tightened to prevent a repeat of alleged irregularities said to have contributed to the shock by-election defeat of a Labour candidate in a previously safe seat earlier this month.

The Met said it would investigate claims the poll in the Banglatown and Spitalfields ward had been rigged - giving victory to Gulam Robbani, an independent candidate backed by the borough's mayor Lutfur Rahman. He won by just 43 votes.

"The mayoral election could be close. The issue of postal vote fraud and intimidation could be make-or-break"

One-in-seven of the postal votes cast in the by-election was rejected.

The Met investigation comes 24 hours after local government minister Grant Shapps launched an attack on the Electoral Commission, saying: "We cannot afford to be complacent."

Councillor Peter Golds, the borough's Tory leader, said: "The mayoral election could be close. The issue of postal vote fraud and intimidation could be make-or-break."

He added: "These allegations

have flown around Tower Hamlets for many years yet previous police inquiries have amounted to little more than perfunctory checks before saying everything is okay. At last it feels like we might be getting somewhere."

Joshua Peck, leader of the council's Labour group, said: "The issue goes deeper than that - having a police officer at a polling station is not going to prevent some of the things that have been going on - about whether people are legitimately on the register."

The police investigation comes after the borough's returning officer ordered a probe following a dramatic rise in postal votes at some addresses in the borough.

Residents in the Spitalfields ward of Tower Hamlets said campaigners had been knocking on doors and collecting ballot papers, offering to post the votes on their behalf.

There are also allegations of apparent "ghost voting", with as many as eight voters - all with postal votes - registered in some flats.

He added: "These allegations

Perfume launch



American model/ burlesque artiste Dita Von Teese attends a photo call for her inaugural fragrance "Dita Von Teese" at Liberty's in London yesterday.

Hosepipe ban to stay despite deluge

London Evening Standard
London

Thames Water launched a campaign yesterday to convince sceptical Londoners that the drought is far from over despite a month of deluges.

Tube adverts show torrential rain falling onto a parched riverbed and urge people to keep using water "wisely".

They aim to address growing scepticism about the need for a hosepipe ban after the capital endured one of the wettest Aprils on record, with almost an inch of rain falling last night.

They read: "One wet month versus two dry years. We need many wet months to make up the shortfall of the driest two years since records began. Come rain or shine, please use water wisely!"

Richard Aylard, Thames Water's director of sustainability, said: "We can understand why some people are puzzled to see a bus with 'We are in drought' across its flanks with monsoon

like rain cascading."

But he added: "The recent rain is a temporary and welcome boost for the environment and wildlife, not a long-term fix for water supply... it is likely that the current temporary hosepipe ban will need to remain in place for the rest of the year."

Londoners were warned to expect a month of rain, although sunshine is expected today.

The second half of May will be dominated by "showers or longer spells of rain," the Met Office predicted. The Environment Agency said boats should not venture on the Thames upstream of Teddington because "strong flows make it difficult and dangerous".

The floods claimed their first fatality on Monday when a 52-year-old man from Middlesex was swept away as he tried to drive through the swollen River Enborne at Headley Ford near Newbury. His 54-year-old wife escaped. Flood alerts have been issued along much of the Thames flowing towards London, as far as Shepperton and Molesey, near Hampton Court.



LAW AND ORDER

Pair arrested over body on royal estate

The police have arrested two men on suspicion of murdering a Latvian teenager whose remains were found at Queen Elizabeth II's Sandringham estate. A dog walker found the body of 17-year-old Alisa Dmitrijeva in woods on the estate in Norfolk, eastern England, on January 1. Her remains were found just one mile from the main gate of Sandringham House, the royal residence on the 19,770-acre estate. Dmitrijeva, who had been living in the town of Wisbech, was reported missing on September 6 last year. Norfolk Constabulary said the two men, who are aged 28 and 31 and from the Wisbech area, were being questioned at a police station in nearby King's Lynn.

EDUCATION

Best teachers deserve extra pay, say MPs

The best teachers should be rewarded with higher pay than their colleagues under new proposals from MPs. A report by the Commons education select committee says evidence shows that very good teachers boost grades and make a significant difference to their pupils' future earnings. It calls for the department for education to develop plans for a pay system that rewards teachers who add the greatest value to pupil performance. Christina Blower, general secretary of the NUT, said: "Performance-related pay is not only inappropriate but also divisive. Children and young people differ and class intakes differ, making it impossible to measure progress in simplistic terms."

CHALLENGE

Blind adventurer to take on English Channel swim

A 43-year-old blind Scottish adventurer is determined to complete his 101st extreme challenge this year by swimming the English Channel. Dean Dunbar is training to swim the English Channel to raise money for soldiers, sailors, airmen and Families Association and the Perth & Kinross Society for the Blind. His death-defying activities include jumping off cliffs, riding on the wings of a plane, waterfall climbing and even mountain biking. *The Sun* reported, adding that he was the first registered blind person in the world to bungee jump from a helicopter and be thrown from a human catapult.

ENTERTAINMENT

Duran Duran to headline London Olympics concert

Duran Duran will headline a concert in London's Hyde Park to coincide with the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games, organisers announced yesterday. The 1980s rockers will represent England at the BT London Live concert on July 27, sharing a stage with Welsh band Stereophonics, Northern Ireland's Snow Patrol and Scottish singer Paolo Nutini. Concertgoers will be able to watch the opening ceremony live on giant screens. Organisers said the performances would be timed so the audience at the concert will be able to watch TV coverage of the opening ceremony from the Olympic Park.

CRIME

Court clerk sentenced for watching porn during trial

A 54-year-old court clerk was caught watching porn by a judge during a rape trial. The man said he did so as the case was "boring". Debasish Majumder viewed the explicit material while a sex attack victim gave evidence at the Inner London Crown Court, the Daily Mail reported. He will now be supervised for 18 months and ordered to sign the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years. His computer usage will also be monitored. Majumder, a resident of Haringey, had been working for the court service for 27 years. He confessed he routinely watches internet porn when he was bored. The court sentenced Majumder to seven months in prison, suspended for two years.

Police hold seven over 'terrorism financing'

Reuters
London

Police yesterday said they had arrested seven people on suspicion of financing terrorism overseas and money laundering through the illegal export of the narcotic qat to North America.

Six men and one woman were held in early morning raids in London, the Welsh capital Cardiff and in Coventry in the English midlands, police said.

The raids were part of an investigation run in parallel with the US Homeland Security Investigations directorate into a network suspected of exporting qat to the US and Canada.

"The arrests were a part of a pre-planned, intelligence-led operation into suspected fund-raising for terrorism overseas," the Metropolitan Police said.

"The arrests were a part of a pre-planned, intelligence-led operation into suspected fund-raising for terrorism overseas"

Qat is grown and widely chewed in the Horn of Africa and in Yemen. It is habit-forming and excessive use can cause insomnia, stress, depression and apathy. The plant, whose leaves must be consumed fresh, is legal in Britain but is a controlled substance in the US and Canada.

Police did not disclose the origin of the smuggled qat or where they believed the funding was targeted, but international authorities have previously said profits from the qat trade are used to finance militant groups like al Shabaab in Somalia.

A UN Monitoring Group report last year estimated qat traders using one Mogadishu airfield in an area controlled by al Shabaab would have paid the militant group around \$500,000 in taxes over a 10-month period in 2010.

The police were also searching

seven other residential properties in London, Coventry and Worthing on England's southern coast and business premises in Coventry.

Meanwhile police chief constables claimed that clandestine cannabis factories are booming in Britain, with the police detecting more than 7,800 in the past year - more than double the number found four years ago.

The rise in illicit cannabis production is being fuelled by the increasing involvement of organised crime groups, who see it as a "low-risk and highly profitable criminal business".

But the police also acknowledge that the recession and pressure on household budgets has led to a rise in a "grow your own" trade, with intelligence reports showing an increase in sales of seeds and equipment from local "head shops" to customers wanting to grow a few plants at home for their own use.

The third "problem profile" of UK commercial cultivation of cannabis, published by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo), says police have seized more than 1.9m plants with an estimated street value of £207m in the past two years.

The survey, published every two years, confirms a majority of the cannabis used in Britain is now home-grown rather than imported, with some claiming more than 80% is intensively cultivated domestic herbal cannabis.

But police chiefs say there is a shift away from large-scale cannabis factories in disused industrial and commercial buildings such as empty cinemas, shops and banks back to smaller houses and flats, often on suburban streets.

The organised crime gangs behind the trade in home-grown cannabis are reacting to police crackdowns by moving away from large-scale premises to employing a large number of "gardeners" to operate small-scale "grow sites" or factories across several residential areas.

Site inspection



An army personnel leaves Bow Quarter estate in east London yesterday. Some 700 people living in the area have received leaflets informing them a 'Higher Velocity Missile system' could be placed on their water tower to secure the Olympic Stadium from attacks.

Govt boosts immigration staff after Heathrow row

AFP
London

The government is to move 80 extra staff into border control roles in a bid to ease lengthy queues at Heathrow airport just weeks before the London Olympics, Immigration Minister Damian Green said yesterday.

"As of today, we are instituting some changes," Green said on a visit to the airport to the west of London, where some passengers have been forced in recent days to wait at least 90 minutes to have their passports checked.

"During the course of May

we're employing 80 more people," the minister added. But the 80 staff were existing employees of the Border Force government agency who were being moved to frontline jobs from back office roles and other locations.

A majority of the 80 workers will go to Heathrow, the Home Office said.

The delays at the airport, the world's busiest in terms of international passenger traffic and the main gateway for the Olympics which open on July 27, are proving a major embarrassment for the government.

Frustrated passengers resorted to slow hand-clapping and jeering in queues last week.

Green admitted in parliament on Monday that some passengers from outside the European Union were forced to wait in Heathrow's flagship Terminal 5 on Friday for up to an hour and a half. But the head of British Air-

"During the course of May we're employing 80 more people"

ways' parent company accused the government of misleading the public over queueing times, saying some passengers had been forced to wait at Heathrow for up to two-and-a-half hours.

"The government is misleading people," International Airlines Group chief executive

Willie Walsh said. "We have accurate, detailed information that shows that people queued for up to two hours and 31 minutes on Friday night," he told BBC radio.

Green stood by the estimate of waiting times provided by the Border Force, saying: "The figures are as accurate as can be."

The minister, who blamed the delays on the heavy rain that lashed Britain over the weekend which caused flights to bunch together, said the government would not increase the speed of passport checks at the expense of security.

"Security is the number one priority," he said as he visited Heathrow's Terminal 3 during a

quiet period. "But after that we have to make sure that the personal experience is as smooth as possible."

Speaking earlier on BBC radio, the minister said he could see "why people are annoyed" but said the government was working to improve the situation, including by building a central control room for the Border Force at Heathrow.

The minister added that he believed Heathrow's owner BAA was in talks with airlines for carriers to fund an increase in Border Force staff. London mayor Boris Johnson has led complaints about the queues, saying Monday that they gave "a terrible impression of the UK".

Secret service 'withheld' evidence on spy's death

London Evening Standard
London

The MI6 examined memory sticks owned by "body in the bag" spy Gareth Williams without telling the police, the inquest heard yesterday.

The intelligence service did not even inform the officer in charge of the case that the memory sticks existed until yesterday - 20 months after the death. In a dramatic move as the inquest was about to conclude, the coroner ordered MI6 to send another senior officer to court to be questioned.

A witness, known as SIS D, was summoned to give evidence anonymously. He will be the fourth witness from the intelligence service granted such protection on the grounds of national security.

Westminster coroner Fiona Wilcox also revealed she had only just been informed that a second North Face sports hold-

all had also been found in Williams's office at MI6 headquarters at Vauxhall Cross. Even though the bag was similar to the one his body was found inside, it was not seized by police and no inventory taken of its contents.

"I was not surprised that memory sticks were found but I would have expected the relevant information to be sent to our team"

MI6 made its own inventory of all Williams's belongings in his office but did not pass it to the police until Monday. Mobile phones and laptops found in the code breaker's Pimlico flat were taken by the police.

But police were unaware of the existence of "nine assorted memory sticks" in his locker at his MI6 office.

Detective chief inspector Jackie Sebire, the senior investigating officer, told the court that she had been unaware that any

of Williams's electronic media had been examined before it was passed to the police.

"I was not surprised that memory sticks were found but I would have expected the relevant information to be sent to our team," she said.

She agreed that she should have been informed about the memory sticks back in August 2010, when Williams died. The second holdall has now been requested by the police and will be produced in court.

Detective Colin Hall told the court he had been taken to Williams's office by his superintendent Michael Broster, and two MI6 officers. He said that it was Broster who told him not to take the bag found under Williams's desk but to search it and then leave it. Asked by the coroner if he did not think such a bag was relevant, he replied: "He was a superintendent and I'm a detective and I do what I'm told." The inquest continues.



Queen Elizabeth approaches women holding Corgi dogs as she attends the Mad Hatter's Tea Party at Sherborne Abbey in Sherborne, Dorset yesterday. The Queen and Prince Philip are on a tour of south-west England.

Queen 'knights' Bond in film for Olympics

London Evening Standard
London

After more than 50 years on Her Majesty's Secret Service, the MI6 agent with a licence to kill may finally get a knighthood. Buckingham Palace sources have told the Londoner that James Bond, played by Daniel Craig, has secretly received the sword's tap on his shoulder from the Queen.

The actor, who has been shooting new Bond movie *Skyfall*, was seen at the Palace with a film crew last month.

"Daniel Craig was here in black tie one morning in early April," says a source. "Judi Dench (who plays M, the head of MI6) was also here, and the talk of the palace was that Bond was going to be knighted that morning."

It is believed that the Queen bestowed the honour as part of a film for the opening ceremony of the Olympics. The event's artistic director, Danny Boyle, has been filming at the Palace. There has been speculation that, as part of the film, the Queen gives Bond

a mission to open the Games and that he will be parachuted into the Stratford stadium.

A knighthood for the agent is long overdue. "Bond did sterling work for Queen and country and deserves a gong," says Ian Fleming's biographer Andrew Lycett. "The first Bond book Casino Royale came out in 1953, Coronation Year, so the Queen has something to celebrate. James Bond receives an obituary in *The Times* in *You Only Live Twice* in which he is described as Commander James Bond CMG. Reports of his death later prove to be an exaggeration and he is brought back to life for later instalments."

Craig has deflected enquiries about his mission. "According to the papers, I've got an invitation, I've been, had tea, sat out with the corgis," he told LBC. "It's all a bit of... I'm just a bit nonplussed about the whole thing."

A spokesman for the palace said it was involved in "a number of filming projects during this special Jubilee year and we would not go into details of a specific project until nearer the time of transmission".



TURKEY

New constitution to be drafted

The Turkish parliament will start drafting a new constitution aimed at guaranteeing more rights to minorities, especially Kurds, a parliamentary source said yesterday. The new text would replace a constitution drawn up by the military after the 1980 coup. "The consultations with the political groups and civil society are over and the writing of the text will begin in the days to come," the source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. The draft text will then be presented and put to vote in parliament. It would also have to be approved in a referendum. The outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party or PKK, listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and by much of the world community, took up arms in Kurdish-majority southeastern Turkey in 1984, sparking a conflict that has claimed some 45,000 lives.

ITALY

Population 59mn due to migrants

Italy's population has reached 59.4mn, an increase of 4.3% since 2001 due largely to the number of migrants in the country which has almost tripled over the last decade, a census published Friday showed. Migrants living in Italy currently number 3.7mn compared to the 1.3mn that resided in the country in 2001 when the previous census was held, Italy's national statistics office ISTAT said. In 2001 there were 23.4 migrants among every 1,000 residents, while the figure has now reached 63.4, ISTAT said. Rome remains Italy's largest city with 2.6mn inhabitants. The country's tiniest municipality in terms of population is Pedesina, a town in the northern Lombardy region with a population of 30.

ESTONIA

President shuns Ukraine summit

Estonian President Toomas-Hendrik Ilves is among European leaders who will not attend a Yalta summit in mid-May, his office said yesterday, citing a busy schedule as a reason. "Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has got an invitation to attend the summit of East and Central Europe states in Ukraine but President Ilves cannot attend because he will attend the Lennart Meri conference held at the same time in Tallinn," the office told Estonian media. Ukraine faces growing isolation as several EU presidents and the EU chief have voiced plans to miss the Yalta summit and the Euro 2012 football tournament over its treatment of jailed ex-premier Yulia Tymoshenko.

RUSSIA

Arrests at protest against gay law

At least 17 demonstrators were arrested yesterday in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg as they agitated against laws that ban so-called homosexual propaganda. Participants in the protest waved rainbow banners reading "Homophobia is illegal", said a police spokesman cited by the Ria Novosti news agency. Those arrested face fines.

Spanish royal seeking deal with prosecutors

DPA

Madrid

A son-in-law of Spain's King Juan Carlos is seeking to make a deal with prosecutors who are investigating him over allegations that he had been involved with a corruption network, prosecutors confirmed yesterday.

Enrique Urdangarin, 44, who is married to Princess Cristina and has the title of Duke of Palma de Majorca, faces charges of using a non-profit institute to organise events related to sports and tourism in the Balearic Islands and eastern Valencia, diverting public and private funds to a network of companies he created with his business partner, Diego Torres.

The Noos Institute, which was

Le Pen 'spurns' Sarkozy bid for far-right support

Far-right leader won't back Hollande either

Reuters
Paris

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen delivered a further blow yesterday to President Nicolas Sarkozy's re-election hopes by refusing to endorse him and telling her 6mn supporters to make their own choice in Sunday's ballot.

Conservative Sarkozy, who faces off with Socialist Francois Hollande on May 6, needs most of the 18% of voters who backed National Front leader Le Pen last week to support him in the runoff if he is to overtake first-round winner Hollande.

But Le Pen, who came third on April 22 with a score that eclipsed her father's record at the head of the populist protest movement, told a rally in Paris yesterday that she personally would spoil her ballot paper in the second round by choosing to vote for neither of the two remaining contenders.

"I will not grant my trust, or a mandate, to these two candidates," she told supporters at an annual commemoration of Joan of Arc, the national saint her group favours to the May Day celebrations held by international labour and leftist parties.

"On Sunday, I will cast a blank ballot," she said, while stopping short of urging followers to do likewise. "I have made my choice. Each of you will make yours."

Sarkozy fired back at his own



Le Pen: will back neither candidate by spoiling her vote.

outdoor rally, on a holiday that turned the streets of Paris into a peaceful political battleground: "I will fight to the last second of the last minute because I love France."

"Nicolas, president!" they chanted back on a square across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower. "We're going to win!"

Hollande has a six- to 10-point opinion poll lead over the president for the May 6 second round, profiting from disillusion with Sarkozy's economic record.

Hollande also promises to boost growth and raise funds with a new 75% tax on incomes above 1mn euros.

Supporters of Sarkozy's UMP party at the rally on Trocadero Square, like 67-year-old Jacqueline Rousseau, fear such policies will hurt France and accuse Hollande of double standards.

"If Nicolas Sarkozy doesn't make it, all the rich will leave

and we'll be just a country of poor people," said Rousseau. "Why would they stay with us, to be taxed 75%? They're all jealous, but the Socialists eat caviar everyday!"

Analysts calculate that Sarkozy needs as many as 80% of Le Pen's first-round voters behind him to win. But polls indicate only about half of them intend to vote for him, while as many as one in five could back Hollande.

With a parliamentary election to come in June, National Front leaders believe they can break through and win seats in the legislature, especially if a heavy defeat for Sarkozy plunges his centre-right UMP into deeper disarray.

Sarkozy, 57, is the most unpopular president to seek re-election and first in the 54 years of the present electoral system to fail to finish first in a first-round vote.

Economic gloom counts against him, as does a personal style that seems dynamic to supporters but showy and shallow to critics.

Whoever wins on Sunday, investors see a lack of economic growth undermining efforts to cut government deficits just as concerns are resurfacing about the wider eurozone debt crisis.

Both candidates have been criticised abroad for lacking big ideas to bolster competitiveness and rein in state spending.

Sarkozy, who used his Labour Day speech to renew his calls for more entrepreneurial spirit in a country where one worker in five is a public employee, has stressed his experience of running the economy during the campaign while Hollande has said Sarkozy must bear the blame for strained public finances.

For his own Labour Day message, Hollande, 57, paid respects at the tomb of popular Socialist prime minister Pierre Bérégovoy - who shot himself on May 1, 1993 - and derided the president's stress on work when unemployment was at a 12-year high.

The two candidates, who will hold a single televised debate today, also exchanged barbs over trade union charges that Sarkozy was trying to hijack Labour Day for his campaign.

Tens of thousands of unionists marched in Paris and other cities.

Hollande can count on much of the 15.5% of the first-round vote that went to leftist candidates to add to his own 28.6% score without having to make



Sarkozy: needs most of Le Pen's supporters to vote for him.

changes to his campaign tactics.

But Sarkozy is tacking with difficulty between ideas that appeal to National Front voters' dislike of immigrants and those which can bolster his support in the liberal centre.

Yesterday he appeared to rule out a deal to make losing centrist candidate Francois Bayrou his prime minister.

Polls show the 9.1% of voters who chose Bayrou in the first round are now split evenly three ways, with a third backing Sarkozy, a third Hollande and a third undecided or not voting.

"The French have started their emancipation," said the 43-year-old who has rejuvenated the party her father founded and who wants France to abandon the euro currency.

Scorning the mainstream parties, the UMP and the Socialist PS as an indistinguishable, pro-EU bloc, she coined an acronym for them and prophesied further gains for a party that hopes to return to parliament for the first time since France briefly experimented with proportional representation in the 1980s.

"The UMP will not succeed," said Le Pen, whose 83-year-old father Jean-Marie stood by her side. "All their efforts cannot stop us growing and cannot block our path to power.

"Our last chance to stop the implosion of France is to bring lawmakers into parliament en masse to stand up to a presidency dominated by Europe and markets."

Low points for high joints

A demonstrator holds a giant cardboard joint protesting the new policy of the Dutch 'coffee shops', in Maastricht yesterday. A Dutch district court has thrown out a bid by coffee shop owners to fight the introduction of a 'cannabis card' aimed at stopping foreigners from buying the drug in the country. New cannabis-for-locals-only laws rolled out yesterday in three provinces.

Macedonia arrests religious radicals suspected in murder

AFP
Skopje

Macedonian police announced yesterday that they arrested 20 radical Muslims, suspected to be members of a terrorist group which has been linked to the murder of five Macedonians in early April.

The ministry of the interior found the perpetrators of the horrific killings at Smilovska lake" near Skopje, Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska told a press conference.

Twenty radical Muslims, mostly Macedonian citizens, some of whom had been "fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan against Nato soldiers", were arrested.

They were nabbed on Monday after a massive security operation involving some 800 police officers and other interior ministry officials.

The minister described the

suspects as "Skopje followers of radical Islam" but did not reveal their names or ethnicity.

"Among those 20 people a few are directly involved in the horrific killings and for some we do not have details," Jankulovska said.

On April 12 five men, one 45 years old and the others aged between 18 and 22, were found dead from gunshot wounds at a popular fishing pond near Skopje.

The authorities said they seized weapons and radical Islamic literature.

The murders sparked fears that tensions between Macedonians and minority ethnic Albanians could flare up again.

The atmosphere has for some time been tense in the former Yugoslav republic, where relations between the two main communities remain scarred from a 2001 armed conflict between government security forces and ethnic Albanian rebels.

Fund fighting killer diseases downsizes

Jaramillo took over in January after an investigation found a "grave misuse of funds" at the fund, a unique public-private financial institution that spends donor money on tackling three of the world's biggest killer diseases.

The revelation prompted governments such as Sweden and Germany to freeze their contributions to the fund, forcing the fund to scrap new grants until 2014.

Jaramillo's promise to bring efficiency, accountability and results got a swift vote of confidence from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which pledged \$750mn in January, more than the \$650mn that the

Microsoft chairman's charity has contributed since the fund's launch 10 years ago.

But more is needed from governments, which have provided the bulk of the \$22.6bn that has been raised by the Geneva-based organisation to date for its work in 150 countries, paying for 3.5mn anti-retroviral drug treatments and 9mn tuberculosis treatments.

A source close to the fund said that the re-organisation would involve about 120-130 redundancies, largely in strategy and research jobs, but more posts would also be added, so the fund would shrink from about 650 to about 600 staff overall.

cinema

GULF CINEMA: Tezz (Hindi) 2.30, 8.30 & 11pm; Maya Mohini (Malayalam) 5pm;

DOHA CINEMA: Maya Mohini (Malayalam) 2.30, 8.30 & 11pm; Tezz (Hindi) 5.30pm.

MALL CINEMA (1): 5 Days Of War 2.30pm; Devil's Double 4.30pm; Safe 6.45, 9 & 11.15pm.

MALL CINEMA (2): Tucker & Dale Vs Evil 3.5 & 11pm; Burning Bright 7 & 9pm.

MALL CINEMA (3): Outback (3D) 3 & 5pm; Lucky One (2D) 7, 9.15 & 11.30pm.

ROYAL PLAZA Cinema Palace (1): Pirates! Band Of Misfits (3D) 3 & 5pm; Lucky One (2D) 7, 9 & 11.15pm.

ROYAL PLAZA Cinema Palace (2): Tucker & Dale Vs Evil 2.30, 9 & 11.30pm; Devil's Double 4.30 & 6.45pm.

ROYAL PLAZA Cinema Palace (3): Flypaper 2.30, 4.15 & 6.15pm; Flowers Of War 8 & 11pm.

CINEMA LANDMARK (1): Out Back 3 & 5pm; Safe 7, 9 & 11pm.

CINEMA LANDMARK (2): Outback (3D) 2.30 & 4.15pm; The Cold Light Of Day (2D) 6pm; Titanic (3D) 8pm; Lucky One (2D) 11.30pm.

CINEMA LANDMARK (3): The Raven 2.30pm; Lucky One 4.45 & 7pm; Burning Bright 9.15 & 11.15pm.



DANGEROUS TERRAIN

Suicide bomber kills visiting MPs in central Somalia

A suicide bomber killed at least three people and wounded more at a hotel in the central Somali town of Dusamareb, where lawmakers visiting from the capital had gathered, witnesses and officials said yesterday. Member of parliament Dahir Amin Gesow told Reuters he was in the hotel cafe when the bomber walked in blew himself up. He said several people were killed, including some lawmakers. The commander of the pro-government militia which controls Dusamareb, the capital of Galgadud, said at least three were killed in the blast. "The bomber targeted these officials from Mogadishu," said Abdifi Siyad, commander of the Sufi militia group Ahlu Sunna Waljamaa.

INNOCENT VICTIM

Kenya church grenade blast toll rises to 2: medic

The death toll after a grenade attack on worshippers during a church service in the Kenyan capital on Sunday has risen to two, a medical official said yesterday. "We lost one of the patients, he had suffered serious injuries," the medic said, who asked not to be named. One man was killed on the spot in the attack on the God House of Miracle Church in Nairobi's Ngara neighbourhood. Kenyan police have blamed the attacks on Somalia's Al Qaeda-linked Shebaab or their sympathisers, claiming the attacks are a response to the Kenyan army's intervention in Somalia. The Shebaab have not claimed responsibility for the attack.

GORY TALE

Victim tells of rape as in Bemba's war crimes trial

A Central African war crimes victim yesterday described how she was raped by soldiers after her village was overrun by forces believed connected to Congolese ex-vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba, on trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Bemba faces three counts of war crimes and two of crimes against humanity for atrocities committed by members of his private army in the neighbouring Central African Republic between October 2002 and March 2003. Bemba has pleaded not guilty to the charges, with his lawyers saying his forces in the CAR were under then-CAR president Ange-Felix Patasse's command when the atrocities were committed.

DENIAL

Ex-rebel leader says 'not involved' in Congo unrest

A former rebel leader wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court yesterday denied any involvement in the deadly fighting which has plagued the eastern DR Congo in recent days. "I am not involved in the clashes pitting the FARDC (regular army) against the soldiers who defected," Jean-Bosco Ntaganda told AFP, in reference to army deserters who previously fought in his rebel group. Ntaganda headed the CNDP rebel militia, which was incorporated into the army in 2009 following a peace deal with Kinshasa. "I am at my farm near Mushaki," in Kivu Nord. "My superiors in the army know I'm here and have authorised me to stay. Even the head of state (President Joseph Kabila) knows that."

APPEAL

UN again urges aid for Ivory Coast refugees

The UN yesterday renewed an appeal for aid to people in the west of Ivory Coast in the wake of post-election violence in the west African country. The world body received only \$31mn of the \$173mn it sought in an appeal in January, humanitarian coordinator Ndolamb Ngokwey said in a statement. "Even though political stability has allowed a large number of refugees and displaced people to go home, it's more difficult to make sure they integrate completely," Ngokwey said. The region remains volatile. Last Tuesday night armed men attacked the village of Sakre, near the border with Liberia, leaving seven people dead and causing some 6,300 people to flee.

Europeans protest against austerity at May Day rallies

Marches in Spain, Italy, France, Greece and Portugal; Protesters carry banners opposing budget cuts

Reuters
Athens

Workers across southern Europe protested yesterday against spending cuts in May Day rallies, before weekend elections in Greece and France where voters are expected to punish leaders for austerity.

Unions in Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Greece used the traditional marches to express anger over a savings drive across the eurozone, aimed at shoring up public finances but criticised for forcing countries deeper into recession.

Italian demonstrators briefly clashed with police in riot gear in Turin and thousands marched in the central city of Rieti to listen to the leaders of the country's three main unions denounce Prime Minister Mario Monti's reforms.

French trade unions organised about 290 demonstrations from Marseille in the south to Strasbourg in the east. In Paris, police said 48,000 people turned out, up from 12,000 last year.

President Nicolas Sarkozy attracted almost 100,000 to a rival rally for "real workers" after the



Teachers chant anti-austerity slogans while marching in central Athens during a May Day rally.

largest union, the CGT advised its members to vote him out of power on Sunday, the first time a union has openly urged a vote against a candidate.

In Madrid, tens of thousands headed in the rain to the main square waving signs opposing cuts, while thousands turned out in Lisbon. In Athens around 5,000 workers, pensioners and students marched with banners

reading "Revolt now" and "Tax the rich?"

Greece will vote on Sunday in a parliamentary election that risks derailing the international bailout keeping the country afloat by punishing the parties that backed the package.

"Our message will be stronger on Sunday," said Maria Drakaki, 45, a public sector worker whose salary has been cut. "There's no

way I'm voting for one of the two main parties."

In France, Sarkozy addressed a rally near the Eiffel Tower with a message to unite and work harder to pull France out of the financial crisis.

French voters seem poised to choose policies favouring economic growth over austerity with Socialist Francois Hollande leading Sarkozy in the polls. Far-right

protesters in Turin shouted down the local mayor as he led a parade, accusing him of not doing enough to create jobs in the city that is the home of Italian car giant Fiat.

Protesters in Turin shouted down the local mayor as he led a parade, accusing him of not doing enough to create jobs in the city that is the home of Italian car giant Fiat.

In Portugal, thousands of people rallied in Lisbon, some with placards saying "Stop the robbery, no more stolen wages".

The 700,000-strong CGTP union, which refused to sign a pact on labour market reforms required under a 78bn euro EU/IMF bailout this year, rallied across Portugal under the slogan "Against exploitation and impoverishment, for a policy change".

"Austerity is not a solution for Portugal or Europe," said Joao Proenca, chief of the UGT union, the second biggest. "The pivotal issue is to promote job creation."

Portugal is implementing tough austerity measures, which have deepened its recession and pushed unemployment to all-time highs of around 15%.

Spain's jobless rate rose to near 25% in the first quarter, more than double the EU average, as the economy sank into recession. Some economists, including those at the International Monetary Fund, have questioned whether deep cuts should be made at the expense of growth.

In Greece, repeated rounds of cuts have slashed wages and pensions and deepened a recession that is now in its fifth year. Private sector wages shrank by a quarter last year alone and one Greek youth in two is out of work.

"These politicians cannot help us," said Dina Bitsi, 58, a pensioner with two unemployed sons. "They approved the austerity package and the bailout. We are turning our backs on them."

The two biggest Greek parties, the Socialist PASOK and the conservative New Democracy, have ruled Greece for decades but are expected to struggle to win enough support to renew their pro-bailout coalition.

Greece's lenders have said that if the country fails to stick to the reforms pledged in return for 130bn euros in aid, the country might be forced to abandon the euro.

Most Greeks want to keep the single currency, despite opposing the austerity measures they have been forced to endure since the country's first EU/IMF bailout in 2010.

"We want to stay in the European Union and the euro. We realise there is a crisis but it's unacceptable that even now the rich have become richer and the poor poorer," Bitsi said.



Anti-coal seam gas protesters march yesterday to the New South Wales state Parliament as part of a 'Save our Land' rally to mark May Day in Sydney.

← →

Workers from the Nigerian fishing industry raise a fish to salute Lagos State Governor Babatunde Fashola during workers rally to mark May Day in Lagos. The theme of this year May Day is 'Right to Work, Food and Education: Panacea to Insecurity'.

Mali junta says counter-coup defeated

Reuters
Bamako

Heavy gunfire erupted yesterday near Mali's state television in Bamako on the second day of fighting between forces from the ruling junta and soldiers believed to be loyal to ousted President Amadou Toumani Toure, witnesses said.

Shooting cracked out from the direction of the television building, Reuters witnesses said, and people were fleeing the area along the road to the building.

"We were on our way there, but were told there is fighting going on around the ORTM (state television) and we were told to go back," one witness said. Another witness said there was also shooting in other parts of the city.

The military junta said the fighting, which broke out late on Monday, was an attempt to reverse a March

22 coup that ousted Toure, adding that there was evidence that foreign fighters were backing the effort.

Speaking to a local radio station overnight, junta chief Captain Amadou Sanogo said the fighting broke out after he had sent some units to the presidential guard barracks to tell them that Malian forces should remain united.

"As Ecowas mediators, we are still available to continue the dialogue, which will help Mali normalise its political institutions and bring the army to submit itself under the authority of a civilian government," Bassole said.

"During the exchange between my guys and the paratroopers, some of them decided to battle us once and for all," he said.

"They tried to seize Kati (army base), take control of the radio and television and the airport. But we had been prepared. We managed to kill some and captured others.

Among the captives there are foreign fighters we'll show on TV!"

Djibril Bassole, Burkina Faso's foreign minister and a leading mediator in the Malian crisis for West Africa's Ecowas bloc, said the bloc had sent no troops to Mali yet.

"Ecowas has not sent any troops on the ground. No decision has been taken in that light," Bassole told Reuters by telephone from the Burkina Faso capital Ouagadougou.

Bassole said talks planned for yesterday in Ouagadougou between the junta and Ecowas mediators had been cancelled because a plane sent the previous day to collect members of the junta for the meeting had not been allowed to land in Bamako.

"As Ecowas mediators, we are still available to continue the dialogue, which will help Mali normalise its political institutions and bring the army to submit itself under the authority of a civilian government," Bassole said.

Nigeria troops attack Boko Haram hideout

Reuters
Kano

Nigerian forces yesterday raided the hideout of Islamist militants in Kano, killing the suspected mastermind of an attack on Christian worshippers, in a gun battle that lasted several hours in the main northern city.

The raid followed a spate of attacks in the past days, believed to be by Islamist sect Boko Haram, which killed 30 people and dampened hopes that tighter security in the north had drastically reduced the sect's capability.

Residents of the Bubujage slum area of Kano awoke to several loud explosions and the sound of gunfire. "It is really terrifying ... everyone is indoors," said Anthonia Okafor, a student at Kano

Hundreds have died in violence across the north and in the capital Abuja since the Islamists launched their uprising in 2009, targeting authorities, security

forces and more recently the north's Christian minority.

"Our men just raided one of the hideouts of the elements ... where we discovered explosives and weapons," said Lieutenant Ifehe Iwediichi, a spokesman for the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Kano, Nigeria's second biggest city.

"The main suspect has been killed," he added, referring to the suspected mastermind of an attack on a university in Kano on Sunday, when gunmen sprayed bullets in a lecture theatre being used for Christian worship.

That attack and another one on Sunday against a church in northeast Maiduguri, Boko Haram's spiritual headquarters, killed 19 people between them.

Nigerian forces took journalists to the scene of the battle, a hot, dusty slum at the edge of a rusting industrial estate. They brought out three women and two children they said had been rescued from the house, which was partly demolished by fighting. The front wall was blasted off; the iron roof, collapsed.

"The most difficult task we face with these terrorists is they know us but we don't know them. They're not rooted in a particular place," Kano army commander Brigadier General Ilyas Abba said, facing the house pocked with bullet and bomb craters.

"We have rooted them out of here today, but tomorrow they could be somewhere else," he said, adding that one suspect was arrested but two had escaped through the back door.

Police Commissioner for Kano State Ibrahim Idris told Radio Nigeria that AK-47 assault rifles, 467 munitions and 45 cans full of explosives were seized in the raid in Kano, an ancient Islamic city once at the heart of the merchant caravan routes stretching across the Sahara from Africa's interior to the Mediterranean.

"Based on intelligence reports on the suspects' hideout, a joint team comprising soldiers, police and the State Security Service commenced that operation this morning," he said.

NUCLEAR

South Korea envoy to visit Beijing amid N-test concern

South Korea's chief nuclear envoy will travel to China this week, the foreign ministry said yesterday, amid growing concern North Korea may test a nuclear bomb following its failed rocket launch last month. Lim Sung-nam will meet his counterpart Wu Dawei during the two-day visit starting today, said ministry spokeswoman Han Hye-Jin. They would assess the situation following the launch on April 13 and discuss further action, she said. China is the North's closest ally but supported a United Nations Security Council statement which strongly condemned the launch and tightened existing sanctions.

DEMO

Indonesia stages Asia's biggest Labour Day rally

Thousands of Indonesian workers held Asia's biggest May Day rally yesterday, demanding better pay and protection of job security, watched warily by a heavy police and army contingent. Colourful protests organised by trades unions and left-wing parties across Asia shared the theme of better wages and conditions, and denunciations of government policy, as living costs spike in fast-growing economies. Carrying banners saying "raise our salaries" and "stop outsourcing contracts", more than 9,000 workers gathered at Jakarta's main roundabout before marching to the state palace.

TRAGEDY

Children, baby among 13 killed in Indonesia bus fire

A bus fire on Indonesia's Sumatra island killed 13 people early yesterday including four children and a baby, police said, with survivors forced to smash locked windows to escape the blaze. "Thirteen of the 45 passengers died, trapped on the bus after a fire broke out. The driver wasn't able to extinguish the fire and it began to spread," West Sumatra police spokesman Mainar Sugianto said. "The fire broke out in the front of the bus and no one could get out from the back door because it was blocked with boxes and bags of goods," Fikri, a survivor, told Elshinta radio.

UNREST

Motorcycle bomb kills two soldiers in Thai south

Two Thai military rangers were killed and six were wounded yesterday when a bomb planted in a motorcycle exploded in the southern province of Pattani, a police officer said. At least 5,000 people have been killed in southern Thailand since 2004 in violence attributed to Muslim separatists. Police said that the soldiers from a ranger unit were travelling in a pickup truck, heading to an outpost when a bomb of up to 10kg (22lb) was remotely detonated on a road near a military camp. About 30,000 troops are in the region, trying to crush the insurgency, but they have had little success.

PROTEST

Thousands of Cambodian workers take part in march

Thousands of workers marched through the streets of Phnom Penh yesterday to press for higher wages and better working conditions on International Labour Day. Up to 6,000 workers paraded down the Cambodian capital's riverfront clutching balloons and holding banners that demanded pay increases to help reduce poverty. Union members then submitted a petition to the National Assembly calling for better working standards and the creation of a labour court. "We think wages for private sector employees should be at least \$131 a month for it to be possible to live," said Ath Thorn, president of the Cambodian Labour Confederation.

May Day protest

Militants and labour union members gather around a burning effigy of Philippine President Benigno Aquino in Manila yesterday, as part of the May Day protests demanding higher wages and policies that would make it harder to fire workers.

Manila seeks American help in building armed forces

AFP
Washington

The Philippines, lamenting the poor state of its armed forces, appealed yesterday for US and international help in building a "minimum credible defence" amid an escalating territorial dispute with China.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto del Rosario and defence Secretary Voltaire Gazmin made the pitch in unprecedented joint talks in Washington with their US counterparts Hillary Clinton and Leon Panetta.

Del Rosario lamented how the international news media has accurately described the poor state of the Philippine armed forces.

"It sounds terribly painful for the Philippines, but more painful is the fact that this is true, and we only have ourselves to blame for it," del Rosario said candidly as Clinton and Panetta listened across a table.

"For the Philippines to be minimally relied upon as a US regional partner... it therefore behoves us to resort to all possible means to build at the very least a most minimal credible defence posture," del Rosario said. "On our own, we will do the best we can," the top Philippine diplomat said.

"Developing a minimum credible defence posture may however be hastened mainly through an enhancement of the activities we do together with our singular treaty and through a positive consideration of increased assistance that we seek at this time as well," he said.

The two nations, which completed extensive war games earlier this month, are bound by a mutual defence treaty in which the US has pledged to come to the aid of its weaker ally if it faces military aggression.

"We are concurrently seeking a higher level of assistance from other international partners," del Rosario added.

Gazmin alluded to tension

with China over islands in the South China Sea as he called for the need to "intensify our mutual trust to uphold maritime security and the freedom of navigation."

"We should be able to work together to build the Philippines' minimum credible defence posture, especially in upholding maritime security," Gazmin said.

The Philippines and China have been embroiled in a dispute over a shoal in the South China Sea, with both nations stationing vessels there for nearly three weeks to assert their sovereignty at this time as well," he said.

The Philippines says Scarborough Shoal is its territory because it falls well within its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, as recognised by international law.

The Philippines has called for arbitration through the UN to end the dispute, but China has refused.

In a press conference after the talks, the Philippine officials stressed diplomacy when asked

what aid they had sought from Washington to bolster Manila's ability to patrol its waters and deter what they call intrusions.

"The assistance we have sought is to help us bring the case to international legal bodies so that the approach is the legal rules-based approach in resolving the issue in the South China Sea," Gazmin said.

Clinton, the US secretary of state, told reporters that the first meeting of the two countries' four key national security officials is "a testament to our shared commitment to write a new chapter" in their partnership. She voiced concern about Scarborough Shoal, repeating that Washington does not take sides on competing sovereignty claims there but has a national interest in maintaining freedom of navigation as well as peace and stability.

"The US supports a collaborative diplomatic process by all those involved for resolving the various disputes that they encounter," she said.

In a rare retreat, Suu Kyi announced on Monday that her National League for Democracy party would take its seats in parliament-dominated by the military and its political allies—and pledge to "safeguard" the army-created constitution.

"I know that it must have been a very difficult decision," Ban said.

"But a real leader demonstrates flexibility for the greater cause of the people. This is what she has done yesterday and I really admire and respect her decision."

"I am sure she'll play a very constructive and active role as a parliamentarian for the betterment and well-being of this great country."

Suu Kyi, who won a parliamentary seat in historic April 1 by-elections, is now expected to take the oath today, according to NLD sources.

Appearing alongside Ban after their near hour-long talks at her lakeside villa in Yangon, Suu Kyi said she was willing to compromise for the sake of reform.

"We have always believed in flexibility, in the political process... that is the only way in

which we can achieve our goal without violence," she said.

The UN chief, who on Monday became the first visiting foreigner to address Myanmar's legislature, also lauded the reformist efforts of President Thein Sein and pledged to support Myanmar's government through its "irreversible" transition to democracy.

He added that meetings with Thein Sein and the NLD leader had left him "convinced that they will continue to make progress."

Tuesday's face-to-face talks were the first between Suu Kyi and Ban, who left frustrated after a previous visit in 2009 when the generals who ruled the nation for decades refused to allow him to see the veteran activist while in detention.

The opposition leader had dropped her boycott of parliament saying her party did not want to cause "a political problem or tension", ending the first rift with the government since the April by-elections.

"Our voters voted for us because they want to see us in parliament," she said.

The democracy icon has said

one of her priorities is to push for an amendment of the 2008 constitution, under which one quarter of the seats in parliament are reserved for unelected military officials.

Ban, who also invited Suu Kyi to visit the UN, is the latest in a string of top foreign visitors to Myanmar amid a thaw in the army-dominated nation's relations with the West.

In a landmark speech to parliament on Monday following talks with Thein Sein, the UN chief paid tribute to Suu Kyi and the NLD for participating in the by-elections.

He also welcomed moves by the international community to reward sweeping changes in the country since the end of direct army rule last year, and called for the West to go further in easing or lifting sanctions.

But after their meeting Suu Kyi sounded a note of caution over the deepening of aid to Myanmar, urging international support to be carefully targeted.

"Whenever aid comes to Burma... it should come in such a way to empower the people and decrease dependency on the government," she said.

Matters of the heart!

A young couple embrace besides a painting of a heart by an unidentified artist at the Art Beijing 2012 expo in China yesterday.

Beijing, US in talks 'to allow Chen to leave'

AFP
Beijing

Beijing and Washington are working on a deal to allow rights activist Chen Guangcheng to leave China for the US with his family after he fled house arrest, a fellow activist said yesterday.

Bob Fu, who runs the US-based group China Aid and has been in contact with Chen and his supporters, said both sides were keen for a swift agreement ahead of key US-China talks that start tomorrow in Beijing.

Chen had initially been reluctant to leave China, but now accepted it would be difficult for him to stay, and was prepared to go into exile in the US as long as his family could accompany him, Fu said.

"The situation has changed on the past few days. He under-

stands that there is no way he could return to Dongshigu now," Fu said by telephone, referring to Chen's hometown.

"But he won't leave without his family—if he had thought about that he would already have gone."

"The most viable scenario is to negotiate a quick deal to allow China to make a face-saving agreement."

That could involve China allowing the family to leave for medical treatment in the US, said Fu, a former Tiananmen Square democracy activist who fled China in 1996 and now lives in Texas.

Fu did not reveal who his sources were, but said he had contacts with officials in China and Washington who said both sides were "working very actively to find a solution."

Chen, 40, a self-taught lawyer, escaped from house arrest

in the eastern province of Shandong on April 22, and is now said to be under US protection in Beijing. His wife and young daughter are believed still to be in Dongshigu.

The affair threatens to overshadow annual talks on the Sino-US relationship between US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, and their Chinese counterparts tomorrow and Friday.

Neither the US nor China has so far commented on Chen's whereabouts, underscoring the sensitivity of the situation.

But Clinton has in the past repeatedly criticised China's treatment of Chen, who won worldwide acclaim for exposing forced sterilisations and late-term abortions under China's policy restricting the size of most families.

Aquino warns of job losses if wages hiked

DPA
Manila

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III yesterday warned that more than half a million Filipinos could lose their jobs if daily wages were increased across-the-board by almost \$3.

Aquino said the 125-peso (\$2.94) across-the-board wage increase being demanded by labour groups would cost the economy 1.43tn pesos every year. "How can the businessmen recover this? Wouldn't they raise

the prices of goods and services? Wouldn't they cut costs by laying off employees?" Aquino said in his Labour Day speech.

"Has anybody explained that there would be 52,000 Filipinos who could lose jobs this year and next year if this is implemented?" he added.

Aquino said the current minimum wage of between \$9 and \$10 was already higher than in other South-East Asian nations. "Who will want to invest here if the labour cost is too high?" he said.

Aquino's speech disappointed thousands of workers.

Jakarta keeps US beef ban amid fears

Indonesia will not lift a ban on certain US beef imports until the US declares the products free from mad cow disease, the agriculture ministry said yesterday. Indonesia suspended US imports of boned meat and innards on April 26, two days after the fourth-ever case in the US of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, known as mad cow disease, was reported in California. "The US government has yet to overcome the problem. It hasn't given us assurance that the products are disease-free," Indonesia's agriculture minister Suswono told reporters.



TORTURE

Cops suspended after suspect commits suicide

Two policemen were suspended after a man allegedly committed suicide yesterday by hanging himself at a police station in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj district. Sardana, 25, was found hanging with a blanket in a toilet at the Saurikh police station, where he was brought for questioning on Monday night for allegedly eloping with a woman. The family of the victim alleged he was tortured the entire night, following which he took the extreme step. The incident sent senior police officials into a tizzy as Kannauj Lok Sabha constituency has been represented thrice by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav. Kannauj superintendent of police Vinod Singh suspended two policemen, including station in-charge Aditya Kumar Yadav.

COURAGE

14-year-old girl foils marriage attempt

She is 14 years old and a school dropout, but West Bengal resident Seema still mustered up the courage to stand up to her family and foiled an attempt to get her married by calling a helpline. The girl, who was to tie the nuptial knot today, called up the helpline number urging them to intervene and stop her marriage, police said yesterday. The incident took place in Purulia district. "The girl called up Childline, and informed them that she was being married off. Subsequently we intervened and rescued the girl," district police superintendent C Sudhakar said. While her father was remanded in 14 days' judicial custody by a local court, the girl was sent to a government home.

NEW TREND

Two brides refuse to marry drunk grooms

Left at the altar - alone and drunk. That was the fate of two grooms in normally patriarchal Bihar when their would-be brides and their families walked out on them because they were simply too drunk. While one incident took place in Rohtas district's Khaira village, the other was in Aurangabad's Judahi village. Savita Kumari from Khaira called off the wedding when she found her groom drunk minutes before the ceremony on Sunday night. In the second case the same night, Lalan Singh took an equally courageous stand when he decided not to get his daughter married to a drunk and asked the 'baraat' to return.

PROTEST

Village council members stage hunger strike

Dozens of village elders and panchayat members sat on a day's hunger strike in Srinagar yesterday to protest against the alleged apathy of the Jammu and Kashmir government in empowering panchayats, the village councils. "We have been forced to hit the streets because we are unable to serve the people who elected us. Except for lofty speeches, nothing substantial is happening on the ground to make the elected sarpanches and panches effective," said Shah Nawaz, a sarpanch from the Chadura tehsil in central Kashmir. "We have braved odds, including threats, to participate in the elections and today we are sandwiched between an insensitive administration and voters who want us to deliver," he said.

TRAGEDY

Five more farmers commit suicide

At least five "debt trapped" farmers have committed suicide in the last 48 hours in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, taking the toll to 332 in the state in 2012, an activist said yesterday. "Ramas Dhalhe of village Chincholi in Yavatmal district committed suicide early today. He was a cotton farmer who was in debt trap of around Rs3 lakh," said Kishor Tiwari, president of the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a farmers' advocacy group. "In the last 48 hours, four other farmers also committed suicide after they could not repay their debt," he added. Tiwari said the total number of suicides by farmers has reached 332 in the four months of 2012.

Pension, insurance fund for overseas workers

By Ashraf Padanna
Kochi

India has launched a fund for providing pension and life insurance cover for its overseas contract workers (OCW) fulfilling the promise made by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in January.

Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi officially launched the Pension and Life Insurance Fund (PLIF) at a function held here to mark the International Labour Day yesterday. Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy presided over the function.

The PLIF scheme is a combination of old age pension, resettlement scheme and life insurance cover. All migrant workers in the age group of 18-50 with Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) stamp on their passports will be eligible for subscription.

They will get pension in old age through a framework regulated by the Pension Fund Regulation and Development Authority (PFRDA), savings for return and resettlement through a mutual fund regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the life insurance cover by a nationalised insurer.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) will contribute a maximum of Rs3,000 for women and Rs2,000 for men annually for a period of five years. The workers need to contribute Rs1,000 to Rs12,000 a year while return and resettlement contribution will be Rs4,000 a month.

The beneficiaries will be allowed to withdraw 50% of savings in the PLIF account after five years. Forty percent of the remaining savings will be paid back as lump sum at the age of 55 and the remaining will be paid back as a monthly pension.

On their return to India, PLIF subscribers would be able to continue savings for their old age using their bank accounts and the electronic clearance system. The pension and resettlement savings as well as co-contributions by the government will thus reflect in the individual PLIF accounts.

Workers demand job security

An activist of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) shouts slogans during a May Day protest rally in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday. CPM's state committee secretary Mohamed Yousuf Tarigami asked the government to fulfil the promises it had made over the years to the working class and demanded workers be provided job security and proper wages.

RS seat is an honour but cricket comes first: Sachin

Sachin Tendulkar's nomination has surprised many in India and some criticised the "apolitical" cricketer for accepting the offer from the Congress Party

Agencies
Pune

Batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar said yesterday he was "honoured" to be nominated to India's parliament but stressed that cricket would remain his priority as long as he keeps playing.

Last week, Tendulkar was offered one of the 12 seats in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of parliament, that are reserved for those who have distinguished themselves in various fields such as the arts, sciences or social services.

"When you get nominated because of your contribution in your field, it's an honour. I was excited to be nominated," Tendulkar, 39, told a televised press event in Pune.

"I don't think I will stop (playing) cricket and go straight into politics. I will keep playing cricket. Cricket is my life and will always be," he added.

Tendulkar has not formally accepted his nomination, but such honours are rarely handed out without the prior agreement of the nominee.

It is unclear exactly when Tendulkar might take up his seat.

Tendulkar, who was also given the honorary rank of Group Captain in the Indian Air Force

in 2010, was nominated last week alongside actress Rekha and industrialist Anu Aga.

Before the news of his nomination became public, Tendulkar and his wife Anjali, made a courtesy call to Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi at her residence in New Delhi.

The home ministry finalises the nomination list only after getting the consent of the people they recommend.

Tendulkar stressed that his nomination had nothing to do with politics.

"I have played cricket for 22 1/2 years. And I understand that I was nominated because of this reason. I am not a politician," he said.

"I believe President (Pratibha Patil) has chosen me after recognising what I have done for over 22 years," he said referring to greats in other fields like singer Lata Mangeshkar and actor Prithviraj Kapoor.

"There are many responsibilities on me. I would definitely like to contribute in the field of sports because that is my expertise," the player added.

He will become the first cricketer to take a seat in the upper house. There have been several film personalities in the past and currently poet and script-writer Javed Akhtar is in the house.

The "Little Master's" nomination has raised eyebrows in India, with questions over how the cricketer, who has



previously steered clear of politics, could balance his sporting commitments with his duties as an MP.

Some former players have also wondered if the batsman may lose his universal popularity in India as the proposal to nominate him came from the ruling Congress Party.

Opposition parties were quick to criticise the move as an attempt by the beleaguered government to distract attention from its difficulties over a series of graft scandals and accusations of policy paralysis.

"What is Tendulkar going to do in the Rajya Sabha? He has no scope there," Bal Thackeray, head of the regional Shiv Sena party, told reporters in Mumbai.

"It is Congress's dirtiest play, the real Dirty Picture," he said.

Thackeray, in his party mouthpiece Saamna, on Saturday said Tendulkar's fans would have loved to call him Bharat Ratna Sachin Tendulkar, the MP. He also alleged that the Congress was trying to divert media's attention by doing so.

He, however, said he was proud of Tendulkar and his achievements and contribution in the field of cricket.

Tendulkar has played more Tests (188) and one-day internationals (463) than any other player since his debut in 1989.

He is the highest run-getter in both forms of the game and in March became the first batsman to complete 100 international centuries - 51 in Tests and 49 in one-dayers.

The batsman is currently playing for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League, a franchise-based Twenty20 competition.

Is Italian connection behind ASG's intriguing betrayal?**Delhi Diary**

By A K B Krishnan

Indo-Italian relations remain strained ever since two Italian marines on board cargo vessel MT Enrica Lexie shot dead two Indian fishermen, mistaking them to be pirates, off the Kerala coast two months ago. While India arrested the marines and initiated the process of putting them on trial for murder, Italy continues to insist they are innocent and mount pressure of all sorts for their release.

While the concern of Italy for the marines involved in the crime is understandable, the tone and tenor of official reactions and the massive diplomatic pressure being put on New Delhi from the beginning have been reflecting the kind of colonial mindset that still prevails in the European country. Italy needs to be reminded that India is not a banana republic and once a crime is committed law takes its course.

Immediately after the marines' arrest by the Kerala police, Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi has summoned the Indian ambassador in Rome and told him in no uncertain terms that the Indian action represented an infringement of

Italy's national sovereignty. The Italian embassy in New Delhi, meanwhile, in a "Note Verbale" addressed to the Ministry of External Affairs, asked the government to ensure unimpeded departure of the marines.

The note pointed out that according to the principles of international law and several decisions of international courts, state organs enjoy jurisdictional immunity for acts committed in the exercise of their official functions.

"The Italian Navy military detachment that operated in international waters on board the vessel Enrica Lexie must be considered as the organ of the Italian state," the note warned.

The Italian prime minister also spoke to his Indian counterpart and hinted about the likely adverse repercussions on the relations between the two countries if the marines were tried in a criminal court in Kerala. The Roman Catholic Church too intervened, contacting the Catholic ministers to ask the Kerala government not to take "precipitate action."

Rightwing activists have called for a boycott of Indian goods and

Indian-owned businesses.

The day after the shooting, the Italian embassy labelled the fishermen as pirates who attacked the Italian ship in international waters and said that after ascertaining through binoculars that the pirates were armed and after giving repeated warnings, the marines fired some shots and the pirates withdrew. Italy also began

claiming that the shooting took place beyond the territorial waters of India and therefore, the Indian police had no business to act. A fairy tale however vividly told by the Italian media would not have many takers. Those aboard the 20m-long Enrica Lexie, with 25 crew members including a six-strong security detail from the Italian Navy, claim that they faced a pirate-like attack from a mecha-

nised wooden fishing boat, only a fraction of its size, and had to resort to shooting. A vital element lacking in the well-woven version is credibility.

It was broad daylight when the incident occurred and there is no question of the crew of the Italian tanker mistaking the slow moving boat, which had its name 'St Antony's' painted in bold letters on both sides, for a high-speed pirate's skiff. Even giving the benefit of doubt to the Italians, why didn't they follow international protocol before opening fire? The ship ought to have changed course and watched for the boat tailing it before taking drastic measures.

The Italian government and media, instead of accepting that the captain of Enrica Lexie had committed a grave error of judgment, chose to label those killed as pirates as it afforded a convenient rationale and cover for the extra-legal killings.

Italy has also taken a jingoistic position later and described the Indian action as "coercive operations" carried out unilaterally.

It's true the arrogant Italian denial of the right of India to act against the crime was met with equally stern response from India. New Delhi insisted that the two Italian murderers would be tried in India, not in Italy, as Rome wanted. How could Italy prosecute them after denying the offence and declaring the offenders as innocent and the victims as pirates?

Italy, meanwhile, also struck a compromise deal with the families of the two slain fishermen, provoking the Supreme Court to say the manner in which the entire legal process is sought to be defeated is not permissible. "They are playing with the Indian process of law."

According to the deal, Italy paid Rs10mn each to the victims' heirs for withdrawing the case against the marines.

As the legal row and diplomatic face-off continued for two months

with both the sides trying to interpret the International Maritime Protocol in ways that suit their respective positions, informed Indians have been curiously watching how the UPA government would persist with the stern stand on the issue because of the obvious high-level Italian connection.

Their watch was not without result when the other day Harin Raval, an additional solicitor general of India, representing the government, suddenly sprang a surprise by telling the Supreme Court that when the marines shot the fishermen the Italian ship was outside Indian territorial waters and the state police, therefore, had no jurisdiction to prosecute the Italians.

That was precisely the case of Italy, but the court heard it from the ASG's mouth. It took strong exception to Raval's remarks and asked how the government could take such an "unacceptable" position when the facts on whether the incident took place within the territorial waters of India or outside are yet to be established.

An angry Kerala government responded by saying it was sur-

prised by the Centre's stand in the apex court and took up the matter with Solicitor General Rohinton Nariman, who promised to take his deputy off the case. The external affairs ministry asserted that the ASG was wrong. The shipping ministry said that ASG acted against brief.

The intriguing question then is whose brief was it that the ASG presented in the morning? His statement to the court late in the afternoon that what he had told earlier was not the government's view, but his opinion could not save the situation. Why should the ASG come to the court to say his opinion whether the ship was in or out of the national waters?

There is more than meets the eye in his pre-meditated statement. It is difficult to believe that an additional solicitor general can behave in such cavalier fashion, unless he has some strong backing. Who could be behind the ASG's presumptuous statement that countered the known stand of both the central and Kerala governments? The ASG's betrayal could confirm the worst suspicions of informed Indians.



PATERNITY CASE

Enough is enough, court tells N D Tiwari

"Enough is enough," the Supreme Court said yesterday while reprimanding veteran Congress leader N D Tiwari for having disobeyed an order to give a blood samples for DNA test in a paternity suit. Tiwari, 86, challenged in the Supreme Court a ruling of the Delhi High Court asking him to give his blood samples in the suit filed by Rohit Shekhar, 31, who claims to be the politician's biological son. Justices Aftab Alam and C K Prasad disapproved of the conduct of the veteran leader and said "enough is enough." Tiwari said that the high court's order was based on a misreading of the law.

INVESTIGATION

SC reserves order in Mayawati's assets case

The Supreme Court yesterday reserved its order on a plea by former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati seeking quashing of criminal proceedings initiated against her by the Central Bureau of Investigation in a case of disproportionate assets. Justices P Sathasivam and Dipak Misra reserved the order on the conclusion of arguments by Mayawati's lawyer Harish Salve, who told the court it had never ordered a probe by the CBI into the alleged disproportionate assets of the former chief minister. Salve told the court that it had ordered investigations into the Taj Corridor case and there was no direction to probe the alleged disproportionate assets.

UNIVERSITY

AMU elects first woman to teachers' association

After being in the news for alleged gender bias, the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has for the first time elected a woman to its influential teacher's association. S Chandni Bi, assistant professor of history, has been elected to the powerful executive council of the Aligarh Muslim University Teachers Association, officials said. "It's a significant development and I hope to further the cause of women's emancipation, a cherished wish of the founder of the AMU, Sir Syed (Ahmed Khan). I would say the university is evolving and gradually responding to changing demands and perceptions. The AMU teachers association is an important body and can effect significant changes," Chandni Bi said.

ANNIVERSARY

Low-cost houses for mill workers planned

As Maharashtra turned 52 yesterday, the government said it would provide low-cost housing to mill workers and free houses to the relatives of mill workers who died during struggle for a state for Marathi-speaking people. "The government has decided to provide 6,948 houses to mill workers at reduced and affordable rates, at Rs 750,000 in multi-storeyed buildings. The government will also give free houses to the survivors of the mill workers who lost their lives in the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement," Governor K Sankaranarayanan said at a function held to mark the state's 52nd anniversary in Mumbai.

TELECOM

Vodafone hikes tariff for post-paid customers

Vodafone India yesterday hiked its post-paid tariffs by 20% to 1.2 paise per second in the Mumbai circle. "Vodafone had hiked its call tariffs for pre-paid customers last year, however the same was not done for the post-paid customers. This is just a step in that direction," an industry source familiar with the development said. The firm has increased the tariffs to 1.2 paise per second from 1 paise. Last year Bharti Airtel had increased call tariffs by 20-50% in some regions of the country. The move was followed by almost all leading players. Vodafone too had hiked the call rates by 20% for its pre-paid customers.

Assam ferry disaster toll 105; many still missing

Rescue workers search frantically for survivors from the capsized ferry on the Brahmaputra river in Assam

AFP
Guwahati

Rescue teams searched for bodies in the Brahmaputra river yesterday after a ferry sinking left at least 105 dead, with more corpses expected to have been flushed downstream into Bangladesh.

The vessel was split in two while navigating the fast-flowing river in the northeastern Assam state, and police said about 100 passengers were still missing.

Despite an operating capacity of 225, some 350 people were believed to be on the two-deck boat when it broke up mid-stream during torrential, pre-monsoon rains.

The boat sank near the riverside town of Dhubri, about 25km from the border with Bangladesh.

"I appeal to Bangladesh to help us in retrieving any dead body or survivors who could have reached their territory," Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi told reporters, saying a formal request had been made to Dhaka.

The Brahmaputra, which is 8km wide at the scene of the accident, flows through northeastern India into Bangladesh and out into the Bay of Bengal.

Gogoi added that an inquiry would be launched, but rescue efforts remained the priority.

Police said 105 bodies had been counted and some 150 people were rescued or swam to safety, adding that the ferry carried no lifeboats or lifebelts and the chances of picking up more survivors were remote.

Two helicopters scoured the river from above as soldiers and police officers reinforced divers and rescue teams working in rubber dinghies, but rain and dangerous water conditions restricted the search operation.

"The weather is inclement and the river is rough so the rescue efforts are being hampered," state police chief J N Choudhury said. No further bodies were recovered yesterday.

Survivors said many passengers had continued to board the ferry even after the last tickets had been sold.

The bodies of the victims were being kept at a local hospital.

The boat was on its way from Dhubri, 300km from the state's main city Guwahati, to Fakirganj.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called the sinking a "tragedy" and announced compensation would be paid to the victims' families.

He said in a statement he was "shocked and grieved to know about the loss of lives" and added he had instructed all possible assistance to be given to the government of Assam.

In one of the last major ferry disasters in India, at least 79 Muslim pilgrims drowned when an overcrowded boat carrying 150 people sank in the eastern state of West Bengal in October 2010.

Fishermen living with their families in tiny hamlets stretch-

Temple festival



Thousands of people watch processions led by caparisoned elephants during the 'pooram' festival in Thrissur in the southern state of Kerala yesterday. The Thrissur pooram, known as mother of all temple festivals, was introduced over a century back by rulers of the erstwhile Kochi princely state. Since then, the festival is celebrated every year by people in the locality setting aside religious divides.

BJP, JD-U differ on presidential election

IANS
New Delhi

Differences in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the presidential election became apparent yesterday with a key ally saying it does not stand by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The BJP has said it will not support either Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee or Vice President Hamid Ansari.

The BJP denied there was a rift with the Janata Dal-United.

However, JD-U leader and NDA convener Sharad Yadav minced no words.

The JD-U, he said, did not

agree with the BJP's views and there had been no discussion on the presidential candidate in the BJP-led opposition alliance.

"The view that Sushma ji has expressed is their party's view. There has not been any discussion with us or in the NDA on the presidential candidates," Yadav told reporters.

BJP leader Sushma Swaraj on Monday said her party would not support Mukherjee or any other Congress candidate. She also said the party would not back Ansari but was open to former president A P J Abdul Kalam.

Attempting to paper over the cracks, BJP spokesman later said Yadav was right and the

views expressed by Swaraj were not of the NDA.

"Mrs Sushma Swaraj had said it has not been discussed in the NDA. The line taken by both leaders are same," party spokesman Rajiv Pratap Rudy said.

"There is no rift whatsoever between the BJP and the JD-U on this issue. It's mere speculation or an interpretation, which was uncalled," he said.

"Sushma ji had said we will not have any deal with the Congress... there has been no discussion in the NDA yet. We will first discuss it in the BJP, then the NDA, and then with larger opposition," added his colleague Shah Nawaz Hussain.

The Samajwadi Party (SP),

which is extending outside support to the Congress-led government, agreed with the BJP that Kalam was a good choice and pitched for a Muslim candidate.

SP leader Kamal Farooqui also suggested the names of Chief Election Commissioner S Y Qureshi and former deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha K Rahman Khan.

"My party is discussing names. We will come out with a name very soon... the non-NDA parties are in support of a Muslim candidate, and as the BJP is for A P J Abdul Kalam, they may also support if a good Muslim candidate is pitched," Farooqui told TV news channel Times Now.

Collector may be freed today

Maoists may set free Sukma District Collector Alex Paul Menon free today, official sources in Chhattisgarh said yesterday. "Maoist interlocutors G Hargopal and B D Sharma communicated to the Maoists today that they had signed an agreement on Monday night with mediators appointed by the Chhattisgarh government, and it is believed the rebels have no objection to releasing Menon by tomorrow," a top official said. Chief Minister Raman Singh chaired a cabinet meeting yesterday that approved the agreement signed between the two sides for release of Menon. The mediators from the government as well as the Maoists had signed a two-page draft agreement on Monday night.

Villagers watch as a piece of a sunken ferry is pulled up onto the bank of the river Brahmaputra near Buri village in Goalpara district of Assam state yesterday.

Nupur stands in jail queue for lunch

Dentist Nupur Talwar stood in queue to get her lunch of 'arhar dal,' 'alo palak' and 'chapati' yesterday in Ghaziabad's Dasna jail. She also got a book from the jail library, a jail official said. Talwar, the mother of murdered teenager Aarushi, would have to spend another night in the jail with a special court reserving until today its order on her bail plea. Talwar, who is in barrack number 13 along with 69 other women inmates, is "like a normal qadi (prisoner)," Dasna jail superintendent Viresh Raj Sharma said. "She stood in line like the other inmates to get her lunch and is mixing with other inmates," Sharma added. Talwar woke up at 5.30am and had a simple breakfast of 'gur-chana' with tea after spending a night in the jail. She is a suspect in the 2008 twin murders of her daughter Aarushi and the family's domestic help Hemraj.

Sharma said Talwar interacted with fellow prisoners and claimed innocence.

"No special treatment was given to her," Sharma said.

Talwar was taken into custody on Monday morning, shortly after

surrendering before the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) special judge S Lal, who rejected her plea for interim bail.

Talwar was not in court yesterday as her lawyers argued that she be given bail. Her husband, Rajesh Talwar, who is already out on bail, was also not in the court.

Her lawyers argued there was no scientific evidence against her in the twin murders on May 16, 2008.

While Aarushi's body, with her throat slit, was discovered first, the body of Hemraj was found later from the terrace of the house.

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Afghanistan seeks Indian equipment for security forces

IANS
New Delhi

A fortnight after multiple terror strikes, Afghanistan yesterday sought India's assistance in equipping its security forces, indicating increased security co-operation between the two countries in the run-up to the withdrawal of international forces from the violence-torn country.

Underlining its "unwavering commitment" to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, India, on its part, conveyed that it was open to such ideas and would ensure that the country does not become "a target for extremist forces".

Against the backdrop of the continuing volatility in Afghanistan and Pakistan's efforts to control the reconciliation process, External Affairs Minister SM Krishna held wide-ranging talks with his Afghan counterpart Zalmay Rassoul.

The two foreign ministers held the maiden meeting of the India-Afghanistan Partnership Council, which was set up under the landmark strategic partnership agreement sealed in October last year during the visit of Afghan President Hamid Karzai here. This was the first bilateral strategic pact Afghanistan has signed with any other country.

With the Taliban upping the ante, expanding security and counter-terror co-operation figured prominently in the talks. Issues relating to the safety of nearly 4,000 Indians living in that country and the security of Indian missions and facilities figured in the discussions.

India also announced that it would hold a meeting of regional investors ahead of the Tokyo conference in July.

"With India, we are not only willing to discuss the training of our officers, but also equipping of security forces," Rassoul said at a joint press conference with Krishna after the talks.

He was responding to a question on whether Afghanistan was seeking military equipment from India for its armed forces.

"Afghanistan's defence of its own territory is of extreme importance to us"

Rassoul, however, did not reveal the precise nature of assistance Afghanistan was seeking from India. "Security organisations of the two countries are in discussion," was all he would say.

Admitting that India has been involved in training of some sections of the Afghan National Army, Krishna said India will continue to do so. "We have always reacted positively to any suggestions from Afghanistan," he said when asked whether India would be supplying equipment to Afghan armed forces.

As the clock ticks away for the withdrawal of the international coalition force in Afghanistan, the international community is focusing on bolstering the capacity of the Afghan forces.

Rassoul asserted that the Afghan forces will take full responsibility for the security of Afghanistan.

India, which has pledged \$2bn for an array of recon-

struction activities in Afghanistan, has stakes in the security of the neighbouring country which Pakistan tends to regard as its strategic backyard.

Alluding to the April 15 multiple terror attacks in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, Krishna commended the Afghan National Security Force for handling the attacks with "confidence" and hoped that they would be able to take care of the country's security after international troops leave in 2014.

"Afghanistan's defence of its own territory is of extreme importance to us. Our security is entwined with the stability and security of Afghanistan," Krishna replied when asked about the fear of the Taliban takeover after the exit of the western troops in 2014.

He also pitched for "an Afghan-led inclusive and transparent reconciliation process" that sticks to "red lines" laid down at the earlier conferences in Bonn and Kabul that envisages negotiations with only elements who accept the Afghan constitution and abjure violence.

Krishna underlined India's unwavering commitment to "assisting the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation." "Let me assure you that while it is a time of change and transformation in the region, India's commitment to Afghanistan is neither 'transitory' nor in 'transition,' he said.

"We will continue to partner the Afghan government to ensure that Afghanistan is a source of regional stability and does not become a target for extremist forces," he stressed.

The bomb was planted in a parked car on the outskirts of Quetta, Baluchistan's capital; No claim of responsibility, say police

AFP
Quetta

A car bomb killed two people and wounded 16 others, including five paramilitary troops, in Pakistan's troubled southwest yesterday, police said.

The explosives were planted under a car parked on Saryab Road on the outskirts of Quetta, the capital of the oil- and gas-rich province of Baluchistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

"At least two civilians were killed and 16 others, including five troops, were injured in the explosion, which took place as an FC (Frontier Corps) convoy passed by the car," local police official, Abdul Qayyum, said.

Another local police official, Noor Ahmad, confirmed the casualties and said the explosion "apparently targeted the FC convoy".

There was no claim of responsibility, but Baluchistan suffers from Islamist militancy, sectarian violence between Sunnis and



Pakistani firefighters extinguish burning auto-rickshaws after a bomb explosion in Quetta yesterday.

Shia Muslims and a separatist insurgency.

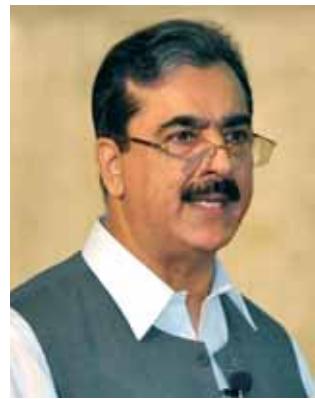
On Sunday, the decapitated body of a British aid worker, Khalil Dale, was found in Quetta, almost four months after he was

snatched by masked gunmen in the city. He was the third Westerner kidnapped and beheaded in Pakistan since 2002.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed since Baluch rebels

rose up in 2004 against the federal Pakistani government, demanding political autonomy and a greater share of profits from the oil, gas and mineral resources in the region.

Courts approached for removal of PM Gilani

Internews
Islamabad

Gilani: call for disqualification

Petitions seeking Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's disqualification poured in courts across the country yesterday.

A petition filed in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) yesterday sought the court to order Gilani to stop serving as prime minister after his conviction in the contempt of court case.

It states that the premier defied the court's orders by not writing a letter to the Swiss authorities asking them to reopen graft cases against President Asif Ali Zardari and thus he should be disqualified.

The petition maintains that according to Article 63(1)(g) of the constitution, the prime minister stands disqualified from being a member of the National Assembly and thus, his cabinet also

tion would deem such actions to be unconstitutional.

It added that all federal ministers, advisers and special assistants should be asked to quit their offices.

The petitioner, advocate Chaudhry, cited all advisers and special assistants to the prime minister, the federal law secretary, attorney general and the chief election commissioner as respondents in the petition.

Meanwhile, the Sindh High Court yesterday adjourned the hearing of a petition filed by advocate Syed Moulvi Iqbal Haider on the same issue till May 3.

Justice Faisal Arab and Naheed Akhtar took up the petition which was filed on Saturday on the request of Haider. The hearing will now take place in an open court on Thursday.

Justice Maqbool Baqar earlier declined to hear the same petition, saying that there were too many cases to be heard in the day

and not enough time. The petition too, seeks to move the Speaker of National Assembly to ask the chief election commissioner to declare the seat of the prime minister vacant upon Gilani's conviction of contempt of court.

The petition numbered CP-D 1600/2012 cited the NA speaker, the chief election commissioner and the federal law secretary as the main respondents.

The petition reiterated that the Supreme Court has left the decision of unseating the premier up to those who hold constitutional offices.

It thus, requested NA Speaker Fehmida Mirza to ask the chief election commissioner to declare the seat vacant.

The petition also requests the commissioner to convene a meeting to exclusively discuss the issue of Gilani's disqualification after he was convicted and sentenced.



Afghanistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zalmay Rassoul shakes hands with his Indian counterpart, S M Krishna during a meeting in New Delhi yesterday.

Afghan protesters accuse Nato of killing civilians

AFP
Kabul

Hundreds of Afghan protesters blocked highways in two separate demonstrations on Tuesday, accusing US-led Nato troops of killing children and civilians, officials and witnesses said.

In the first demonstration, protesters carrying the bodies of four children aged eight to 12 blocked the Kabul-Kandahar highway in the south and chanted anti-US slogans, they said.

A spokesman for Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Lieutenant Commander Brian Badura, said initial reports suggested that the children were killed by insurgent fire.

"We are aware of an incident in southern Afghanistan yesterday. ALP (Afghan Local Police), along with coalition advisors, were meeting with local villagers when they were attacked by insurgents," he said.

"Initial reporting indicates



Afghans shout slogans during a protest against the Nato operation which allegedly killed two civilians.

there were a number of children killed and wounded by the insurgents. The children were evacuated by coalition forces to a medical facility for treatment.

The deputy governor of Zabol province, Mohamed Jan Rasouly, said the children died during an exchange of fire between Taliban insurgents and ISAF and Af-

ghan security forces in Shahjow in the troubled southern province on Monday.

The gunfire began when the security forces were meeting local community leaders and came under attack by insurgents.

"ISAF and Afghan troops returned fire. There was an exchange of fire during which four

children were killed and some others kids were injured. Today the people are protesting the killing of the children," Rasouly said.

The official said his initial findings suggested the casualties were caused by Taliban fire.

Police official Mohamed Zahir said that "a few hundred" people took part in the protest. The men carried the bodies of four children they alleged were killed in ISAF fire, he said.

In a separate demonstration in eastern Laghman province, protesters carrying the bodies of two men blocked the highway from Kabul to Jalalabad, chanting "Death to America and Death to (Afghan President Hamid Karzai)"

Mohamed Aziz Kuchi, the uncle of one of the dead men, said that "around 2am last night, Afghan and foreign forces entered our house. They opened fire on us, killing two young men."

"They took eight others away, including a 75 year-old man. They were all civilians, with no links to the Taliban."

Pakistani university discards Rushdie books after protests

Internews
Islamabad

After protests on the campus and outside by the students and common people, Pakistani University of Peshawar syndicate yesterday set aside the Academic Council's decision to include a controversial writer's books in MPhil and PhD courses offered by the English Literature department.

During a meeting, the syndicate decided to drop *Shame* and *Midnight Children* written by Salman Rushdie from the list of suggested books for PhD and MPhil courses of English Literature, according to a spokesman for the university.

"No book of Salman Rushdie is or will be included in MPhil and PhD courses of English Literature as a controversial writer for authoring a blasphemous fiction, *Satanic Verses*.

Sources said the two books were part of a list presented to the Academic Council as suggested reading for MPhil and PhD courses and since the

council 'overloaded with' the items on agenda, it approved the list without thorough examination.

They, however, insisted that there were no ulterior motives behind the approval as some books were suggested for reading for the World English Literature for MPhil and PhD classes.

A source in the department said the World English Literature was a new course introduced to let students know of the contributions of non-English writers since all good books were authored by writers of the previously colonised countries.

He said some writers from India and Pakistan had recently produced better writings and the course intended to enlighten MPhil and PhD students about them.

He said the books suggested for MPhil and PhD reading included Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kamila Shamsi's *Broken Verse*, a political fiction, and Daniyal Moheen-uddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wounds*, which is about women in Pakistan.

"There was a misunderstanding. Neither these books are on our list of suggested reading nor have we a single book of Salman Rushdie in our library," he said.

Sources in the university said the Academic Council had approved the two books for MPhil and PhD courses of English Literature but the syndicate decided to drop them from the list of suggested books without much discussion.

"There was a misunderstanding. Neither these books are on our list of suggested reading nor have we a single book of Salman Rushdie in our library," he said.



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GULF TIMES

The balance of power in English football changing

The balance of power in English football shifted across the city of Manchester on Monday evening as the blue half of the city took a step ahead in the race for the title by beating defending champions, United.

The perennial "noisy neighbours" have reached new levels of annoyance, and although the race to the Premier League trophy is not yet over, it seems that this result could mark a significant change and signal a definite end to the era of "the Big Four".

As Alex Ferguson prepares to celebrate 25 years in charge of Manchester United during the most successful tenure at a club in modern football, he has witnessed his team surrender the initiative in the competition after a disappointing return of four points from a possible twelve in recent weeks.

His frustration at the shift in power was plain to see during the match billed the most important in the

It takes more than money in the bank to create success on the pitch

history of the Premier League. He confronted his opposite number on the touchline during the match, going nose to nose with Mancini and accusing him of constantly badgering

the match officials.

In reality though, his exasperation was a product of his own team's lacklustre display. Instead it was Manchester City who rose to the occasion, and despite failing to create many scoring opportunities, they always looked the most likely to put the ball in the back of the net. It was fitting that their inspirational captain, Vincent Kompany scored the winning goal which puts his team in the driving seat for the rest of the season.

Mancini insists that Ferguson is still the more likely manager to be celebrating on May 13, claiming that his side's difficult match against Newcastle could result in another shift in initiative.

But the way that his team is performing at the moment belies this claim and would suggest that City can maintain their good form and top the highest tier of English football for the third time in their history.

Many will argue that this history does not compete with the illustrious records of the likes of United, Liverpool or perhaps even Arsenal, and that the current success has been bought by the millions of dollars injected by owner, Sheikh Mansour.

To believe that any of the top clubs do not rely on massive funding is naive, indeed perhaps the most notable aspect of modern football is that money is of the utmost significance.

However, it has also been proven on many occasions that it takes more than money in the bank to create success on the pitch.

On Monday night, one team wanted it more than the other and one group of players was more intent on reaching the peak of English football. Money cannot buy passion or commitment, and it is because of these, that Manchester City have taken a massive step closer to getting their hands on the most coveted domestic trophy in European football.

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Creating a monster hit:
Time Out Page 11



Philippines initiative aims to narrow the wealth gap

Inequality is rising in 11 countries making up 82% of Asia's population

By John O'Callaghan
Manila

Fe Capco and her five children live in a shack with no running water along a dirt track in eastern Manila. She earns about \$100 a month washing clothes and her husband used to bring in about \$70 a month driving a motorcycle taxi until he went blind.

But things are better than they used to be.

Through a programme in the Philippines called Pantawid Pamilya (Family Subsistence), 3mn poor households like Capco's get small grants from the government if they keep their children in school and take them regularly to health centres.

"It's really a big help because now we don't have a problem about whether we can have food to eat or if the kids have money to go to school," Capco, 43, said with her two-year-old daughter Rihanna in her lap.

A high school graduate with gleaming eyes and a ready smile, Capco has been in the ramshackle community for 18 years. None of her neighbours has a steady job.

With a quarter of its people below the poverty line as the population crests 100mn, the Philippines points to the need for developing Asia to reverse worsening inequality and

broaden the benefits of the region's tremendous economic growth.

Conditional Cash Transfer schemes like Pantawid Pamilya - so named for the conditions imposed to qualify for benefits - were pioneered in Brazil and Mexico and have proven very effective in giving immediate help to the poor and breaking vicious cycles of poverty by improving health, education and

Narrowing the wealth gap has become as pressing as poverty alleviation, making it a key theme of this week's annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila with government officials, bankers and civil society groups from 67 countries.

Inequality is rising in 11 countries making up 82% of Asia's population, the ADB says. That list includes China, India and Indonesia - three huge economies driving much of the growth.

"Relative to other regions, the recent period of growth in Asia has been both less inclusive and less pro-poor," the International Monetary Fund said in a report.

Even wealthy countries are feeling the pain.

In Japan, the world's third-largest economy, a rapidly ageing society is putting pressure on a pension system designed when it was assumed contributions would rise in perpetuity.

In South Korea, the 15th largest economy, relative poverty has worsened, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said in a recent survey of the country.

In 1990, about 8% of South Koreans

lived on less than half of the median income. These days, it is about 15%.

For Rajat Nag, the ADB's managing director general, growing inequality "threatens to undermine the region's stability".

Governments in Asia have the resources to promote inclusive growth, he said in mid-April, and they should adopt more targeted social spending. That means rolling back poorly focused schemes like the fuel subsidies in Indonesia that the government finds hugely costly but politically difficult to kill.

"Countries have often felt that they first need to grow and they need to grow fast," Nag said. "But a principle of rising tides will lift all boats makes an assumption that no boat has a hole in the hull."

Conditional Cash Transfer schemes in the Philippines and Indonesia - and more limited ones in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia - are seen as one of the best ways to target spending.

Pantawid Pamilya, piloted in 2007, is now the largest social protection scheme in the Philippines. The monthly grants of up to 1,400 pesos (\$33) go to the mother, as experience shows women tend to spend the money on food, medicine and school supplies.

"From the beginning, the programme was very well designed," Nazmul Chaudhury, the World Bank's point person for Pantawid Pamilya, told Reuters.

"In terms of the sophistication of an integrated programme, the rigour of the poverty targeting database and

the potential for this as a larger social safety net, there's nothing like that in the region."

Capco and her neighbours live just a short drive from the Makati business district where manicured squares, office towers, fancy hotels and expensive boutiques might mislead the casual visitor into thinking the Philippines is a wealthy country.

Reality is more squalid for many of the 13mn people in congested Manila, including nearly 600,000 families classified as "informal settlers" - a polite term for squatters like Capco.

Clashes in the capital last month between 1,500 squatters and police trying to enforce a court-ordered demolition of makeshift stalls left one man dead and dozens hurt. Residents pelted police with rocks, petrol bombs and bags of human waste.

In the countryside, life can be even harder. Lack of opportunities in rural areas drive many people to Manila and other cities, often into slums.

Pantawid Pamilya has not been without its challenges in a country with pervasive corruption, powerful vested interests and overburdened health and education systems.

Despite all that, it is having a "very strong impact already on education", said Chaudhury of the World Bank.

The benefits are also clear to Capco, who plans to set up a small stall selling rice cakes and other snacks.

"My hope is for all my kids to finish college," she said as half-clothed toddlers played in the grass and two goats grazed nearby. "I will try my best to support their education." - Reuters



Fe Capco, a beneficiary of government's Conditional Cash Transfer programme holds her daughter Rihanna on her lap at the entrance of their shanty in Pateros, Metro Manila. Through the Pantawid Pamilya (Family Subsistence) programme in the Philippines, about 3mn poor households get small grants from the government if they take their children to health centres regularly and keep them in school.

Arab Spring frees media, mostly

By David Rosenberg
The Media Line

For the first time in eight years, freedom of the global press was not in the decline in 2011 and for that the world can thank protesters who brought down dictatorships in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, the human rights monitor Freedom House says in its annual survey of the media.

Led by dramatic improvements in press freedom in Libya and Tunisia, and with some help from Egypt, Freedom House says its index of global press freedom edged up 0.14 point last year, offsetting declines in most other parts of the world. Libya, which under Muammar Gaddafi's rule had one of the world's most suppressed media, was designated "partly free" in 2011. Tunisia, which also enjoyed a huge rise in its score, won the same designation.

At the same time, the Arab Spring protests that unleashed a new era of media freedom also elicited a push-back from the region's authoritarian regimes still fighting to stay in power. Moreover, the infant democracies the turmoil has created are fragile and

have already experienced some reversals, Freedom House president David Kramer said.

"The newly opened media environments in countries like Tunisia and Libya are critical for the future of democratic development in the region," he said. "Also of great concern are those countries, both in the Middle East and around the world, where authoritarian regimes are now on the defensive, creating an even more perilous situation for journalists."

"The newly opened media environments in countries like Tunisia and Libya, while still tenuous and far from perfect, are critical for the future of democratic development in the region and must be nurtured and protected," he said. "Also of great concern are those countries, both in the Middle East and around the world, where authoritarian regimes are now on the defensive, creating an even more perilous situation for journalists."

In fact, the Arab Spring had the per-

verse effect of sparking crackdowns on media all around the world, Freedom House said. Fearing their own people might be inspired to revolt, many countries took steps ranging from information blackouts in the state media to sophisticated Internet and text-message filtering.

The percentage of the world's population enjoying free media declined by half a percentage point last year to its lowest since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into its survey.

Moreover, the big improvement in press freedom last year did not have a big enough impact to change the status of the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) as the world's chilliest place for journalists and bloggers. Even though the average score for Mena countries jumped 2.9% last year after three years of declines, it had the poorest ratings of any of the world's regions.

Five Mena countries were designated "partly free" and 13 as "not free". Those 13 accounted for more than 70% of the region's population, according to the report, Freedom of the Press 2012: A Global Survey of Media Independence.

"Although transnational satellite television and Internet-based information platforms have had a positive impact, the media in much of the region remained constrained by emergency rule, state ownership and editorial directives, harsh blasphemy legislation, and laws against insulting monarchs and public figures," the report said.

Syria's rating fell five points to 89 in 2011 as it barred foreign journalists from covering the 14-month-old rebellion against the rule of President Bashar al-Assad. Independent media outlets have been forced to close, giving the state media a monopoly, Freedom House said.

Although the Arab Spring is little more than a year old, many of the democratising governments that have arisen from it have sought to restrict press freedom, the report found. The transitional Libyan regime has liberalised the media environment but hasn't established institutions that would guarantee it. In Egypt, "many features of the old regime" have survived and the interim military government has reportedly interfered in television news, Freedom House said.



New vaccines spell
hope for Ghana's kids:
Time Out Page 13

COMMENT |



Keyboard cops on the prowl

If CISPA enters into US law, civil liberties will be threatened in a way that no democracy can tolerate

By Naomi Wolf
New York

Almost no one had read the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA) before it was rushed through the United States House of Representatives in late April and sent to the Senate. CISPA is the successor to SOPA, the "anti-piracy" bill that was recently defeated after an outcry from citizens and Internet companies.

SOPA, framed by its proponents in terms of protecting America's entertainment industry from theft, would have shackled content providers and users, and spawned copycat legislation around the world.

Now, with CISPA, the clampdown on Internet freedom comes in the guise of a bill aimed at cyber terrorism that should give Internet entrepreneurs – and all business leaders – nightmares. And yet, this time, major Internet and technology companies, including Facebook and Microsoft, supported the bill, on the grounds that it would create a clear procedure for handling government requests for information.

Microsoft, at least, belatedly dropped its support after recognising that the law would allow the US government to force any Internet business to hand over information about its users' online activities.

But the bill is far more alarming than that. For example, "the head of a department or agency of the Federal Government receiving cyber threat information...shall provide such cyber threat information to the National

Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center of the Department of Homeland Security".

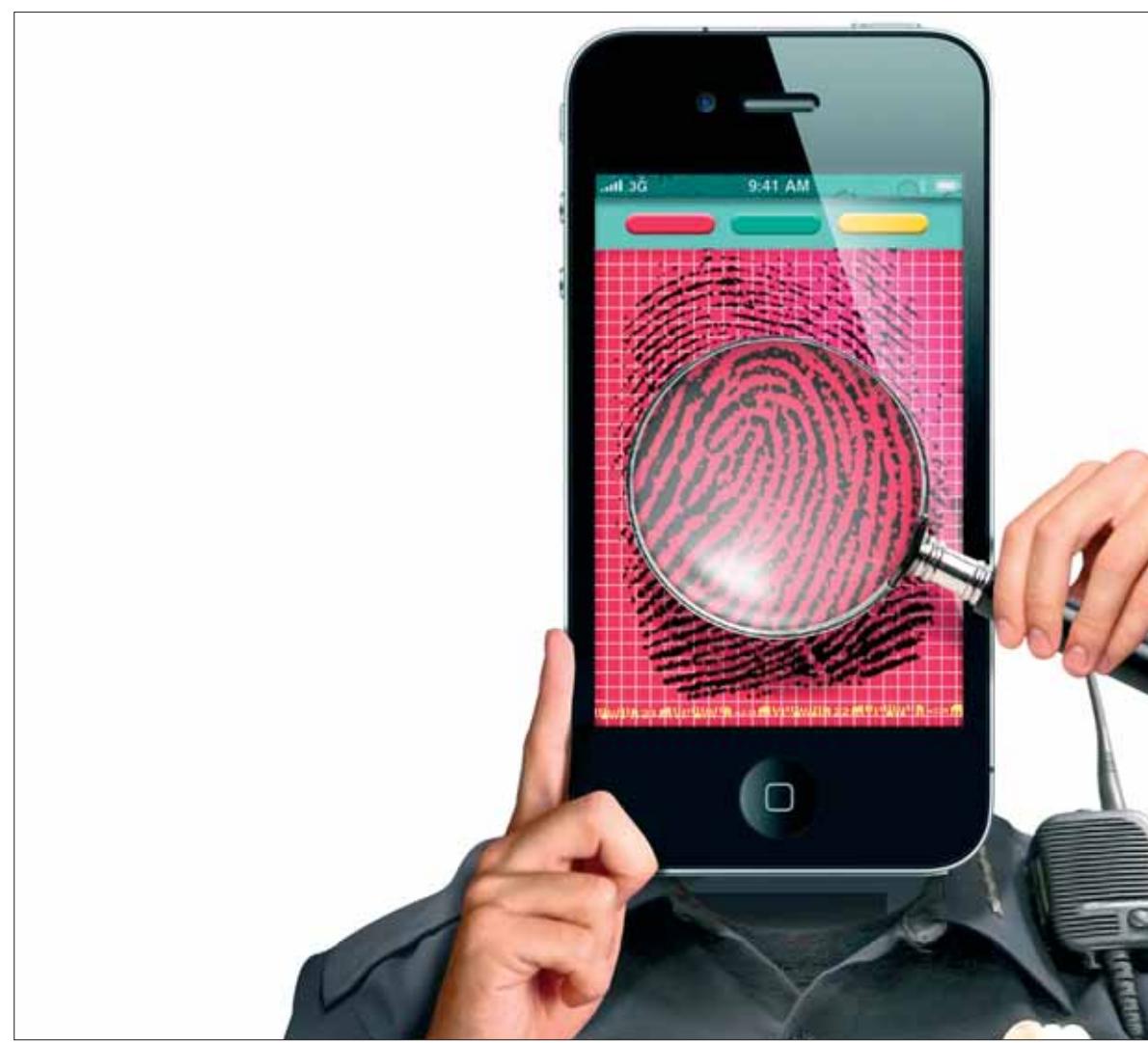
No actual threat need be made. And what counts as "threat information" is defined so broadly that it can mean anything. "Notwithstanding any other provision of law," the government may rely on "cybersecurity systems to identify and obtain cyber threat information."

The vague concept of "cyber threat information" does not just let DHS investigate anyone. By including information pertaining to "a vulnerability of a system or network of a government or private entity" and the "theft or misappropriation of private or government information, intellectual property, or personally identifiable information," the bill appears to target whistleblowers and leakers, and threatens investigative journalism.

The respected Internet technology site Techdirt has called the bill "insanity": "CISPA can no longer be called a cybersecurity bill at all. The government would be able to search information...for the purposes of investigating American citizens with complete immunity from all privacy protections as long as (it) can claim someone committed a 'cybersecurity crime'."

Indeed, the DHS may look through data transmitted online without restraint, regardless of what it ultimately finds. And, in this respect, business leaders who believe that this bill is aimed at terrorists – or "at most" at the domestic activists and documentarians who can make it harder for them to operate – should be careful about what they wish for.

Indeed, because the definition of cyberterrorism is so broad and subjective, US business leaders who are pushing for CISPA risk exposing themselves to the DHS's power to scrutinise their personal lives, subpoena their bank records, and disrupt



their electronic communications. And the law would give the DHS similar control over the personal and financial lives of anyone who does business in the US or with American companies – a power that the US government has already tried to assert by issuing

a subpoena for Icelandic legislator Birgitta Jonsdottir's personal bank records.

Everyone has secrets: love affairs, substance-abuse problems, mental-health diagnoses, or questionable discussions with accountants. In a strong

civil society, these personal matters properly remain private. In a surveillance society, they become leverage.

I am fearful of the effects of unrestrained domestic surveillance for specific reasons: I worked in two US presidential campaigns, and saw

firsthand the standard tactics – non-violent but still mafia-inflected – of high-level politics.

There was no shortage of privately contracted surveillance and wiretapping. Campaigns routinely planted spies – interns, household staff, or even lovers – in the opposing camp, and devoted vast numbers of man-hours to combing through private records in opposition research. The results were then regularly used behind the scenes to bully, intimidate, and coerce targets.

Most of these "scandals" never saw the light of day – the goal was pressure, not disclosure. CISPA would give the same power to the DHS.

America's business leaders may think that they are immune, but the bill's definition of a "threat" is so vague – with no distinction between a "threat" to the Internet and any random, even metaphorical "threat" on the Internet – that the DHS may keep tabs on anyone who says something that irks someone in a cubicle.

If CISPA enters into US law, alongside the recently enacted National Defence Authorisation Act – which gives the government the power to detain any American for anything forever – fundamental civil liberties will be threatened in a way that no democracy can tolerate.

And because so much of the freedom of the Internet around the world derives from the freedom of expression that until recently characterised the US, enactment of CISPA poses a similar threat around the world.

The good news is that President Barack Obama has vowed to veto CISPA. The bad news is that he made – and then broke – a similar vow on the NDAA. – Project Syndicate

•Naomi Wolf is a political activist and social critic whose most recent book is *Give Me Liberty: A Handbook for American Revolutionaries*.

Space rock 'caught dinosaurs already in decline'

AFP
Paris

Large, plant-eating dinosaurs were already in decline by the time a space rock smashed into Earth 65m years ago and ended the reptiles' long reign, a new study says.

The findings by scientists in the US and Germany do not dispute the mass extinction that so dramatically ended the Cretaceous era.

But they suggest the dinosaur kingdom, or at least some of its species, was not struck down in its prime as is often hypothesised.

"A lot of the time people think of the dinosaurs going extinct: 'oh, you know, an asteroid did it... the dinosaurs were doing just fine, an asteroid

came along and killed them all off,'" Steve Brusatte, a palaeontologist at the American Museum of Natural History, told AFP.

"This was a world that was undergoing a lot of changes before the asteroid hit."

"I think now we can say it was probably more complicated than that. You had some dinosaurs that were doing just fine, but you had others like these big plant eaters that were maybe in trouble."

"This was a world that was undergoing a lot of changes before the asteroid hit. It wasn't quite such a nice,

easy story as we might like to think."

The study compared the skeletal structure of 150 different species of land-bound dinosaurs to see how they changed over time, the idea being to see if a species was up, down or stable in survival terms.

By this benchmark, the large herbivores – specifically, horned and duckbilled dinosaurs – were becoming less and less diverse during the last 12mn years of the Cretaceous.

The four-footed giants "were becoming more similar to each other, they were losing variability," said Brusatte. "Usually when you see these big decreases in the anatomy like this, that means that a group is in trouble."

Groups that show an increase in variety boost their chances of survival because they can fill new habitat

niches or adapt to changing conditions, he explained.

But if big herbivores were on the skids towards the end of the Cretaceous, carnivorous dinosaurs and medium-sized herbivores were thriving, say the researchers.

"What we can say for certain now is when the asteroid hit and when these volcanoes began erupting, they didn't hit a world that was totally OK, they didn't hit a static world," said Brusatte.

"At the time, dinosaurs, at least some of them, were undoing major evolutionary changes and at least these plant eaters were declining."

The reason for their downward spiral is unclear but "was probably something ecological," he said. The findings are published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

Live issues

Food allergies: worrying reactions

By Anne Wollenberg
London

Chefs don't want to poison their patrons, you'd presume. But if you have a food allergy or intolerance, you may be familiar with the game of Spot The Killer Ingredient I play when eating out with my fiancé, who is allergic to bell peppers (which show up in the most ridiculous places, such as on top of a steak sandwich) or my mother, who has a severe potato allergy – the tiniest amount will send her into anaphylactic shock. I've seen waiters not slyly when she explains this, then bring her a salad topped with crisps.

When it comes to allergies, restaurant staff can be well-meaning but ill-informed. In separate studies by Brighton and Sussex Medical School and the Jaffé Food Allergy Institute at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, restaurant workers were interviewed about their awareness of allergies. Over a fifth of the respondents in both surveys thought someone with an allergy could eat a small amount of that foodstuff (they can't), and over a fifth thought it was fine to just pick it off a finished meal (it's not).

Despite these and a frankly terrifying list of other misconceptions (38% of the Brits interviewed wrongly believed a glass of water could help to alleviate an allergic reaction, for example), the majority of respondents in both surveys thought they could confidently provide a safe meal for a person with a food allergy.

Then there are the people who hear "allergic" and think "fussy". Of course,



some people really are just being fussy, but the problem comes when restaurant staff take it upon themselves to decide who has a genuine allergy and who is just crying wolf.

"So many people claim to have an allergy or intolerance when they don't, so restaurant and service staff don't take it seriously," says food and travel writer Nikki Bayley, who is allergic to mushrooms and jalapeno peppers. "I've swollen up in restaurants after asking if they're

in the recipe – including in restaurants that know she's there to review them. "One chef decided there was some sauce I had to try. I spent an hour and a half being violently sick in their bathroom."

"Sometimes they seem to think it's not a big deal and I'm just being fussy," agrees writer Camilla Chafer, who has a milk allergy. "Yes, the sauce has milk in it, now you mention it. Can't you just scrape it off? No, I can't. It's not a choice and I'm

not deliberately being awkward. I just don't want to vomit or pass out in your restaurant."

This is something restaurants need to recognise, says Alex Gazzola, author of the Food Allergy and Intolerance Ink blog. "There's a psychological side to food sensitivity – people may feel frightened, ashamed, anxious or embarrassed." It's hardly pleasant being the person who kicks up a fuss and sends their meal back.

It would be far too cynical to assume restaurants simply don't care and don't want the hassle of catering for customers with allergies. After all, those that do it well can count on enduring customer loyalty and positive recommendations – and nobody wants to do it badly, do they? When I phone some restaurants to ask if they can cater for people with allergies, they all insist they can, but from experience, I already know otherwise.

It's not as if staff would have to learn a million allergies and ingredients, they just need to listen when someone expresses concern about the menu. Gazzola also recommends that dishes are given clear, descriptive names (as opposed to "Chef's Special") and that menus be posted online so they can be studied in advance. He also advises diners with allergies to phone ahead if possible to ensure their needs can be accommodated.

Restaurants are not the sole culprits here: the worried well aren't helping either. "I'm not saying restaurants are terrible and they need to sort their act out," says Bayley. "People need to stop complaining about things that aren't the matter with them." – Guardian News and Media

Weather report

Three-day forecast



TODAY
High: 41 C
Low: 27 C
Relatively humid at first becoming hot by midday and partly cloudy with slight dust.

THURSDAY
High: 39 C
Low: 31 C
M Sunny

FRIDAY
High: 44 C
Low: 29 C
P Sunny

Fishermen's forecast
OFFSHORE DOHA
Wind: SE-SW 5-15 KT
Waves: 1-3 feet
INSHORE DOHA
Wind: SE-SW 5-15 KT
Waves: 1-2 feet

Around the region

	Weather today	Max/min	Weather tomorrow	Max/min
Abu Dhabi	Clear	42/26	M Sunny	42/27
Baghdad	C Rain	40/25	P Sunny	37/21
Dubai	M Sunny	37/28	M Sunny	38/28
Kuwait City	Clear	43/25	M Sunny	44/27
Manama	M Sunny	39/29	M Sunny	39/30
Muscat	M Sunny	40/27	M Sunny	39/28
Riyadh	P Sunny	39/29	M Sunny	40/26
Tehran	Clear	25/15	C Rain	28/14



Around the world

	Weather today	Max/min	Weather tomorrow	Max/min
Athens	Clear	27/17	M Sunny	27/17
Bangkok	P Sunny	39/29	C Rain	38/29
Beirut	T Storms	23/17	C Rain	22/17
Berlin	Clear	28/17	C Storms	23/15
Cairo	M Sunny	27/18	Clear	32/18
Cape Town	M Sunny	19/13	Rain	17/12
Colombo	M Sunny	31/24	M Sunny	31/24
Dhaka	T Storms	33/25	C Storms	34/25
Hong Kong	T Storms	31/26	C Storms	30/26
Istanbul	M Sunny	23/13	P Sunny	22/12
Jakarta	T Storms	34/24	C Storms	32/24
Karachi	Clear	37/26	M Sunny	41/27
London	Rain	15/09	C Rain	12/09
Manila	T Storms	32/27	C Storms	34/26
Moscow	M Sunny	13/03	M Sunny	14/05
New Delhi	Clear	37/22	M Sunny	36/23
New York	M Sunny	20/12	C Showers	14/14
Paris	C Rain	17/10	Fog	20/07
Sao Paulo	P Sunny	19/13	Fog	24/10
Seoul	M Sunny	25/12	M Sunny	24/13
Singapore	C Storms	31/26	C Storms	32/26
Sydney	M Sunny	23/14	Rain	20/11
Tokyo	Rain	19/17	Rain	21/18



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MSCI coverage may pave way for rise in status



US, Japan still considering regional trade accord; Mexico and Canada want to join talks



GULF TIMES
 Wednesday, May 2, 2012
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BUSINESS

In brief

'Snail-pace' reforms hit fund flows into GCC

By Santhosh V Perumal
 Business Reporter

The 'snail-pace' reforms of corporate and commercial laws in the Gulf region has led to an 'opaque' framework for foreign ownerships, hence appropriate revision in legislations to attract more foreign investments is required, according to a study sponsored by the Qatar Financial Centre Authority (QFCA).

Corporate laws, specifically related to ownership, were 'opaque', the QFCA study said, adding that although there have been significant improvements in the financial and capital market regulations, 'commercial and corporate laws have not moved in step.'

The study, titled 'The Asset Management Industry in the GCC: Growth Dynamics and Contours of the Next Phase of Evolution', says the biggest constraint in the growth of the asset management industry perhaps was the issue of 'opaque' regulations relating to foreign ownership, adding that at present, the GCC countries were at varying levels of transition to a 100% foreign ownership model.

"Given lack of flexibility in the corporate laws and the opaqueness of ownership, asset managers have had to devise ways around these issues," it said.

However, in an increasingly global financial world, in order to keep up with the other emerging financial centres and to facilitate long term growth of the asset management industry, GCC's onshore corporate laws need to have appropriate revisions, the study said.

"A unified regulation (in each country) and legally enforceable ownership model will remove a big hurdle in foreign investments," it said.

Stressing that there was significant opportunity for the GCC to attract foreign investors and fund managers from across the globe, the study said that as for fund-raising, the region would need to work on making structural improvements with respect to transparency

and corporate governance issues.

"This will facilitate reversing the underweight allocation by international investors," it said, adding Asian investors, specifically from China, were keen to consider investment propositions from the region.

Established fund managers should promptly capitalise on these opportunities, it said.

The global economic re-balancing and the GCC's growing trade relationships with Asia have led to a key shift in capital flows and will possibly be a crucial factor in shaping the GCC's asset management industry, according to the study.

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Stressing that there was significant opportunity for the GCC to attract foreign investors and fund managers from across the globe, the study said that as for fund-raising, the region would need to work on making structural improvements with respect to transparency

Barwa posts QR292mn gain in first quarter

Barwa Real Estate Company has reported 47% decline in its net profit to QR292.46mn in the first three months of this year. Rental income rose 5% to QR172.28mn and income from consultancy and other related services by 55% to QR11.03mn. It also made a profit of QR78.45mn on sale of properties and earned QR12.24mn as share of results from equity-accounted-investees. However, total revenues and gains more than halved to QR650.59mn as its profit on disposal of subsidiaries plunged 53% to QR194.66mn and reported a loss of QR25.38mn on re-measurement of investment properties against a gain of QR420.08mn in the year-ago period. Although operating expenses rose 20% to QR73.20mn, the company cut down its general and administrative costs by 55% to QR135.03mn and net finance costs by 57% to QR130.48mn. Total assets were valued at QR62.75bn. Total equity (attributable to owners of the parent company) stood at QR1.98bn on a capital base of QR3.89bn and earnings-per-share was QR0.75 at the end of March 31, 2012.

Indian exports rise 21%, but trade deficit hits high

AFP
 New Delhi

India's exports grew 21% in the last financial year to beat the government's target, official data showed yesterday, but the country's trade deficit surged to a record high.

India's merchandise exports crossed the government's \$300mn goal to reach \$303.7bn in the financial year ended March 2012. But imports soared by 32% to \$489bn, pushing India's trade deficit to an all-time high of \$185bn.

The trade deficit was more bad news for Asia's third-largest economy after global ratings giant Standard & Poor's downgraded India's credit outlook last week to negative, saying a slowing economy and swelling fiscal deficit was putting the country's prized investment-grade rating at risk.

Energy-hungry India's huge energy purchases accounted for a large chunk of the import bill, with rising fuel prices pushing up the bill. Oil imports went up by 47% to \$156bn

in 2011-12 with the country sourcing 80% of its crude abroad.

"The growing trade deficit, which is the highest in the history of India's trade, is a cause for concern," said Raheeqe Ahmed, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisation.

The trade deficit has raised worries about India's current account deficit – the gap in trade as well as capital flows – which stands at nearly 4% of GDP, the highest on record.

The country is no longer able to depend on the combination of revenues from its flagship outsourcing sector, remittances from Indians working abroad and foreign capital inflows to cover its ballooning imports.

The weak Indian currency, which has fallen by about 20% against the US dollar in the last 12 months, is making it even harder to attract foreign capital.

Also, while India's exports grew on an annual basis, overseas sales fell 5.7% to \$29bn in March from a year earlier. It was the first monthly export fall since late 2009 when India was feeling the effects of the last global financial crunch.



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US factory growth best in 10 months

Reuters
 New York

US manufacturing grew in April at the strongest rate in 10 months, easing concerns the economy had lost momentum at the start of the second quarter.

The Institute for Supply Management said yesterday its index of national factory activity rose to 54.8 from 53.4 in March. The figure topped expectations for the reading to decline to 53 and was also above the top end of forecasts in a Reuters poll.

A reading below 50 indicates contraction in the manufacturing sector, while a number above 50 indicates expansion.

Manufacturing accounts for about 12% of US economic activity and has been a cornerstone of the recovery from the 2007-2009 recession.

ISM's gauge of employment also rose to its highest level since last June, to a reading of 57.3 from 56.1. The forward-looking

new orders component racked up its best reading in a year at 58.2, up from 54.5.

The strong labour figure comes ahead of the government's more comprehensive monthly jobs report due on Friday, which is forecast to show the economy added 170,000 jobs in April, including 22,000 manufacturing positions.

The national ISM report was in contrast to some regional manufacturing reports from the industry group, including Chicago on Monday, that showed the rate of growth slowed last month.

It also bucked the trend of other recent data that suggested the economy lost some steam as the second quarter got under way, highlighting the bumpy nature of the recovery.

The ISM report on US factory activity followed data out of China that showed manufacturing there rose to a 13-month high in April, though that reading was slightly below expectations.

Encouraging signs in the economy prompted General Motors to lift its outlook for industry-wide US vehicle sales

this year, though GM reported its new sales dipped slightly in April.

Ford also reported a decline in sales for April yesterday, but both GM and Ford said their sales declines reflected a quirk in the calendar that resulted in three fewer selling days than in the year-ago month.

The US economy grew at a 2.2% rate in the first quarter, slower than the 3% pace logged in the final months of 2011.

Separate data yesterday showed construction barely rose in March as investment in public projects dropped to a five-year low.

Construction spending edged up only 0.1% to an annual rate of \$808.07bn, the Commerce Department said, after a revised 1.4% drop in February. Economists polled by Reuters had expected construction spending to rise 0.5%.

Also in March, lending to small businesses, a key driver of employment, fell for the third straight month, according to Thomson Reuters/PayNet Small Business Lending Index.



US, Japan still mulling regional trade agreement



Obama and Noda during their press conference at the White House.

Reuters
Washington

President Barack Obama has voiced support for Japan joining talks with the US and eight other countries on a free trade agreement in the fast-growing Asia-Pacific region, but said no final decision had been made.

"We instructed our teams to continue our consultation regarding Japan's interest in joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which would benefit both our economies and the region," Obama said at a joint news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

The US hopes to finish talks with Australia, New Zealand, Peru, Chile, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei on the TPP pact by the end of the year.

The countries say they are aiming for a "21st Century" agreement that goes further than previous trade pacts in tearing down barriers to trade and raising international standards in areas like labour and the environment.

In November, Japan, Mexico and Canada expressed interest in joining the talks. Over the past five months, the current members have been discussing the feasibility of bringing the three countries into the negotiations without lowering ambitions for the agreement or allowing the talks to drag on.

Canadian Trade Minister Ed Fast, in Australia to drum up support for his country's application, said it was unclear when a decision would be made or whether all three applications would be dealt with together.

"Each of our economies – Japan, Mexico, Canada – have unique circumstances, unique challenges, unique trade barriers that the current partners want to have addressed," Fast told Reuters in an interview at the Canadian consulate in Sydney.

"We believe it is to our benefit that our application be considered on its own merits rather than as a group."

Canada has faced opposition to its supply management system for agricultural producers, which has been criticised as a form of protectionism. Fast said Canada had told the partners all issues "without exception" would be on the negotiating table but there was no plan to dismantle the supply management approach.

"We've made a commitment to our Canadian farmers ... and we have no intention of breaking our word to that industry."

Many members of the US Congress are wary about allowing Japan, the world's third largest economy, into the negotiations.

They have demanded stronger evidence that Tokyo is ready to open its market to more US exports in sectors ranging from agriculture to autos.

The next time the top trade officials from the TPP countries will be together is in early June in Kazan, Russia, at the Apec (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation) trade ministers meeting.

Apec leaders are due to meet in early September in Vladivostok, Russia. That comes right after the US Democratic Party's convention to nominate Obama for president, raising questions about whether he will attend the Apec meeting.

Noda, who faces opposition at home to his push to join the TPP talks, said it was important the US and Japan work together on creating rules for the region in areas ranging from anti-terrorism and intellectual property rights protection to the oceans and outer space.

"In the economic area, we shall deepen bilateral economic ties and fortify the growth and prosperity of the two countries through the promotion of economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region," Noda said.

"Our countries will work on regional trade and investment rules-making with a view to building FTAAP, or the Free Trade Area of the Asian-Pacific," he said, referring to a longer-term goal of crafting a free trade pact among all 21 Apec members.

That "will advance consultations with a view to participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations," Noda said.

Obama and Noda also pledged to strengthen the US-Japan security alliance, the latest effort to project unity between Washington and its Asian partners as a counter-weight to China's growing assertiveness in the region.

The two leaders put their stamp of approval on a long-stalled agreement to sharply reduce the US military presence on the island of Okinawa, which could help ease the way for Obama's strategy of dispersing US forces around the western Pacific.

The Obama administration used Noda's visit and meetings between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defence Secretary Leon Panetta and their counterparts from the Philippines to showcase efforts to forge closer security ties with Asian allies.

CORPORATE RESULTS

BP profit falls as oil spill costs still weigh

Oil producer BP reported a bigger-than-expected 13% drop in underlying quarterly profit, as production fell after the group was forced to sell fields to pay for the Gulf of Mexico disaster, offsetting an increase in crude prices.

BP said yesterday output would continue to decline in the second quarter as it unveiled plans to sell a number of mature fields in the Gulf.

The London-based group also said it would have to spend more than earlier expected to clean up America's worst-ever offshore oil spill, although this was offset by a drop in the expected cost of paying out claims after the company agreed a settlement with impacted individuals and businesses.

Europe's second-largest oil group by market value said its replacement cost (RC) net profit reached \$4.93bn in the quarter, compared with \$5.61bn in the same period last year.

Stripping out one-off items such as the profit on asset sales, the result was down 13% to \$4.80bn, below an average forecast of \$5.10bn from a Reuters poll of nine analysts.

the previous quarter, but significantly better than a £3.5bn loss in the first quarter of 2011.

Britain's biggest retail bank in terms of customers said it was taking an extra £375mn provision to cover compensation for the mis-selling of insurance products following a spike in complaints received in February and March.

Lloyds had already set aside £3.2bn last year, which analysts thought was conservative. British rival Barclays also increased its provision last week.

Pfizer

Pfizer reported higher-than-expected quarterly earnings as improved profit margins and strong sales of its Lyrica nerve-pain drug partly offset plunging demand for its Lipitor cholesterol fighter, now facing cheaper generic rivals.

The global drug maker said sales of Lipitor, which lost patent protection in November, fell 42% to \$1.4bn.

Pfizer earned \$1.79bn, or 24¢ per share, in the first quarter. That compared with \$2.2bn, or 28¢ per share, a year earlier, when results suffered because of a litigation charge and costs of revamping research operations.

Excluding special charges to boost productivity and address legal matters, Pfizer earned 58¢ per share, from 60¢ a year ago. Analysts on average had expected 56¢, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

Total company revenue fell 7% to \$15.41bn, a bit below Wall Street expectations of \$15.47bn.

The New York drug maker agreed last week to sell its baby formula business to Nestle SA for \$11.85bn to focus on its core pharmaceuticals business. On Tuesday, Pfizer said it planned to allocate proceeds from the deal to share repurchases and possibly other uses.



MEDICARE GROUP Q.S.C. DOHA - QATAR

INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED MARCH 31, 2012



INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF 31 MARCH 2012

	31 March 2012 (Unaudited) QR.	31 December 2011 (Audited) QR.
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and Bank balances	62,017,049	60,150,700
Accounts receivable	102,883,876	80,202,512
Inventories	15,775,869	14,843,739
Prepayments and other debit balances	2,096,788	1,117,877
Assets of disposal group classified as held for sale	685,215	685,215
Total Current Assets	183,458,766	157,000,043
Non-current assets		
Investments	44,397,398	44,397,398
Property and equipment	622,568,771	627,606,600
Total non-Current assets	666,966,169	672,003,998
Total Assets	850,424,935	829,004,041
LIABILITIES AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY		
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	17,117,326	20,937,388
Retention payable	14,763,251	14,763,251
Accruals and other credit balances	25,719,958	24,770,635
Total current liabilities	57,600,535	60,471,274
Non-current liabilities		
Employees' end of service benefits	19,524,220	18,236,509
Total non-current liabilities	19,524,220	18,236,509
Total liabilities	77,124,755	78,707,782
Shareholders' equity		
Share capital	281,441,000	281,441,000
Legal reserve	11,232,936	11,232,936
Fair value reserve	(1,823,595)	(1,823,595)
Revaluation surplus	420,638,021	420,638,021
Proposed Dividends	-	30,958,510
Dividend Payable	30,958,510	7,849,386
Retained earnings / Accumulated losses	30,853,308	7,849,386
Total Shareholders' equity	773,300,180	750,296,258
Total Liabilities and Shareholders' equity	850,424,935	829,004,041

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors and signed on their behalf by the following on April 23, 2012.

Sheikh Thani Bin Abdulla Al-Thani
Chairman

Abdulwahed Al Mawlawi
Managing Director

INTERIM STATEMENT OF INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDING MARCH 31, 2012

	31 March 2012 (Unaudited) QR.	31 March 2011 (Unaudited) QR.
Continued operations		
Operating income	87,358,129	73,328,801
Operating costs	(49,397,159)	(42,189,603)
Gross Profit	37,960,970	31,139,197
Income from deposits with Islamic banks	140,648	35,805
Other income	2,916,248	1,918,712
General and administrative expenses	(11,629,232)	(10,683,075)
Depreciation expenses	(6,384,715)	(6,163,066)
Finance cost	-	(262,344)
Profit/(loss) for the period from continued operations	23,003,919	15,985,229
Net profit / (loss) for the period	23,003,919	15,985,229
Attributable to:		
Parent shareholders	23,003,919	15,985,229
Net Profit for the period	23,003,919	15,985,229
Basic and diluted Earnings per share attributable to owners of the parent	0.82	0.57

INTERIM STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDING MARCH 31, 2012

	31 March 2012 (Unaudited) QR.	31 March 2011 (Unaudited) QR.
Cash Flows from Operating Activities:		
Net profit for the period	23,003,919	15,985,229
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation of property and equipment	6,384,715	6,163,066
Provision for employees' end of service benefits, Net	1,287,744	1,291,795
	30,676,378	23,440,090
Accounts receivable	(22,681,367)	(7,839,088)
Inventories	(932,129)	1,203,978
Prepayments and other debit balances	(1,042,723)	(4,475,528)
Accounts payable	(3,820,062)	12,293,260
Accruals and other credit balances	1,013,138	4,806,011
Cash from / (used in) operations	3,213,235	29,428,723
Net Cash from / (used in) Operating Activities	3,213,235	29,428,723
Cash Flows from Investing Activities:		
Acquisition of property and equipment	(1,346,885)	(4,242,682)
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(1,346,885)	(4,242,682)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities:		
Borrowings	-	(1,966,623)
Net Cash from / (used in) Financing Activities	-	(1,966,623)
Net Increase / (Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	1,866,349	23,219,419
Cash and cash equivalents – beginning of the period	60,150,700	35,831,319
Cash and cash equivalents - End of Period	62,017,049	59,050,738

PARTNERSHIP PLANS

Eithad seeks more routes with Aer Lingus stake

Eithad Airways has bought a 3% stake in Irish airline Aer Lingus as a precursor to a commercial tie-up that could help Abu Dhabi's flagship carrier gain more European routes to catch up with Middle Eastern rivals. The deal also positions state-owned Eithad as a potential buyer of the indebted Irish government's 25% stake in Aer Lingus, which it is considering selling as part of its international bailout. After months of speculation about a possible deal, the airlines said yesterday that Eithad's stake purchase reflected "its desire to forge a commercial partnership," with Aer Lingus.

NEW TERMINALS

Iraq oil exports rise to 2.508mn bpd in April

Iraq's crude oil exports rose to 2.508mn bpd in April from 2.317mn bpd in March as new offshore export terminals helped increase sales, the head of the State Oil Marketing Organisation (Somo) said yesterday. Iraq aims to double oil output over the next three years as it recovers from decades of war and sanctions and is expected to provide the world's largest expansion in oil capacity in 2012 as new outlets open. The opening of two new floating single point mooring (SPM) terminals has eased export constraints and boosted crude oil exports significantly.

RECOVERY BID

Shuaa Capital aims to cut costs by 14%

Dubai-based Shuaa Capital yesterday said it aims to trim costs by an additional 14% by the end of the first half as the investment bank eyes a recovery from an economic downturn and a return to profitability. Shuaa, in a statement ahead of the publication of its first-quarter results due next week, said it has slashed 60% of its employees since the beginning of 2011, layoffs that took place primarily in its retail brokerage business. "We have worked hard to cut costs in 2011 and this continued into 2012," said Sheikh Maktoum bin Hasher al-Maktoum, executive chairman of Shuaa Capital.

PRIVATE TRANSACTION

Tasnee eyes debut riyal Islamic bond

Saudi Arabia's National Industrialisation Company (Tasnee) will begin meeting investors next week ahead of a potential debut Islamic bond, or sukuk, the petrochemicals firm said in a regulatory filing. HSBC's Saudi Arabian unit has been selected to organise the roadshows, which could lead to a privately-placed transaction, according to a statement published late on Monday. A number of Saudi entities have priced their first local currency sukuk this year as interest in the country's debt market grows on the back of high investor liquidity and a desire to diversify funding sources.

EXCESS LIQUIDITY

IPIC prepays \$514mn of debt due in 2013

Abu Dhabi government-owned International Petroleum Investment Co, or IPIC, said yesterday it has made an early repayment of 1.89bn UAE dirhams (\$514mn) of debt that was due to mature in 2013. IPIC continues to generate significant income from its investments and, following the prudent guidelines of its board of directors, has used part of its excess liquidity to retire a portion of its outstanding liabilities. IPIC's managing director Khadem al-Qubaisi said in a brief emailed statement. "IPIC will continue to focus on the success of its business and will manage its balance sheet accordingly," he said.

Dubai looking to fund airport expansion with \$1.25bn sukuk

The emirate is confident of repaying creditors at Dubai World on time

Reuters
Dubai

Dubai will use \$1.25bn raised last week to fund the expansion of its airport and is confident of repaying creditors at its flagship conglomerate Dubai World on time, a top Dubai official told Reuters yesterday.

"We will use proceeds from the \$1.25bn sukuk to fund Dubai International Airport expansion," Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum, a close advisor and uncle to Dubai's ruler and a key figure in the emirate's recovery from its 2009 debt debacle, said in an interview on the sidelines of a Dubai travel show.

Sheikh Ahmed holds a host of top positions including the chairman post at its largest bank Emirates NBD, Dubai World and at crown jewel Emirates airline.

The emirate is steadily recovering from a 2009 debt crisis when Dubai World stunned global markets with plans to delay repayment on \$25bn of debt.

The conglomerate reached a deal in 2010 to repay lenders over five and eight years. Other state-linked firms are in the midst of restructuring debt.

"We (Dubai World) are committed to the plan set in 2010. Dubai World and its companies are making excellent revenues and we expect the debt to be paid on time. There's no need to extend debt when it falls due," said Sheikh Ahmed, who also heads the Supreme Fiscal Committee.

The emirate's rehabilitation has been helped by a revival in trade and tourism and its safe-haven status amid the Arab Spring popular revolts.

Investors are closely watching two significant maturities in 2012 from state-linked firms, Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA) and DIFC Investments, which must repay a combined \$3.25bn. Both are in talks with banks on refinancing the debt.

Dubai's five-year credit default swaps, used to insure against a sovereign default, have narrowed more than 85 bps since the start of this year to around 358 bps, according to Thomson Reuters data.



Sheikh Ahmed: Emirates cash reserve is good.

far below the 650 basis points level hit in late 2009 at the height of the crisis.

Emirates airline, among the top 10 in the world by passenger numbers and top customer of Airbus' A380 superjumbo, expects 2011 profits will not be higher than those in 2010 when it posted a 52-percent rise to \$1.5bn.

Emirates takes \$2bn hit from fuel costs

The chairman of Dubai-based Emirates Airline said the carrier's performance in the fiscal year just finished was "positive", but soaring fuel prices took an almost \$2bn chunk from its profits. "For the full year 2011-2012, it's going to be positive...we carried 35-37mn passengers, so it's up on last year which was around 30-plus mn," Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum told Zawya Dow

The airline has a \$500mn bond maturing in June.

"The Emirates cash reserve is good. It is excellent, I must say. We have 4bn dirhams in cash so we are capable of paying off the debt in June... but we are still weighing options," the airline's chairman said.

Jones in an interview on the sidelines of a tourism event in Dubai yesterday. "Fuel costs are now touching on 40%-43% of total costs, it is very close to \$2bn, it is not easy to mitigate this risk," he added. Emirates, the Middle East's largest carrier with a fleet of over 170 aircraft, last tapped the debt market in June 2011 when it issued a \$500mn bond that was oversubscribed.

Sheikh Ahmed said the carrier was open to acquisitions but had no current targets. Emirates group also includes air services firm Dnata which bought an Italian flight catering group in 2010 and is hungry for more purchases.

Emirates, which carries more than 30mn passengers a year, was linked to a possible buy of loss-making airlines in India this year but its president dismissed the talk last week.

"I always say we remain open about any business opportunity to grow whether in airline business or also other services," Sheikh Ahmed said yesterday. "Dnata has done a lot in terms of acquiring companies that are interesting. So it is not specifically about buying an aircraft."

Asked whether Emirates would be interested in India's Spicejet or Kingfisher, he said: "No, but I will always remain open."

Arcapita unit files for bankruptcy protection

A unit of Bahrain investment house Arcapita has filed for bankruptcy protection in the US, the company said in a statement.

Falcon Gas Storage Company, a non-operating subsidiary of Arcapita, also intends to file a motion for joint administration with its parent company for the ongoing Chapter 11 restructuring, it said in the statement late on Monday.

In March, Arcapita became the first Gulf entity to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the US after it was threatened with legal action if it did not repay a hedge fund in full.

Falcon's filing is to address liabilities of its 2010 sale of NorTex Gas Storage Company.

"As we have said from the very beginning, our goal in this process is to restructure our balance sheet and reorganise our business to maximise recoveries for all creditors and other constituencies," Atif A Abdulmalik, Arcapita's chief executive said in the statement.

"We believe the actions we are taking with respect to Falcon are a logical step in this process but we do not anticipate any similar actions with our operating subsidiaries or portfolio companies."



Dubai slips for 5th session; most Gulf bourses end lower

Reuters
Dubai

Most Gulf bourses closed lower yesterday with Dubai's index falling for a fifth session as investors booked profits while activity was muted with some regional and international markets closed for a May Day holiday.

Dubai bellwether Emaar Properties slipped 0.6%, Dubai Investments shed 1.3% and contractor Drake and Scull fell 1.6%.

The emirate's index dropped 0.5%, trimming 2012 gains to 20%.

"Low volumes and the absence of catalysts usually lead to some downward consolidation, and

we're seeing that in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi," said Sleiman Aboulhosn, assistant fund manager at Al Masah Capital. "It looks like things might quiet down a bit with summer approaching. We're watching out for new catalyst, but short-term, things are quiet this week."

Shuaa Capital gained 4.6% after saying it expects to reduce costs by 14% in the second half of 2012 and has completed job cuts.

"We now have a clear direction, a significantly reduced cost base and a much higher degree of financial visibility," Shuaa's executive chairman said in a market update for shareholders ahead of its quarterly earnings.

Abu Dhabi's index ended little changed at 2,505 points.

In Saudi Arabia, the index finished lower for a second session in three as investors booked profits.

Banks and petrochemical stocks were the main drag. Samba Financial Group and Banque Saudi Fransi fell 1.5 and 0.8% respectively.

National Industrialisation Company (Tasnee) shed 1.9%. The petrochemicals firm said it will begin meeting investors next week ahead of a potential debut Islamic bond, or sukuk.

Yanbu National Petrochemical lost 1.4% and Saudi Kayan Petrochemical slipped 0.6%.

The index slipped 0.2% to 7,545 points, trading sideways in a tight range since the end of earnings season.

"The Saudi market is trading between 7,200 and 7,600, which are the resistance and support levels, and is waiting for a catalyst to move it out of this range," said Marwan Shurrab, vice-president and chief trader at Gulfmena Investments.

Kuwait's index climbed 0.5% to its highest finish since May 2011.

Local retail investors make up the bulk of trading activity, betting on cheap stocks for short-term gains, despite institutional investors expecting weak quarterly earnings.

Small-caps extended gains, with Abyaa Real Estate and Manazel Holding rising 5.3% and 4.8% respectively. Investor Holding climbed 5%.

In Oman, the index fell 0.6%, down in the last seven of nine sessions as investors booked recent gains after a mixed set of earnings. The market hit a 10-month high in early April.

Oman International Bank slumped 7.6%, after earnings dropped 45.4% to 2.4m rials (\$6.23mn).

The stock accounted for 60% of all shares traded on the index.

Egypt and Bahrain's bourses were closed.

MSCI coverage of Saudi may pave the way for emerging-market status

Investors are seeking access to Saudi Arabia as the government of the largest Arab economy pursues more than \$500bn of spending drive

Bloomberg
Dubai

MSCI Inc's move to resume coverage of Saudi shares in standalone indexes could pave the way for emerging-market status should the exchange open to foreign investors, Schroder Investment Management Ltd and Citigroup Inc said.

"This is a very positive development and a step in the right direction for a potential inclusion into the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, once the market opens up for foreign investments," Rami Sidani, the Dubai-based head of Middle East and North Africa investments at Schroder Investment Management, whose parent company oversees about \$291bn, said in a telephone interview.

The Capital Market Authority in Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter and home to the biggest stock market in the Arabian Gulf, said in January it will allow overseas companies to list securities on the bourse. The decision helped fuel speculation the kingdom is taking steps to open up its exchange to foreign, non-regional investors, who currently can't directly invest.



Investors watch share price movements displayed on screens in a hall at ANB Invest, the investment arm of the Arab National Bank, in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index has returned 18% this year, the second-best performer in the Gulf after Dubai and compared with a 12% gain in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

Investors are seeking access to Saudi Arabia as the government of the largest Arab economy pursues more than \$500bn of spending to build real estate, infrastructure and industry. Among companies trading on the Saudi bourse are Saudi Basic Industries Corp, the world's biggest petrochemicals company, and Kingdom Holding Co, the investment company controlled by billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal.

MSCI, a New York-based index-provider, said on Monday it would reintroduce the MSCI

Saudi Arabia Domestic Indices and related regional indexes in June. The index provider said in 2009 it would remove the country's shares from its Gulf and Arabian equity indexes because of a dispute with the exchange over the licensing of information from the bourse.

Manuel Rensink, MSCI's head of Middle East and North Africa, didn't answer two calls to his mobile phone and calls to the company's office in New York weren't answered.

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index has returned 18%

this year, the second-best performer in the Gulf after Dubai and compared with a 12% gain in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

The country is the latest in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council to move closer to gaining the emerging-markets designation at MSCI, which helps exchanges lure investors because fund managers buy their shares to mirror MSCI's indexes.

Qatar and the UAE are up for review in June after MSCI in December delayed for a sec-

ond time in 2011 a decision on whether to upgrade the two nations to emerging-market status.

Israel's benchmark TA-25 Index has surged 37% since MSCI announced the country's promotion to developed-market status in June 2009.

Six of the GCC's seven bourses are classified as frontier markets by MSCI, a designation for countries with an average stock-market value of about \$30bn, 94% less than in emerging nations, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

"Almost any way you look at it, Saudi belongs in emerging markets" should foreign ownership restrictions be removed, said Andrew Howell, a London-based strategist for frontier and emerging European markets at Citigroup. "There is no doubt that the market has been anticipating to some degree that Saudi will be opening more."

Saudi Arabia will only open its stock exchange to foreign investors in a "gradual" process and after concluding there will be no negative impact on trading, the official Saudi Press Agency reported last month, citing the market regulator's chairman Abdulrahman al-Tuwaijri.

"Saudi Arabia from an economic and company perspective offers a lot of attractive features, so it's something we would be recommending to clients to follow closely and look to add exposure when and if it becomes possible," Howell said.

A much lower 17.04% of them bought equities compared to 58.87% on Monday and a much lower 20.56% offloaded against 55.23%.

Foreign institutions were increasingly bearish as their net selling rose to 2.20% from 0.11% the previous day.

A higher 8.03% of them were into buying against 6.26% on Monday and a higher 10.23% of them into selling compared to 6.37%.

Qatari individual investors' bullish grip strengthened as their net buying rose to 3.30% from 0.03% the previous day.

A much higher 54.43% of

them purchased equities against 24.78% on Monday and a much higher 51.13% sold compared to 24.75%.

Non-Qatari retail investors turned bullish as they were net buyers to the extent of 2.41% against net sellers of 3.57% the previous day.

A much higher 20.50% of them were into buying compared to 10.08% on Monday and a higher 18.09% were into offloading against 13.65%.

Total trading volume shrank 42% to 13.43mn equities and value by 32% to QR442.82mn while deals gained 25% to 6,647.

The banks and financial services sector's trading volume plummeted 77% to 3.40mn shares and value by 64% to QR156.79mn, whereas deals rose 34% to 1,866.

The telecom sector's trading volume plunged 61% to 0.70mn, value by 57% to QR14.05mn and transactions by 47% to 313.

However, the real estate sector's trading volume more than doubled to 3.10mn shares, so did value to QR61.57mn as deals almost doubled to 1,065.



Major shakers at the QE yesterday were Doha Bank, Salam International Investment, Mawashi, Gulf International Services, Barwa, Mazaya Qatar, Vodafone Qatar and Nakilat

The industrials sector's trading volume soared 59% to 2.12mn shares, value by 44% to QR66.40mn and transactions by 48% to 1,010.

The transport sector's trading volume gained 28% to 0.82mn shares, value by 57% to QR17.58mn and deals by 47% to 446.

The insurance sector's trading volume shot up 20% to 0.12mn shares and value by 10% to QR5.14mn, whereas transactions fell 43% to 72.

The consumer goods and services sector's trading volume was up 5% to 3.17mn shares, value by 21% to QR121.29mn and deals by 12% to 1,875.

Actively traded stocks (in terms of volume) were Barwa (1.68mn shares); Qatari Investors Group (1.64mn); Dlala (1.31mn); Mazaya Qatar (1.25mn) and Mawashi (868,062).

Mr. Ali Ibrahim Al Abdul Ghani appointed General Manager of Qatar Islamic Insurance Co.

The Board of Directors of Qatar Islamic Insurance chaired by HE Sheikh Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani, adopted the appointment of Mr. Ali Ibrahim Al Abdul Ghani as General Manager of the company with effect from 1 May 2012.

It is worth mentioning that Mr. Al Abdul Ghani holds a Bachelor Degree of Business Administration from the University of Campbell, North Carolina - United States of America in 1985.

After graduating, he worked at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the post of Chief Financial and Administrative Affairs, and then in 1987 moved to work in the Qatari Armed Forces. He has been assigned several leadership positions during his tenure there, most recently as General Director of the Qatar Armed Forces Procurement Department.

In addition, Mr. Al Abdul Ghani attended many courses on how to provide and manage resources, business contracts and adopt modern methods in the art of negotiation, budgeting, risk management, build the organizational structures of institutions, modern management of human resources, in addition to lots of seminars and forums at the local, regional and international levels.

Mr. Al Abdul Ghani expressed his gratitude to the Board of Directors for their confidence to appoint him in this position, wishing to successfully contribute to the company's performance and development.



CORPORATE RESULTS

DIFC unit swings to profit; upbeat on sukuk



DIFC Investments, the investment arm of the company running Dubai's financial free zone, is confident of successfully refinancing an upcoming Islamic bond maturity, and said it swung to profit in 2011.

DIFC Investments' (DIFCI) sukuk obligation has been highlighted by analysts as one of the most challenging refinancings in the Gulf Arab region this year, given the size of the maturity and the firm's limited cash position.

The firm is "committed" to the repayment of its \$1.25bn Islamic bond, or sukuk, chairman Abdulla Mohamed Saleh said in a statement to Nasdaq Dubai.

The 0.849% sukuk maturing on June 13 was last bid at just over 98 levels, to yield about 18.2%. The price is slightly shy of 98.290 levels hit on Monday.

The company swung to a profit in 2011, and sold Despec International, an IT distribution firm during the year.

DIFC Investments made a net profit of \$130.5mn last year compared to a net loss of \$272mn in the previous year, after the impact of discontinued operations.

Profit from continuing operations totalled \$185.4mn compared to a loss of \$286mn in 2010.

Rental income increased last year by 1.8% over 2010 and total rental income generated from investment properties was \$128mn.

During 2011, DIFC Investments sold Despec International, an IT distribution firm, for \$27mn, with payment to be received in three installments by December 31, 2013. The company received an amount of \$15mn in 2011, in line with the instalment plan, it said.

Gulf Bank

Kuwait's Gulf Bank posted a 25% fall in first-quarter net profit, it said in a statement yesterday.

Net profit for the first three months ending March 31 was 7.37mn dinars (\$26.58mn), compared to 9.78mn in the same period a year ago, the bank said in the statement on the Kuwait bourse website.

Arab Bank Group

Jordan-based Arab Bank Group posted a 10% rise in quarterly profit yesterday to \$204mn, as revenues rose and its wide geographical spread left it less exposed to the region's political turmoil than some of its peers.

The bank, one of the Middle East's major financial institutions with a presence in 30 countries across five continents, saw assets grow 1.5% to \$46.3bn at end-March 2012, according to a bourse statement.

Gross income for January-March rose 8.5% to \$459.6mn with a healthy rebound in the bank's core commission and trade finance business.

Arab Bank Group chairman Abdulla Shoman

said in March he hoped the bank would continue the steady performance it achieved last year with 13% growth in net profit to \$306mn, even though unrest in the Arab world made it difficult to predict the outlook.

He said growth in the bank's balance sheet last

year reflected its financial strength despite a difficult business climate that saw many global and regional banks' earnings fall.

Bankers said Arab Bank set aside nearly \$1bn in provisions in the last two years to cover non-performing loans by businesses reeling from the global downturn, but was cushioned by a healthy capital base.

Tabreed

National Central Cooling Company (Tabreed) reported a 15% rise in first quarter profit yesterday as operating costs declined by a quarter for its chilled water business.

Tabreed made a net profit of 36.8mn dirhams (\$10mn) in the three months to March 31, up from 31.9mn dirhams a year earlier, a company statement said.

Net profit was lifted by a 5% increase in chilled water revenue, and a decline in operating costs of 25%.

Total revenues in the first quarter declined 11% however to 219mn dirhams which the company said was expected as it continues to phase out non-core businesses.

Kipco

Kuwait Projects Co (Holding), or Kipco, the Gulf state's largest diversified investment holding firm, said yesterday it made a first quarter net profit of 8.5mn Kuwaiti dinars (\$30.6mn), 5% higher than the 8.1mn dinars net profit it reported in the year earlier period, as its financial services and media businesses grew.

The company said earnings per share for the first three months of 2012 came in at 6.51 fils per share compared with 6.49 fils per share in the same period last year. Kipco's consolidated assets rose in the first quarter of 2012 to 6.1bn dinars, from 5.86bn dinars for the year end 2011, according to the statement.



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QATAR

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Qatar National Bank	133.50	0.07	72,600
Industries Qatar	145.80	-0.14	144,187
Edzan Real Estate Co	19.20	0.00	14,333
Qatar Telecom (Qtel) Q.S.C	140.40	0.21	61,111
Masraf Al Rayan	26.75	0.00	678,940
Commercial Bank Of Qatar Qsc	71.90	-0.14	124,298
Qatar Islamic Bank	77.30	-0.13	52,918
Qatar Electricity & Water Co	141.10	-0.77	36,310
Qatar Fuel Co	238.90	0.34	77,946
Doha Bank Qsc	57.00	-2.06	408,216
Barwa Real Estate Co	27.10	-2.87	16,756,111
Qatar Gas Transport(Nakilat)	16.45	-0.60	728,919
Qatar Navigation	70.00	0.43	64,940
Aamal Co	16.70	-1.18	57,638
Qatar International Islamic	51.00	0.20	41,267
Al Ahli Bank	72.50	0.00	-
Qatar Insurance Co	75.50	0.67	16,053
Vodafone Qatar	8.55	-0.93	641,731
Al Khaliji Bank	16.40	0.00	40,142
United Development Co	18.38	-0.86	155,209
Qatar National Cement Co	106.50	0.00	7972
Gulf International Services	25.65	-1.16	233,991
Mannai Corporation Qsc	93.60	0.00	-
Qatar General Insurance & Re	43.50	0.80	19,453
Qatar Industrial Manufactur	54.00	0.00	500
Qatar Investors Group	19.97	3.74	1643,074
Al Meera Consumer Goods Co	172.00	-0.58	11,450
National Leasing	42.00	-1.41	21,590
Salam International Investme	14.65	-2.33	799,609
Gulf Warehousing Company	38.00	-0.39	26,920
Mazaya Qatar Real Estate Dev	10.40	-2.35	1,251,938
Qatar Islamic Insurance	58.00	0.35	27,591
Qatar Meat & Livestock Co	47.10	-0.42	868,062
Medicare Group	41.00	1.49	838,579
Zad Holding Co	57.70	9.90	142,132
Al Khaleej Takaful Group	42.00	-0.71	3,000
Doha Insurance Co	26.00	2.16	52,156
Diala Holding	54.90	4.57	1,306,632
Qatar Cinema & Film Distrib	69.90	0.00	-
Qatar & Oman Investment Co	9.90	-0.10	160,424
Qatar German Co For Medical	9.65	-4.46	434,700
Islamic Holding Group	34.25	9.95	488,950

SAUDI ARABIA

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Saudi Hollandi Bank	28.30	-1.39	3,999,230
Al-Ahsa Development Co.	18.65	2.19	8,975,814
Al-Baha Development & Invest	22.55	0.89	16,464,348
Ace Arabia Cooperative Insur	98.00	1.03	12,678
Allied Cooperative Insurance	40.50	0.00	1,307,296
Arriyah Development Company	24.90	0.00	765,943
Fitalhi Holding Group	18.60	0.54	3,822,926
Arabia Insurance Cooperative	33.80	3.36	1,185,191
Al Abdullatif Industrial Inv	28.00	-0.71	56,855
Al-Ahliya Cooperative Insur	44.60	-1.55	343,275
Al Amaliya Cooperative Insur	53.00	0.47	328,284
Dar Al Arkan Real Estate Dev	11.40	-0.87	16,357,602
Al Batain Power & Telecommu	27.20	0.00	108,312
Bank Albilad	30.10	0.00	871,807
Alujain Corporation (Alco)	20.25	0.50	1,314,956
Alredres Petroleum Operates G	35.90	-0.28	339,300
Fawaz Abdulaziz Alnokair & C	85.00	0.00	80,750
Alimma Bank	15.00	0.33	377,484
Al Khaleej Training And Educ	37.10	-0.27	92,909
Abdullah A.M. Al-Khadouri Son	53.25	0.00	102,557
Allianz Saudi Fransi Coopera	82.75	-0.30	77,544
Almarai Co Ltd	66.25	-1.12	600,808
Saudi Integrated Telecom Co	27.20	0.00	19,671,697
Alsayari Group	26.00	0.00	339,581
Amana Cooperative Insurance	36.40	0.00	414,460
Anaam International Holding	75.25	1.01	1,966,129
Abdullah Al Othaim Markets	86.00	1.47	15,163
Arabian Pipes Co	32.80	0.00	196,760
Advanced Petrochemicals Co	27.70	-1.07	694,254
Al Rajhi Co For Co-Operative	62.00	0.81	16,9324
Arabian Cement	59.50	-0.42	102,429
Arab National Bank	30.80	-0.65	279,605
Ash-Shaqiyah Development Co	57.50	0.44	1,548,379
United Wire Factories Compan	44.60	-0.89	553,178
Astra Industrial Group	43.00	1.18	117,611
Alahli Takaful Co	66.50	-0.75	176,163
Aseer	20.75	7.51	9,934,706
9Xa Cooperative Insurance	37.90	-0.52	324,098
Basic Chemical Industries	33.60	-1.18	449,851
Bishah Agriculture	0.00	0.00	-
Bank Al-Jazira	28.20	-1.40	417,318
Banque Saudi Fransi	38.10	-0.78	65,567
United International Transpo	44.60	-0.22	83,167
Bupa Arabia For Cooperative	26.30	0.77	564,026
Buruj Cooperative Insurance	62.00	-3.88	1,246,461
Methanol Chemicals Co	17.60	0.57	5,178,985
Eastern Cement	56.75	-0.44	39,330
Ethad Athbeeb Telecommunicat	18.90	-3.08	64,276,976
Ethad Etisalat Co	69.25	0.00	615,659
Emaar Economic City	13.20	-1.49	16,081,998
Saudi Enaya Cooperative Insu	40.90	0.00	1,377,891
United Electronics Co	88.50	2.61	59,302
Falcon Saudi Equity Et	24.85	0.00	19,479
Filling & Packing Materials M	43.80	-0.45	1,245,434
Food Products Company	29.30	2.09	2,289,063
Falcon Petrochemical Et	27.50	0.00	1,282
Gulf General Cooperative Ins	42.00	0.24	214,825
Jazan Development Co	23.00	6.24	12,882,161
Gulf Union Cooperative Insur	22.90	1.33	1,265,892
Hallwani Bros Co	46.30	2.66	237,237
Hall Cement	22.75	-0.22	1,531,925
Herfy Food Services Co	88.25	-0.28	10,817
Al Jouf Agriculture Develop	38.80	-0.51	154,297
Jarir Marketing Co	162.50	1.88	36,135
Jabal Oman Development Co	21.90	-0.45	11,691,699
Al Jouf Cement	19.40	-0.77	1,090,110
Saudi Kayan Petrochemical Co	17.80	-0.56	7184,964
Knowledge Economic City	21.50	1.15	27,693,310
Kingdom Holding Co	12.15	0.41	455,353
Saudi Arabian Mining Co	33.20	-0.60	790,673
Malath Insurance	26.50	1.15	2,892,144
Makkah Construction & Develp	39.00	0.26	90,020
Mediterranean & Gulf Insur	32.40	-0.92	196,165
Middle East Specialized Cabl	21.10	1.20	72,838,878
Mohammad Al-Mojli Group	15.30	-0.65	5,283,373
Al Mouwasat Medical Services	50.00	-0.99	48,830
National Agriculture Develop	31.20	0.65	488,178
Nama Chemicals Co	23.90	1.49	6,626,243
National Gypsum	31.90	-1.24	158,104
National Gas Industrializa	22.55	-0.22	219,278
National Industrializa	35.30	-1.94	1,993,359
Maadaniyah	32.20	-0.31	502,200
National Shipping Co Of/The	17.85	0.00	1,898,093
National Petrochemical Co	25.90	0.00	158,590
Rabigh Refining And Petroc	22.70	0.22	119,248
Al Qassim Agricultural Co	27.50	0.73	3,990,188
Qassim Cement/The	83.00	0.30	43,761
Red Sea Housing Services Co	34.20	-0.58	278,460
Saudi Research And Marketing	24.40	0.21	117,831
Riyad Bank	24.90	-0.40	437,136
Al Rajhi Bank	78.00	0.00	1,136,904
Saudi Arabian Amaniyah Co	18.95	0.53	1,416,629
Saudi British Co	36.20	-0.82	159,564
Sabk Takaful	41.40	0.24	931,469
Saudi Basic Industries Corp	103.00	0.49	2,916,924
Saudi Cement	97.00	0.00	116,751
Sasco	22.50	2.97	3,670,189

SAUDI ARABIA

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Saudi Dairy & Foodstuff Co	60.00	-1.23	48,190
Saudi Arabian Fertilizer Co	184.50	0.00	141,270
Al Sagr Co-Operative Insur	31.40	-0.32	310,989
Saudi Advanced Industries	22.90	9.83	3,682,674
Saudi Arabian Coop Ins Co	48.60	-0.41	593,963
Saudi Cooperative Ialc Insur	49.90	-0.20	666,248
Samba Financial Group	50.75	-1.46	228,342



Asian markets drop on lower Japanese earnings

Bloomberg

Tokyo

Asia's benchmark stock index fell, paring Monday's advance, as Japanese companies forecast lower-than-estimated earnings and as the outlook for exporters dimmed after a report signalled US manufacturing is slowing.

The MSCI Asia Pacific Index lost 0.7% to 124.49 in Tokyo with more than two stocks falling for each that rose. Japan and Australia were the only major markets traded yesterday in Asia, with markets closed in Hong Kong, China, India and South Korea.

"Investors can't get optimistic about the Japanese economy," said Koji Toda, chief fund manager at Resona Bank Ltd in Tokyo, a unit of Japan's fifth-biggest lender by market value. "The number of companies where earnings are improving as much as investors' expectations is relatively small."

The Asia-Pacific index fell 2.8% in March and April amid concern Europe will be trapped in a recession with debt-stricken nations such as Spain cut spending, and as Chinese economic growth slows.

Japan's Nikkei 225 Stock Average fell 1.8% after the yen touched 79.68 per dollar yesterday, matching the strongest level since February 22, showing that the Bank of Japan's additional stimulus on April 27 isn't weakening the currency.

A stronger yen cuts the value of overseas earnings at Jap-

anese exporters. Japan's markets will be closed today and tomorrow for public holidays.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.8% after the Reserve Bank of Australia yesterday cut its benchmark interest rate by a half percentage point to a two-year-low 3.75%.

Financial shares contributed the most to the gauge's advance. Commonwealth Bank of Australia added 1.7% to A\$52.85. Westpac Banking Corp, Australia's No. 2 lender by market value, advanced 0.4% to A\$22.83. The MSCI Asia Pacific Excluding Japan Index was little changed.

"Aussie equities have been lagging for a while on the tight monetary policy, so it needed to be loosened," said Nader Naeimi, a Sydney-based strategist at AMP Capital Investors Ltd, which manages almost \$100bn.

"Given the weakness that we've seen across the board in manufacturing and retail, a quarter-point cut wasn't going to be enough. They have done the right thing."

Tokyo Electron, the world's second-biggest maker of semiconductor production equipment, fell 8.3% to ¥4,085, the lowest level since February 8, after predicting profit will drop 18% this fiscal year.

Yamada Denki, an operator of consumer electronics stores, slumped 10% to 4,665 yen after reporting an operating profit of 88.9bn yen (\$1.1bn), missing analyst estimates of 112bn yen.

Sharp Corp, Japan's largest maker of liquid-crystal displays, dropped 9.3% to ¥468

after forecasting a wider-than-expected full-year net loss.

Of 375 companies listed on the MSCI Asia Pacific Index that have reported earnings since April 10, about 42% missed analysts' estimates and 45% beat them.

Companies that do business in the US fell. Sony dropped 3.9% to ¥1,265. Honda Motor, Japan's second-largest carmaker by market value that generates 44% of its sales in North America, declined 3.4% to 2,799 yen.

"As expectations ratchet up and data can't support those high expectations, we start to get pessimistic again," said Andrew Pease, Sydney-based chief investment strategist for the Asia-Pacific region at Russell Investment Group, which manages about \$150bn. "Having seen a big rally in stocks in the March quarter, we are back to more neutral positioning. Valuation support isn't there as strongly as before."

Stocks also fell after a government report on Monday showed Spain's economy shrank 0.3% in the first quarter, matching the contraction in the previous three months.

Asian stocks held on to losses even after Chinese government report today showed the Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 53.3 in April from 53.1 in March.

The MSCI Asia Pacific Index rose 10.1% this year through Monday, compared with an 11.2% gain by the S&P 500 and a 5.2% advance by the Stoxx Europe 600 Index. Stocks in the Asian benchmark are val-

ued at 12.8 times estimated earnings on average, compared with a multiple of 13.3 for the S&P 500 and 10.8 times for the Stoxx 600.

The Nikkei 225 Volatility Index rose 1.4% to 20.81, indi-

cating traders expect a swing of about 6% on the benchmark gauge over the next 30 days.

Trading volume on the Nikkei 225 was 6.5% below its 30-day average, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.



People walk past an electric quotation board flashing the Nikkei key index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in front of a securities company in Tokyo, yesterday. Tokyo stocks lost 1.78% to close at their lowest level in nearly 11 weeks yesterday with exporters' shares dragged down by the yen's renewed rise against the dollar.

London stocks higher in quiet trade; Dow hits 2007-end highs

AFP

London

Shares listed on Britain's stock exchange climbed higher yesterday as investors were cheered by upbeat US economic data in the absence of input from European markets that were closed for May Day.

London's FTSE 100 index of blue-chip companies gained a solid 1.30% to close at 5,812.23 points.

On foreign exchange markets, the European single currency declined to \$1.3227 from \$1.3240 in New York late on Monday.

The pound also fell slightly to \$1.6224 but was stable against the European single currency at 81.52 pence per euro.

"After rather disappointing economic data in the past few days, US investors are breathing a sigh of relief in light of today's better than expected ISM figure," said Markus Huber at the ETX Capital brokerage.

He referred to the Institute for Supply Management's US manufacturing index, which registered a solid jump for April, rising to 54.8% from 53.4% in March. Analysts had expected a fall.

With much of Europe closed for business, London investors absorbed results from British energy giant BP, the state-rescued bank Lloyds, cigarette maker Imperial Tobacco and hedge fund manager Man Group.

Shares in Lloyds Banking Group rallied 8.34% to 33.60 pence, topping the FTSE leaderboard, after the lender announced a return to net profit in the first quarter.

Profit after tax stood at £10mn (\$16mn) in the first three months of 2012 as LBG set aside another £375mn to compensate clients who were mis-sold insurance.

Imperial Tobacco shares meanwhile jumped 3.73% to 2,556 pence as investors welcomed the group's up-

beat outlook and shrugged off news of a 11-percent decline in net profit to £826mn in the six months to March.

On the downside, BP fell 0.83% to 441.30 pence after it reported that net profits sank 18% in the first quarter, as output was hit by the sale of assets to meet BP's huge Gulf of Mexico disaster bill.

Profit after tax fell to \$5.92bn (4.46bn euros) from \$7.25bn in the 2011 first quarter.

Man Group tumbled 5.51% to 97.80 pence after the hedge fund manager said funds under management slumped almost 15% to \$59mn by the end of the first quarter.

US stocks rallied yesterday and the Dow hit its highest level since December 2007, after data showed the US manufacturing sector expanded at a faster pace than expected in April, easing jitters about a slowdown in the economic recovery.

Data from the Institute for Supply Management showed growth in US manufacturing came in its strongest rate in 10 months in April, suggesting the economy remains resilient after indications it had lost momentum at the start of the second quarter.

"Sell in May is a valuable seasonal strategy when confirmed by our indicators. However, weakness in the measures we monitor, although growing, has not progressed to the point that they support a bearish outlook as they did in May 2011," said Ari Wald, technical analyst at Brown Brothers Harriman.

"For now we believe a balanced approach is most appropriate due to the lack of full confirmation in either direction."

The Dow Jones industrial average was up 113.18 points, or 0.86%, to 13,326.81. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index was up 15.93 points, or 1.14%, to 1,413.84. The Nasdaq Composite Index was up 34.12 points, or 1.12%, to 3,080.48.

The Dow earler rose to as high as 13,338.66 points.

FTSE 100

Company Name	Lt Price	% Chg	Volume
Xstrata Plc	1,205.00	2.34	8,395,474
Whitbread Plc	1,946.00	0.99	353,167
Wpp Plc	848.00	1.74	1,032,645
Wolsley Plc	2,423.00	3.41	834,517
Weir Group Plc/The	1,704.00	-0.06	868,443
Vodafone Group Plc	172.90	1.41	34,255,623
Vedanta Resources Plc	1,238.00	1.73	265,687
United Utilities Group Plc	627.50	1.46	2,041,243
Unilever Plc	2,128.00	1.19	1,264,465
Tesco Plc	319.20	0.58	9,811,914
Tullow Oil Plc	1,547.00	0.85	745,628
Tate & Lyle Plc	696.00	0.80	631,615
Severn Trent Plc	1,683.00	-0.41	783,928
Standard Chartered Plc	1,512.00	0.40	2,477,130
Sse Plc	1,325.00	0.30	995,548
Serco Group Plc	552.50	1.84	513,353
Smith & Nephew Plc	614.00	1.24	598,425
Smiths Group Plc	1,085.00	1.40	409,432
Standard Life Plc	225.50	0.85	1,461,557
Shire Plc	2,016.00	0.30	835,907
Sage Group Plc/The	293.70	2.66	1,833,302
Schroders Plc-Non Voting	1,137.00	0.98	84,930
Schroders Plc	1,437.00	1.34	199,081
Sainsbury (J) Plc	309.20	0.42	2,752,522
SabMiller Plc	2,592.00	0.14	759,435
Resolution Ltd	224.70	0.40	2,727,944
Rsa Insurance Group Plc	105.60	0.57	6,537,441
Randgold Resources Plc	5,460.00	0.65	408,812
Rolls-Royce Holdings Plc	853.00	3.58	3,435,421
Rio Tinto Plc	3,505.50	2.13	2,506,969
Rexam Plc	433.30	0.77	835,917
Reed Elsevier Plc	518.00	1.57	1,594,643
Royal Dutch Shell Plc-B Shs	2,283.00	1.62	2,106,272
Royal Dutch Shell Plc-A Shs	2,213.50	0.93	1,411,072
Royal Bank Of Scotland Group	25.30	4.24	93,117,074
Reckitt Benckiser Group Plc	3,620.00	0.92	1,543,855
Pearson Plc	1,153.00	-0.60	143,3103
Prudential Plc	758.50	0.53	1,334,622
PolyMet International Plc	919.00	0.33	117,666
Petrofac Ltd	1,759.00	1.38	47,044
Old Mutual Plc	149.40	1.08	1,383,656
Next Plc	2,896.00	-0.13	775,367
National Grid Plc	668.00	0.38	2,463,611
Wm Morrison Supermarkets	279.40	-0.43	6,218,329
Marks & Spencer Group Plc	357.70	0.20	2,307,504
Meggitt Plc	413.50	1.22	794,281
Lloyds Banking Group Plc	33.60	8.34	240,171,410
Legal & General Group Plc	119.10	1.28	3,583,341
Land Securities Group Plc	739.50	1.65	622,662
Kingfisher Plc	289.60	-0.31	5,000,889
Kazakhsny Plc	87,750	1.92	750,669
Johnson Matthey Plc	2,340.00	1.12	226,754
Itv Plc	85.65	2.33	6,798,447
Intertek Group Plc	2,557.00	1.67	85,570
International Power Plc	418.00	0.24	4,208,861
Imperial Tobacco Group Plc	2,556.00	3.73	1,709,341
Imi Plc	985.00	-0.45	87,781
Intercontinental Hotels Grou	148,400	1.16	692,564
Icap Plc	384.00	113	325,250
Int'l Consolidated Airline-Dl	180.60	2.38	3,092,762
Hsbc Holdings Plc	565.00	1.78	174,248
Hammerston Plc	424.00	1.53	1,036,049
Hargreaves Lansdown Plc	530.50	0.76	714,548
Glaxosmithkline Plc	1,438.00	0.91	2,700,831
Glencore International Plc	434.60	2.11	2,853,981
Gkn Plc	206.00	1.13	2,333,850
G4s Plc	283.30	1.32	1,141,129
Fresnillo Plc	1,613.00	3.40	304,489
Experian Plc	991.00	1.90	723,740
Eurasian Natural Resources	568.50	1.61	811,227
Man Group Plc	978.00	-0.51	23,460,301
Diageo Plc	1,570.00	1.23	2,275,387
Capital Shopping Centres Gro	328.90	1.20	6



BASEBALL

Yankees
defeat
Orioles,
Kuroda
gets win

Reuters
New York

Hiroki Kuroda combined with two relievers on a five-hitter and helped preserve the New York Yankees' win with a heads-up play at the plate in a 2-1 victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Monday.

Protecting a one-run lead in the seventh, the Japanese starter dashed to the plate in time to apply the tag on a sliding Nick Markakis to end the late-inning threat.

Eric Chavez supplied the fire-power for New York with a two-run home run in the second inning off Baltimore starter Jason Hammel, and relievers David Robertson and Mariano Rivera finished up for Kuroda to seal the victory.

The win improved the Yankees' record to 13-9 and slowed the charge of the surprising Orioles, who finished last in the American League East in 2011 but came into the opener of their three-game series tied for the division lead at 14-8.

Kuroda (2-3) was not at his best but managed to keep the Orioles in check and helped his own cause with some slick fielding in the seventh.

After a lead-off single by Markakis and a long fly to center field by Adam Jones, Kuroda hit Matt Wieters with a pitch.

The runners moved up to second and third on a wild pitch in the dirt that got past catcher Russell Martin. After a strikeout against Chris Davis on another pitch in the dirt, Kuroda bounced a wild splitter past Martin.

Results

Arizona	9	MIAMI	5
Texas	4	TORONTO	1
NY YANKEES	2	Baltimore	1
PHILADELPHIA	6	Chicago Cubs	4
BOSTON	11	Oakland	6
TAMPA BAY	3	Seattle	2 (12 inn)
Pittsburgh	9	ATLANTA	3
HOUSTON	4	NY Mets	3
COLORADO	6	LA Dodgers	2
LA ANGELS	4	Minnesota	3
Milwaukee	8	SAN DIEGO	3

NBA

Thunder roll to 2-0 lead over Mavericks

'We did a good job of getting stops and we hit some big free throws in the end'

Reuters
Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City Thunder dealt Dallas another heartbreak loss in the NBA playoffs on Monday to take a 2-0 lead over last season's champions in a series that is threatening to boil over.

Jason Terry's desperation three-pointer attempt bounced off the rim as Dallas fell 102-99 to the hosts, who opened the first round series with a 99-98 win after Kevin Durant got a friendly bounce in his last-second game winner on Saturday.

The Mavericks have enjoyed no such fortune and must regroup before the best-of-seven Western Conference series continues in Dallas tomorrow.

The Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki scored 31 points and was embroiled in a first-half scuffle with the Thunder's Serge Ibaka and Kendrick Perkins.

"We don't like the cheap shots when they give them, and they don't like them if we give them," said Dallas coach Rick Carlisle. "The dirty (stuff) has got to stop. We don't want anyone to get hurt out there."

The Thunder are relishing their new role as favorites in the series and were led by 29 points from Russell Westbrook and 26 and 10 rebounds from Du-



Dirk Nowitzki of the Dallas Mavericks drives on Serge Ibaka of the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game Two of the Western Conference quarter-finals in the 2012 NBA Playoffs on Monday at the Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City defeated Dallas 102-99. (APF)

rant despite a sub-par shooting night.

Oklahoma City made six successive free throws in the final minute to seal the triumph.

"Our crowd is behind us and we come out and play with our hearts," Westbrook told reporters. "We did a good job of getting stops and we hit some big free throws in the end."

The Mavs held a one-point lead with a minute left, after they controlled Game One much the same way, but managed just one more field goal.

In the Eastern Conference, the Indiana Pacers found their range in the second half to top the Orlando Magic 93-78 and tie their first-round series 1-1.

The Pacers outscored the Magic 30-13 in the third quarter to level the series heading into Game Three today in Orlando.

Results

Eastern Conference	
at Miami	
Miami	104
New York	94
(Miami lead series 2-0)	
at Indianapolis	
Indiana	93
Orlando	78
(Series level 1-1)	
Western Conference	
at Oklahoma City	
Oklahoma City	102
Dallas	99
(Oklahoma City lead series 2-0)	

NHL

Capitals edge Rangers while Kings rout Blues

AFP
New York

Alex Ovechkin scored a power-play goal with 7:27 remaining in the third period to give Washington a 3-2 victory on Monday over the New York Rangers to level their National

Hockey League playoff series.

The Russian playmaker received the puck from a face off, skated to his right and fired the puck past Swedish goaltender Henrik Lundqvist of the Rangers to produce the winning margin.

The second-round Eastern Conference best-of-seven series continues with games three and four in Washington

today and Saturday with game five back in New York on Monday.

Also Monday, the Los Angeles Kings ripped hosts St. Louis 5-2 to seize a 2-0 edge in their best-of-seven Western Conference second-round series.

The Kings, who have not lost a road game in five tries in this year's playoffs, will host games

three and four of the series tomorrow and Sunday.

At New York, Washington's Mike Knuble opened the scoring with 12:20 elapsed in the first period and Jason Chimera gave the Capitals a 2-0 lead just 4:54 later.

But Brad Richards answered for the Rangers with his fourth goal of the playoffs with only 43

seconds remaining in the first period.

And New York equalised 6:58 into the third period on a power-play goal by Ryan Callahan, setting the stage for Ovechkin's game winner.

Washington netminder Braden Holtby of Canada made 26 saves while Lundqvist stopped 22 shots.

Results

Eastern Conference	
at New York	
Washington	3
NY Rangers	2
(Series level 1-1)	
Western Conference	
at St. Louis	
Los Angeles	5
St. Louis	2
(Los Angeles lead series 2-0)	

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BASKETBALL

US coach sees tough draw for Olympics

Reuters
New York

US Olympic basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski said his reigning Olympic champion squad of NBA stars received a tough grouping on Monday in FIBA's draw for the London Olympics.

The Americans were sent into Group A alongside 2000 Olympic runner-up France and 2004 Olympic champion Argentina plus reigning African champion Tunisia and the two top finishers in an Olympic qualifying tournament in June in Venezuela.

"Group A is going to be extremely competitive," said Krzyzewski, the veteran Duke University coach who guided the Americans to an unbeaten gold medal run at the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing.

"It's a tough draw with a former Olympic champion in Argentina. France is another powerful team, a veteran team that is extremely talented. Tunisia continues to improve. And then our Group will add the top two teams from the FIBA World Qualifying Tournament."

"Only 12 teams qualify for the Olympics so you're going to have tough draws, and that's why winning a gold medal is such a great accomplishment."

Drawn into Group B from the ceremony in Rio de Janeiro were China, Britain, Australia, Spain, Brazil and the third-place nation from the qualifying event.

Russia, Greece, Puerto Rico and Lithuania are among the qualifying favorites in a field that will also include Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Macedonia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Jordan, Angola and South Korea.

Four teams from each group will advance to the August 8 Olympic quarter-finals after an initial round-robin schedule. Semi-finals are set for August 10 and the medals will be decided on August 12.

Norwegian swimming champion found dead

Norwegian world swimming champion Alexander Dale Oen has died age 26 at a training camp in the US, Norway's swim federation announced yesterday. Dale Oen, who won the gold medal in the 100m breaststroke in the 2011 World Championships in Shanghai, was found dead on Monday in a shower at a swimming pool in Flagstaff, Arizona, where Norway's national swim team was training for the London Olympics.

The cause of death was not immediately known.

The swim federation said his teammates thought he was taking an unusually long time in the shower, and there was no reply when they knocked on the door. When they entered, Dale Oen was found lying on the floor.

The team doctor tried to resuscitate him, as did ambulance paramedics who arrived within minutes to take him to hospital.

"After more than an hour's attempts to get his heart going, Alexander Dale Oen was declared dead at 9:00 pm local time," the federation said.

"We're all in shock, this is like an out-of-body experience for the whole team here," Norway team coach Petter Loeberg said.

According to Norwegian daily Aftenposten online, Dale Oen had spoken to his family on Skype earlier in the evening "and there was no indication then that he was sick." Dale Oen became Norway's first swimmer to win an Olympic medal when he won the silver in the 100m breaststroke in the 2008 Games in Beijing. He had been tipped as one of Norway's best chances at a medal at the London Olympics in July.

SPOTLIGHT

Chambers' lawyer attacks 'arrogant' BOA

AFP
London

Dwain Chambers' lawyer accused the British Olympic Association (BOA) of "colonial arrogance" after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Monday ruled their lifetime ban on drugs cheats contravened the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) code.

CAS's decision gave the green light to the likes of sprinter Chambers and cyclist David Millar, previously guilty of doping offences, to take part in the upcoming London Olympics should they be selected.

Siza Agha, Chambers' law-

yer, reacted to Monday's ruling by the Lausanne-based CAS by turning on the BOA, saying: "What we have received has been a crude and defiant display fuelled by misguided statements such as 'We have standards and the rest of the world doesn't'.

"It has in my view been an exposure of colonial arrogance that even the most extreme and blinkered should have realised could only serve to marginalise British opinion on the international stage.

Agha added: "Having not been party to the CAS case, Dwain and I will now need to take time to digest and consider the reasoning behind the decision."

Former European 100m champion Chambers, who won 60m bronze in this year's world indoor event in Istanbul last month, was banned for two years after testing positive for the anabolic steroid THG in 2004.

Chambers was prevented from competing at the Beijing Olympics but will now be eligible for selection for the British team at the London 2012 Games.

Millar also served a doping ban in 2004.

The CAS ruling had been widely expected since the International Olympic Committee lost a similar case in November after their Osaka rule-banning drugs cheats from the next Ol-

ymics even if their suspension was completed—was challenged.

That case was brought by the US Olympic Committee on behalf of their 400m runner LaShawn Merritt.

BOA chairman Colin Moynihan reacted to CAS's latest verdict by saying WADA had won a "hollow victory".

Moynihan, a longstanding critic of WADA, also called for reform of the global anti-doping authority.

"This will be seen as a hollow victory for WADA," said Moynihan, who as a cox won a silver medal in rowing for Britain at the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

"We live in difficult days when WADA spends time and

money reducing those countries which have taken a determined stance against drug cheats in sport, such as Canada, New Zealand and ourselves, to a two-year ban which as Sir Steve Redgrave has said is tantamount to almost saying it is unacceptable."

However, Moynihan insisted the likes of Chambers and Millar could expect equal treatment were they to compete at the Games.

"I will give absolutely maximum support to every athlete that is selected for Team GB."

WADA had fought the BOA's policy of imposing life bans for the Olympics, arguing it contravened their own code.

John Fahey, the president of

WADA, welcomed the CAS ruling but slammed the BOA for "the many hysterical and inaccurate public statements" it had made during the case.

"The decision totally rejects the BOA appeal and upholds the WADA foundation board's declaration of non-compliance," Fahey said.

"WADA has spent the last decade harmonising the fight against doping in sport across the world by creating one set of rules in consultation and in accordance with the wishes of all its stakeholders, both sport and government."

"They are not based on emotive arguments or the wishes of any one signatory or individual."

TITLE DEFENCE

McIlroy ready to defend US Open crown

AFP
Charlotte, North Carolina

Rory McIlroy will defend his US Open title in June on a course he has never played in a major championship that has not surrendered a repeat crown to the same player since Curtis Strange in 1989.

McIlroy, dethroned as World No. 1 on Monday by England's Luke Donald after his second two-week stay atop the rankings in as many months, said on Monday he is excited to see San Francisco's Olympic Club, where the 112th US Open tees off on June 14.

"I'll go up there the week before and familiarise myself with the place," McIlroy said. "From what I've heard, it's a really good setup. I'm excited to get up there and see what it's like."

"It's the toughest test that we face all year and I'm not sure why there hasn't been a repeat champion (in so long) but obviously I'm going to try my hardest to make that happen this year."

McIlroy won last year at Congressional Country Club near Washington in wet conditions with a 16-under par 268 total. The usual narrow fairways, dense rough and fast greens were muted somewhat by conditions.

"It was pretty wet and the course played pretty soft," McIlroy said. "The only thing that made the scores so low at Congressional last year was the fact that they just got so much rain beforehand and they were never able to dry the course out the way they would like."

"I'm expecting this year ... it will be fast and running. It won't necessarily be a long ball hitter that will play well. You just really need to control your ball."

"If the weather permits this year in San Francisco, we'll get the golf course firm and fast and it will be tricky. You'll really have to think about where you need to land your ball on the fairways and on the greens and I'm expecting it to be a really tough and tricky test this year."

The 7,170-yard, par-70 Olympic layout features a 16th hole that is a 670-yard par-5, the longest par-5 in US Open history. A long and difficult test is in order for whichever of the more than 9,000 entrants get to play.

"You just really have to mentally prepare yourself for the type of golf that you're going to have to play," McIlroy said.

"Something around even par will win most US Opens. Something around even par isn't going to be too far away. If you shoot four 70s, you will have a great chance."

The Northern Irish prodigy won his first major title only two months after squandering a golden opportunity to win the Masters, leading after each of the first three rounds and with nine holes to play only to falter on the back nine.

"I really wanted to put things right and make amends for what happened at Augusta and obviously I was able to do that," McIlroy said.

Tiger ready for Quail Hollow with 'fixed' swing

'My setup wasn't quite right, as well as my takeaway so we worked on that'

Reuters
Charlotte, North Carolina

Tiger Woods returns to PGA Tour action at this week's Wells Fargo Championship in Charlotte, North Carolina, confident he has solved the ball-striking problems which plagued him at this month's Masters.

The former world number one failed to break 72 in any of his four rounds at the year's opening major, completing his worst performance at Augusta National since he turned professional.

He battled his way to a closing two-over-par 74 for a five-over total of 293, ruing his tendency to allow old habits to creep back into a swing he has grooved with coach Sean Foley over the last two years.

"At the Masters, I was kind of struggling with my ball-striking a little bit," Woods said during a question and answer video session with his fans posted on his website on Monday.

"Sean and I fixed it. It had to do with my posture. My setup wasn't quite right, as well as my takeaway so we worked on that. I just needed to do hundreds of (repetitions). I'm getting dialed in."

Woods, a 14-times major champion, took a week off after the April 5-8 Masters and has since spent the past fortnight working on his game.

Asked if he liked his chances of winning a 73rd PGA Tour title in this week's event at Quail Hollow, he replied: "I feel like I do, yes."

"I feel like if I can do the things that we've been working on, and get my posture and my takeaway dialed in, then yes, I have a good chance."

"I'm going to a golf course



Woods... confident he has solved the ball-striking problems which plagued him at this month's Masters.

I like in Charlotte. I've won there before. The very next week is a tournament that I've also won at," the 36-year-old American added, referring to the May 10-13 Players Championship at Sawgrass.

Woods triumphed at Quail Hollow in 2007 and won his only Players title in 2001 at the event regarded by many as the unofficial 'fifth' major.

Monday's video session,

based on questions sent in by fans via Facebook and Twitter, was an interesting choice by Woods who will not be giving his customary pre-tournament news conference ahead of the Wells Fargo Championship.

The world number seven typically addresses the media before every event in which he plays but is not scheduled to speak to reporters until after he completes Thursday's opening

round at Quail Hollow.

Woods fielded 19 questions from fans in the video session, among them a query as to the best putt he has ever sunk on the PGA Tour.

In reply, he cited the par putt he knocked in from just inside four feet on the 72nd hole of the 1997 Masters, his first major title which he clinched by a staggering 12 strokes with a record low total of 270.

The world number seven typically addresses the media before every event in which he plays but is not scheduled to speak to reporters until after he completes Thursday's opening

"To set the record, all the history it meant at the time, to have my dad there at the back of the green," Woods added. "By far it was the biggest."

As for his favorite major trophy, Woods did not hesitate in selecting the cherished Claret Jug awarded to winners of the British Open.

"The history and what it represents," he said. "Every single great champion has played in the British Open."

He was the first to play in the British Open.

"It was the first to play in the British Open," he said. "It was the first to play in the British Open."

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WELL DONE: Delhi Daredevils batsman and team captain Virender Sehwag celebrates his half century during the IPL Twenty20 match against Rajasthan Royals at the Sawai Mansingh stadium in Jaipur. (AFP)

FINE SHOW

Sehwag shines in Daredevils' victory

IANS
Jaipur

Virender Sehwag smashed a recording-breaking fifth consecutive fifty to help Delhi Daredevils breeze past Rajasthan Royals by six wickets in the Indian Premier League here yesterday.

Daredevils captain Sehwag played a breathtaking knock of 73 off 38 balls, ensuring his team overcomes the 142-run target in 15.2 overs. With the scintillating knock, he also became the first batsman to score five consecutive half centuries in T20 cricket. Kevin Pietersen made 36 in his last game for the Delhi franchise while left-arm spinner Pawan Negi (4/18) did the job with the balls in the Royals' innings which ended at 141 for six in 20 overs.

Sehwag's blinder brought Daredevils' fourth win in a row and they have now extended their lead at the top of the table to 16 points from 10 matches. It was a fourth straight loss for Royals, who are sixth in the standings with eight points from 10 games.

The explosive opener once again toyed with the opposition bowling attack, bludgeoning 12 boundaries and a six. The lone maximum Sehwag hit was his trademark uppercut which also brought his fifty.

Sehwag's opening partner Mahela Jayawardene (0) was dismissed in the first over but that

joy was shortlived for the Royals. Sehwag and Pietersen shared 96 runs for the second wicket and when the latter departed, Daredevils needed just 46 off 60 balls.

Earlier, Royals made a mess of a great start provided by Rahul Dravid (57) and Ajinkya Rahane (42). Dravid ran out of partners as the home team was reduced to 95 for five in 13 overs after the opening pair collected 71 runs in 8.4 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Rajasthan Royals

Rahul Dravid c Morkel	57
A Rahane c Sehwag b Negi	42
Shane Watson b Negi	8
Omals Shah c Shah b Yadav	1
Brad Hodge c Sehwag b Negi	1
A Menaria c Pietersen b Negi	1
Shreavats Goswami not out	18
Ankeet Chavan not out	7
Extras: (lb 2, w 3)	5
Total: (6 wickets, 20 overs)	141

Fall of wickets: 1-7 (Rahane, 8.4 overs), 2-87 (Watson, 10.5), 3-90 (Shah, 11.4), 4-93 (Hodge, 12.2), 5-95 (Menaria, 12.6), 6-128 (Dravid, 18.1)

Bowling: I Pathan 2-0-22-0, U Yadav 4-0-28-1, M Morkel 4-0-23-1, S Nadeem 4-0-33-0, Pawan Negi 4-0-18-4, Virender Sehwag 2-0-15-0

Delhi Daredevils Innings

M Jayawardene lbw b Chavan	0
V Sehwag c Dravid b Hogg	73
Kevin Pietersen c Shah b Watson	36
Ross Taylor c Goswami b Hogg	6
Yogesh Nayar not out	9
Naman Ojha not out	11
Extras: (0.5, lb 3, w 1)	9
Total: (4 wickets, 15.2 overs)	144

Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Jayawardene, 0.3 overs), 2-96 (Pietersen, 10.2), 3-106 (Taylor, 11.4), 4-131 (Sehwag, 14.4)

Bowling: Ankeet Chavan 4-0 29-1, Pankaj Singh 2-0-24-0, Shane Watson 4-0-29-1, Amit Singh 1-0-12-0, Brad Hogg 4-0-32-2, Ashok Menaria 0.2-0-10-0

Deccan Chargers Innings

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PREVIEW

Real Madrid out to clinch La Liga crown in Bilbao

AFP
London

Real Madrid visit Athletic Bilbao today knowing a win would give them their first 'La Liga' title in four years, breaking the domination of Barcelona forged by the departing Pep Guardiola.

With three games remaining Madrid's seven point lead over the Catalans mean one more win is all they require, and the trophy would go some way to make up for the disappointment of losing last week's Champions League semi-final to Bayern Munich.

For Madrid coach Jose Mourinho it

would be the fourth country in which he has achieved such a feat, he is currently level on three with Louis van Gaal who includes two titles in Spain with Barca in his personal haul.

It would also be an incredible seventh championship in 10 seasons for the Portuguese coach who started with two titles in his native country with Porto before going on to win two at both Chelsea and Inter Milan.

To add to the growing list of achievements Madrid need to win their three remaining games to reach 100 points and break the record set by Guardiola's Barca in 2009/10 when they got 99 points to beat Madrid by three, then led by Manuel Pellegrini.

Mourinho continued his boycott of the Spanish media after Sunday's 3-0 victory over Sevilla but his assistant Aitor Karanka talked of the potential of winning the league at his former club.

"It would be nice to become champions in San Mames (Bilbao's stadium), to win the Spanish league is important because it has taken a huge effort to achieve it and it was a big objective of ours, but it does not make up for missing out in the Champions League," he said. For their part, Barcelona kick-off against fourth-placed Malaga two hours before and a defeat for Guardiola's side would hand the title to Madrid before a ball is kicked.

The same scenario, however, was

the case last Sunday before Barcelona showed no signs of nerves and recorded a 7-0 away victory at Rayo Vallecano.

Lionel Messi grabbed two goals to go level with Cristiano Ronaldo on 43 league goals meaning the world's best two players will take their own particular contest to finish as La Liga's top-scorer to the very end.

Messi also has another prize in sight as he currently has 65 in all competitions, just two short of Gerd Muller's 67 goal record set in the 1972/73 season for Bayern Munich.

Other issues to be resolved include the two remaining Champions League and Europa League places.

Valencia and Malaga are in the driving seat for the bigger prize, on 55 points they are both three ahead of Levante. Any slip-up for Malaga at Barca or Valencia at home to Osasuna, themselves only a point from a Europa League place, could be capitalised on by Levante who go to relegation threatened Zaragoza on Wednesday.

The side from Aragon are facing the drop along with Sporting Gijon, both teams are on 34 points, four from Villarreal and five from Granada with bottom club Racing Santander already relegated. Villarreal are the visitors to Sporting Gijon on Tuesday for a decisive clash no team can afford to lose. Sporting's Croatian centre-forward

Mate Bilic, a key player in their revival of recent weeks, is under no illusions as to the importance of the game.

"It's been a difficult year but all that matters now is survival."

"It's complicated but if we beat Villarreal we'll have a chance. They have World Cup winners in their team so it will be difficult, but our fans will play a big part and we owe it to them to get the win," he said.

Fixtures (all times GMT) Wednesday:
Atletico Madrid v Real Sociedad (1600),
Mallorca v Rayo Vallecano (1800),
Zaragoza v Levante (1800), Sevilla v
Real Betis (1800), Barcelona v Malaga
(1800), Valencia v Osasuna (2000),
Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid (2000).

FACEOFF

Fergie accuses Mancini after City's crucial win

'I can't complain about the result'



GIVING A MOUTHFUL: Manchester City's Italian manager Roberto Mancini (R) exchanges words with Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson (2nd R) during their English Premier League match. (AFP)

AFP
London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson accused Roberto Mancini of attempting to influence officials after a furious touchline bust-up with the Manchester City boss here yesterday.

Ferguson and Mancini had to be separated during an explosive finger-jabbing confrontation in the 76th minute of a highly charged encounter at Eastlands which saw City take

control of the title race with a 1-0 victory.

Ferguson had leapt from his dugout to protest after an ugly challenge from Nigel De Jong on United substitute Danny Welbeck. The 70-year-old United boss later accused Mancini of harassing officials throughout the title duel. "Mancini was badgering the ref and the fourth official all game," Ferguson told the BBC. "He was complaining about refs all week, but he can't complain about this one."

However Ferguson had few complaints about a defeat which he admitted had left the

destiny of the title in City's hands.

"We didn't test their keeper enough really, we started brightly and for the first 15 minutes we dominated, but the longer the half went on we were looking for half-time and the goal came at a bad time for us," Ferguson said.

"I can't complain about the result, they were more of a threat from counter-attacks."

"Real out to clinch La Liga crown in Bilbao and we are up against it. They only need to win to two more games and they win the league, simple as

that," said Ferguson, whose side have now taken only four points from a possible 12 in their last four games.

Ferguson was also unhappy with United's defending for City's winning goal, which came when Vincent Kompany headed in a David Silva corner on the stroke of half-time.

"If you lose a goal at a set-piece at this level of football then you only have yourself to blame for that," Ferguson said.

"It was a bad time to concede a goal because there was nothing really happening at the end of the first half."

Mancini meanwhile brushed off the confrontation with Ferguson.

"I was talking with the fourth official, he told me some kind words, I answered him and it finished," said Mancini, who shook hands with Ferguson after the final whistle.

He also laughed off Ferguson's suggestions that he had been attempting to influence the match officials.

"And him? No? He never talks with the referee, no, never," Mancini said sarcastically.

Although City now top the table on goal difference, meaning wins over Newcastle and QPR will virtually assure them of the title, Mancini meanwhile insisted that United were still in a strong position to retain their crown.

"They have easy games—they play against Swansea and Sunderland. We have Newcastle and QPR. These two teams are strong teams," Mancini said.

"For United it will be easy. But we have two strong teams, Newcastle and QPR—one plays for the Champions League, one plays for relegation."

"But now it's not finished. If we think it's finished we make a big mistake," Mancini added.

Asked what he thought the key to the game had been, Mancini replied: "They wanted to draw. We wanted to win. I think that was the difference."

BIG BLOW

After England snub, Redknapp focuses on day job

AFP
London

Harry Redknapp will try to put the disappointment of being overlooked for the post of England manager behind him when his Tottenham Hotspur side resume their challenge for a place in next season's Champions League at Bolton Wanderers on Saturday.

Redknapp always maintained the speculation linking himself with the England vacancy had played no part in Spurs' alarming dip in form.

But the Football Association's decision to make Roy Hodgson their number one choice for the post means it will not even be a factor as Redknapp's team enter the final three games of the season. The weekend victory over Blackburn Rovers settled nerves at White Hart Lane after a run that had brought just one win in nine league games.

That win left Tottenham ahead of fourth place Newcastle on goal difference, with Chelsea a further point behind in fifth.

Those two teams will meet at Stamford Bridge at the same time Spurs face Bolton, presenting Redknapp's side with a chance to steal ground on at least one of their rivals.

Victory will also move Tottenham to within two points of third-placed Arsenal and with the fourth place side set to miss out on a Champions League spot if Chelsea beat Bayern Munich in this season's final, a top three spot remains the number one objective.

"It is all to play for, we have got a difficult couple of away games," said Redknapp. "I can't see Chelsea losing many games



at the moment either, they are looking really strong whatever team their manager picks.

"They have got Newcastle in the week and that is a big game. Newcastle have got tough fixtures—they have got to go to Everton on the last game of the season, you wouldn't want that one and they've got Manchester City at home so we have just got to keep going and see what happens, you never know do you?"

Kyle Walker emerged as the unlikely hero of the victory over Blackburn with a stunning free kick to seal the 2-0 victory.

And the right back admitted: "I don't practise free-kicks, but I just felt it was right."

"Rafa (Rafael van der Vaart) placed the ball down and I said 'Can I have it?' and he said 'No chance.' But then he said I could have it and that was that."

Tottenham's defeat of Blackburn boosted Bolton's hopes of survival.

Owen Coyle's side remain in the bottom three on goal difference but this match marks the game in hand they have on their relegation rivals.

And Coyle's squad may be giving

the further lift of a dressing room visit from Wanderers' Fabricio Muamba who is recovering after suffering a serious cardiac arrest when these two teams met in the FA Cup at White Hart Lane in March.

"When it comes to it we will take a look at it but we will have to decide what is best for everybody," said Coyle.

"The primary concern is what is best for Fabricio because that is all important but it is something we will look at—if he and his partner decide he is well enough and fit enough."

Coyle added: "My take on it has been if Fabricio is able to come along it would be fantastic, for a number of reasons."

"I think it will give everyone a chance to see how well he has been doing and how far he has come from what happened that night."

"The fact it is also Tottenham who were the opponents will give Fabricio the chance to thank all the fans and players involved."

"I've got to say it's not guaranteed. If he is fit and well to come then it is certainly an opportunity."

GERMAN HOPE

Schweinsteiger's brain key to German success

Reuters
Berlin

Germany will seek to end a 16-year title drought at the Euro 2012 finals where much will depend on the performance of the team's brain: Bastian Schweinsteiger.

The experienced 27-year-old Bayern Munich midfielder, nicknamed the 'brain' by Germany coach Joachim Loew, is the team's natural leader and its barometer. If he plays well the team usually wins. A slump in form, or injury, takes the shine off the young German team.

The three-time European champions are chasing a first title since 1996 and Schweinsteiger, whose formidable holding midfield partnership with Sami Khedira helped Germany to third place at the 2010 World Cup, is aware of the expecta-

tions. "This is the best national team I have ever played for," Schweinsteiger, capped 90 times for Germany and going into his fifth major tournament, told reporters. "Everyone expects us to win the title and naturally it is something that we also desire."

The midfielder has also combined well with skilled Madrid playmaker Mesut Ozil and attack-minded teenager Mario Goetze in the German midfield, leading them to a flawless qualification with 10 wins in 10 games. Strong, skilled, clever and in possession of a lethal right-foot shot, Schweinsteiger can be equally dangerous orchestrating breaks for the lightning-quick Germans or slicing open defences with pin-point passing. The only thing missing now is a major title, for either club or country.

The current season, however, may not have been the one the gifted midfielder wished for, having missed two months since November with a broken collar bone. He then picked up a ligament problem as well as a knee injury and was out twice more after the Bundesliga restart.

"He is the head of the team," said Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes, who recently compared him with Barcelona and Spain midfielders Xavi and Andres Iniesta.

"He gives the tempo, he steers our game and is very hard to replace. When he is not there then both our offensive and defensive game is affected."

Bayern already felt his absence when a three-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga going into the new year became a five-point deficit as the Bavarians stammered at the restart without Schweinsteiger.

Germany also paid a price when he missed their friendly against France in February. They lost 2-1 after a lacklustre performance in Bremen.

KEY PLAYER

Robben retains lethal edge for Dutch

AFF
Rotterdam

A season without injuries may never happen in the whimsical career of Arjen Robben, yet despite all the setbacks he remains the most lethal threat in the Dutch team.

When he is fit, and in form, Robben is feared by almost every team in Europe, but the winger's complete package also contains his inconsistency, caused by injuries, with a special vulnerability to muscle strains.

That is why Robben played only three seasons at Chelsea and two at Real Madrid. Since joining Bayern Munich in 2009, how-

ever, his dynamic contribution to a team has been revalued even if it is accepted that he is unlikely to complete a full season.

In 2010, a week before the start of the World Cup, Robben sustained a hamstring injury which would normally have ruled him out of the tournament.

But Netherlands coach Bert van Marwijk retained faith in Robben and his medical staff and he was kept behind for a week's special treatment, joining the squad later in South Africa. He made his first appearance in the third group match, a dead rubber against Cameroon, and then scored in the last 16 meeting with Slovakia and the semi-final against Uruguay. He was the only Dutch player to find two scoring opportunities in

the final against Spain, but was unable to produce a goal or help prevent a rugged Dutch team from losing a third World Cup final. Since then, the unpredictable Robben has played only twice internationally -- against Brazil in June 2011 and at Wembley against an injury-hit England in February this year. In the England match Robben opened the scoring after an impressive 60-metre run from his own half and snatched victory with a precise curled shot in added time.

In five seasons in London and Madrid, Robben played 117 league matches and scored 26 goals. In Munich, in the first two seasons under compatriot coach Louis van Gaal, Robben has scored 39 goals in 60 league matches.

**NBA | Page 44****Thunder hand Mavs second loss****GOLF | Page 45****Tiger ready for Quail Hollow****CRICKET | Page 46****Sangakkara, White star in Chargers' win over Pune****GULF TIMES**
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Jumada-II 11, 1433 AH

SPORT

**FOOTBALL****Fergie accuses Mancini after City's victory****Page 47**

Al Gharafa players Othman el-Essas (C) and Fahed al-Shammary (R) celebrate after scoring against UAE's Al Shabab Al Arabi during their AFC Champions League match in Doha yesterday.

FOOTBALL

Gharafa revive hopes; Lekhwiya suffer 3-0 loss



Al Gharafa revived their Asian Champions League hopes with a 2-1 victory over the UAE's Shabab Al Arabi in Doha yesterday, while Qatar Stars League champions Lekhwiya suffered a big blow to their continental dreams when they were thrashed 3-0 by Al Ahli in Jeddah.

Al Gharafa's first win in five matches took their tally to six points in Group D where Saudi giants Al Hilal are sitting pretty with nine after beating top Iranian side Pirooz 1-0 at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran.

Pirooz are second in the group with eight points, while Al Shabab Al Arabi are fourth with just two from five matches.

Al Gharafa now need to beat Hilal when they clash in a potentially explosive match on May 15 at King Fahd International Stadium in Saudi Arabia and hope Pirooz also suffer an unlikely defeat at the hands of Shabab Al Arabi in order to make the knockout stage.

In a match that sparked to life after a dull first half, it was Shabab Al Arabi who took the lead through Essa Mohamed in the 64th minute.

But Al Gharafa, under new coach Paulo Silas after the sacking of Bruno Matsu in March, struck back to equalise in the 81st minute through the prolific Amara Diane.

Othman el-Essas then found the net from the spot three minutes later

to give Al Gharafa their maiden win in the tournament after three draws and one loss.

"We always knew we had a chance," Silas said.

Abdulrahim Jezawi, Victor Simoes and Tayseer al-Jassim scored for Al Ahli as Lekhwiya suffered their third defeat in the tournament.

Meanwhile, Ex-Middlesbrough striker Lee Dong-Gook scored twice in injury time to put 10-man Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors on the brink of the AFC Champions League knock-outs

in a dramatic night of action yesterday.

Lee's late heroics stunned Chinese champions Guangzhou Evergrande 3-1, while Kashiba Reysol's 1-0 win over Buriram United gave all four Group H teams a chance of reaching the last 16 in their final pool games later this month.

Elsewhere Central Coast Mariners clobbered China's Tianjin Teda 5-1 to resurrect their campaign, while Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma and Nagoya Grampus played out a 1-1 draw to leave Group G also undecided.

Jeonbuk's win in Guangzhou was

sweet revenge for last year's runners-up, who were humiliated 5-1 at home by the Chinese team and lost by the same score to Kashiba, but who are now top of Group H after three wins in a row.

Guangzhou's record signing Dario Conca, reportedly one of the world's best paid players, put the hosts ahead with an early penalty before Lee Seung-Hyun levelled just before half-time. And 2006 champions Jeonbuk, fresh from clinching the K-League title, then shrugged off the dismissal of defender Cho Sung-Hwan, as Lee Dong-Gook netted in injury-time and swiftly followed it up with a penalty.

There were more fireworks in the group as J-League champions Kashiba Reysol downed Thailand's Buriram United 1-0, leaving all four clubs separated by just three points with one round to play.

Kashiba's goal came after 23 minutes when Hideaki Kitajima dribbled through to the left of the goalmouth before sending in a cross that Brazilian midfielder Leandro Domingues netted in the right corner.

The hopes of Buriram, who had surprisingly topped the group for much of the campaign, took a dive when defender Yves Ekwalla Herman of Cameroon was sent off shortly before half-time for a second yellow card.

Jeonbuk, now two points clear on nine points, host Kashiba and Buriram, who have dropped to the bottom of the table, entertain Guangzhou on May 15.

APPOINTMENT

England put faith in Hodgson

Reuters

London

Roy Hodgson was appointed England manager on a four-year contract yesterday, ending months of speculation over who would lead the national team to next month's European Championship.

The experienced 64-year-old, who has been in charge of Premier League West Bromwich Albion since February last year, became the 13th permanent post-War England manager after succeeding Italian Fabio Capello.

"This is a very proud day for me, I'm a very happy man to be offered the chance to manage my country and I'm looking forward to the task ahead," Englishman Hodgson, who the FA said was the unanimous choice of the board, said at a news conference at Wembley.

"Everyone knows it's not an easy one but I'm hoping everyone, the fans and supporters get behind the team."

"It's the team that counts and I will



West Bromwich Albion manager Roy Hodgson (R) shakes hands with English Football Association (FA) Chairman David Bernstein (L) after he was named England's next football manager at a press conference in Wembley Stadium in London yesterday.

do my very best to make sure they are prepared as well as possible for the tasks that lay ahead."

Capello left his role as England manager in February, four years after taking over from Steve McClaren, despite a successful Euro 2012 qualifying campaign.

Since then Stuart Pearce, the under-21s coach, had been in temporary charge with Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp the hot favourite to be offered the job.

FA chairman David Bernstein refused to talk about why Redknapp was overlooked, preferring to trumpet the credentials of Hodgson.

"After putting together a shortlist Roy emerged as the standout candidate," Bernstein said.

"We met at Wembley yesterday and we quickly agreed that Roy was the right man to guide us to the European Championship and future tournaments."

"I want to make it quite clear we were unanimous in choosing Roy," Bernstein added. "He is a manager of a vast experience of international and European football, in fact this is the first time the FA has appointed a manager with any previous international experience and this will be a great benefit to him in making the adjustment from club management."

"Roy has outstanding contacts and could walk into any training ground across the world and command respect."

West Brom confirmed on their

website that Hodgson, who replaced now Chelsea caretaker coach Roberto Di Matteo last year, would remain in charge for the final two games of the season, away to Bolton Wanderers and home to Arsenal.

"Roy's appointment as England Manager is obviously disappointing news for the club as we would have liked him to sign a new contract, which was in the process of negotiation, and remain as our head coach," West Brom chairman Jeremy Peace said in a statement.

"But we understand Roy's desire to take the England job and he will leave us after the Arsenal game on May 13 with our best wishes. We are delighted he will see the season out with us."

After a non-descript playing career spent partly in English non-league football, Hodgson embarked on a near 40-year coaching career in Sweden with Halmstad in 1976 and has since become one of the world's most respected coaches.

Plying his trade in Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, England and Denmark he has won eight league titles and



coached the national sides of Finland, Switzerland and United Arab Emirates.

Hodgson's best moments in international football came in guiding Switzerland to the 1994 World Cup finals and the 1996 European Championship.

His varied club career included two stints at Inter Milan, Blackburn Rovers, FC Copenhagen and Fulham, who he took to the Europa League final in 2010 – the first European final in their history. However, his biggest club job in England ended in disappointment when he left Liverpool by mutual consent in January, 2011 after just 31 games in charge.

Despite a disappointing stay at Anfield, where he never won over the fans, Hodgson restored his reputation at West Brom, guiding the Midlands club to safety last season and to mid-table respectability this season.

With the European championships, where England will face France, Sweden and co-hosts Ukraine, starting in little more than a month, Hodgson faces a hectic schedule, including selecting his squad and preparing for a June 2 friendly against Belgium at Wembley.

"It's going to be difficult of course but I have some time on my hands to think about it and make the decisions that are necessary," Hodgson said.

"I've worked in the Premier league for the last five years so the players are pretty well known to me, I've worked with many of them, and I will do as much research as I can between now and the end of the season."