

# NEWSNOW

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Issue No. 265

# Lockdown!

**SPECIAL REPORT**

## The inside story of our prison system

**PAGES 4 & 5**



## Sporting world-beaters



They won the World Cup just two weeks ago – and last night Spanish sportsmen brought home the Tour de France and the German Grand Prix – thanks to Alberto Contador, *left*, and F1 race driver Fernando Alonso. But the wins were not without controversy.

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Meeah in court tomorrow

**PAGE 3**

## THE HOTEL VICTORIA SAGA

# Security stepped up for minister

By Nitesh Boodhoo



●Incident at Minister Sheila Bappoo's office.

Security has been stepped up for Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare Sheila Bappoo after two hooded men tried to force their way into her office.

The incident is being linked to the "Hotel Victoria saga" involving MP Cehl Meeah and a 16-year-old girl.

The teenager, nicknamed "Shenaz" by the media, is currently being supervised by the Child Development Unit after her case was referred by a social worker. The psychologist who is looking after her has reportedly received anonymous phone calls and threats.

A police statement has been filed at the Pope Hennessy police station about the incident at the ministry and an investigation has been launched.

The two men said they wanted to talk to the minister and her permanent secretary but they were stopped by a security guard.

"There are other children who have the same problem and if those others start threatening us, then how will we be able to do our jobs? My staff and myself are threatened," said Minister Bappoo.

The minister informed the Vice Prime Minister and Acting Prime Minister Dr Rashid Beebeejaun about her feelings of insecurity, and her protection has been reinforced.

Minister Bappoo is believed to be the target of possible intimidation because she met the 16-year-old girl on Friday and ordered the teenager to be placed under the responsibility of the Child Development Unit.

The parents of the girl agreed to send her to the CDU because she has been threatening suicide since the "Hotel Victoria saga" broke.



●Cehl Meeah

Meanwhile, the Central Crime Investigation Division are now investigating the scandal involving MP Cehl Meeah. The Forensic Science Laboratory is analysing fingerprints taken from the bed sheet of the hotel room.

The 16-year-old has declared her love for the MP openly on radio during the past week even though the MP claims to have sent the teenager to the Hotel Victoria to protect her from committing suicide.

The parents of the girl, Mamade and Faranaz Abdool Careem, last week asked the Supreme Court for a prohibition order against the MP., who has been ordered to appear in the Supreme Court on Tuesday before Judge Nalini Matadeen.

The judge instructed the MP to avoid any type of communication with the teenager and also ordered him to stay out of the girl's life and not to intervene in her family matters.

The girl's parents strongly believe that the MP was in the hotel room of their daughter during the night of Saturday till the early hours of Sunday morning. They alleged the MP "wooded" their daughter, who was already had a weak psychological disposition after her former boyfriend finished the relationship and left the country.

## PM to be quizzed about Appasamy

By Sunil Gopal

The prime minister will be quizzed by MMM MP Mr Reza Uteem at the National Assembly on Tuesday about the extradition proceedings against businessman Teeren Appasamy, who was involved in the MCB/NPF financial scandal.

Mr Uteem wants to know if the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) has received the note by counsel for the UK Crown Prosecution Service in relation to the discharge of the extradition proceedings.

He will also ask about the steps that need to be taken for an eventual renewed request to make it "an apple pie order" and whether he will table a copy thereof.

MMM MP Mrs Françoise Labelle will be the first to question him regarding a detainee who died a few hours after his admission to the Intensive Care Unit of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Rose Belle on May 14.

MMM MP Dr Rafick Sorefan will ask the prime minister to give the names of employees of the MBC who have been interdicted from 2005 to date and to indicate the salary paid to each of them during the period of interdiction.

Mr Adil Ameer Meeah, MMM MP, will ask where matters stand in relation to the review of the procedures for the application and renewal of passports.

MMM MP Joe Lesjongard will question wants to know the number of reported cases of larceny and larceny with violence in the region of the Chinese section of the cemetery at Bois Marchand during the past three years.

Leader of the Front Solidarité Mauricienne

(FSM) Cehl Meeah will ask the prime minister to give a list of former MPs who are drawing a retirement allowance.

MMM MP Dr Satish Boolell will ask if the government will consider the creation of halfway houses to enable prisoners serving long-term sentences to re-adjust to normal life without immediate relapse.

MMM MP eda Baloomoody wants to know the number of male and female inmates participating in rehabilitation activities for prisoners convicted for drug addiction. He also wants to know the number of officers running the programme.

The leader of the Mouvement Mauricien Social Démocrate (MMSD) Eric Guimbeau will ask the prime minister a question focused on the refurbishment of the old Parliament House. He wants details of the date the tender was launched; the name of the bidders, indicating the value quoted in each case and the date the tender was awarded. He will also request the prime minister to table a contract of the agreement.

MMM MP Deva Nagalingum will quiz the prime minister on the project for the construction of a new prison in Melrose, while MMM MP Josique Radegonde wants to know the status of the project by the British government to set up a marine park in the Chagos Archipelago.

OPR MP Francisco François will ask about the exhibits which disappeared from the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit at the Port Mathurin police headquarters on or about July 4.

A total of 44 questions addressed to other ministers are on the agenda tomorrow.

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# Prime minister talks about governance with leaders

By Mahesh Bugnath

Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam at the weekend took part in the 13th Summit of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in Kampala, Uganda.

He raised the main points of the Country Review Report submitted by Mauritius with other heads of states of the African Union. The APRM aims to review the state of governance in the countries involved.

"By its very nature, the APR mechanism is a complex and innovative process which probes into nearly all facets of our society. It demands, and is the result of, a wide-ranging consultative process with all relevant stakeholders," the prime minister told other African leaders.

For the Mauritian exercise, civil society at large, the public and private sectors were given full opportunity to respond to the points raised by the APRM Panel.

Mauritius is the third member country of the African Union to have voluntarily subscribed itself to the APRM at its launch in 2003.

The APRM promotes the adoption of policies, standards and practices that favour political stability, economic growth and sustainable development.

The exercise is a self-assessment by countries by an impartial organisation that has been set up to assess the country's performance on governance and create a plan of action to address issues that have been raised. The APRM was launched in 2003 as part of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

## Human rights

The assessment was done by means of a questionnaire divided into four sections: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development.

The aim is to assess the state's compliance with African and International human rights treaties and standards. The whole exercise will aid in bolstering trust in the institutions of the country through increased transparency in the running of state and corporate affairs.

"Devising more appropriate tools for good governance will assist my government in complementing its National Development Programme with appropriate recommendations contained in the plan of action," Dr Ramgoolam said.

He reiterated the government's social commitments: "We strongly believe that economic efficiency must go hand-in-hand with social justice."

Another topic addressed by the prime minister was democratisation of the economy. "I want to have more people to have access to finance and hence, be able to have their own businesses. We have an ambitious democratisation programme."

President of South Africa Jacob Zuma congratulated Mauritius on the island's respect for democracy, its political stability and the measures taken by government for women's rights.

Yesterday Dr Ramgoolam took part in the 15th Conference of Head of States and Government of the African Union. The conference is expected to end on Tuesday.



# 70,000 get swine flu vaccination

## NUMBER OF CASES STABILISING

By Mahesh Bugnath

The number of people who have been vaccinated against the AH1N1 flu has risen to 70,000.

Area health centres have been overloaded with people seeking the flu vaccine, while the Ministry of Health now says the number of patients attending hospitals with flu symptoms over the past fortnight has stabilised.

Principal Medical Officer Dr Ahad Abdool says that it is still too early to say whether there is a decline and that hasty conclusions should not be drawn from the recent trend. "We have to remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions."

He says that patients suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and pregnant women are at higher risk from the swine flu virus and patients who have complications are currently being put on Tamiflu.

Meanwhile, the government's decision to stop counting the number of deaths resulting from AH1N1 infection has been criticised by some doctors who claim that post-mortems performed on those patients would enable a better understanding of the effects of the infection on the body.

The ministry's decision, though, is being defended as it wants to focus on the prevention of the disease and providing treatment to the patients.

According to Dr Abdool, the number of test-positive samples sent for laboratory analysis still stands at 128, the same as last week, from 1,650 samples sent. "We are not waiting for the laboratory results to give Tamiflu to patients who are presenting medical complications. These examinations do nothing to prevent the disease. What we need right now is prevention," said the principal medical officer.

He added that the authorities will continue to follow the protocols of the World Health Organisation.

So far only two confirmed deaths caused by swine flu have been reported by the Ministry of Health.

# Shake-up for Emergency Response

By Nitesh Boodhoo

Seventy police officers from different divisions of the police force have been redeployed into the Emergency Response Service, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Mario Nobin has revealed.

He also announced that 10 more new cars have joined the ERS fleet bringing the number of police vehicles to 35.

The DCP explained that the changes were part of the reinforcement and restructuring of the Mauritius Police Force to improve its effectiveness.

Mr. Nobin said the ERS will now have to arrive on the scene of an emergency in less than 15 minutes from the time it receives a call.

The response time will apply in cases where lives of people are in danger, grab-and-run cases where thieves can be arrested on the spot, when a crime is in progress or in case of attacks on tourists.

He added that the minimum number of officers for each ERS team will now be four and the maximum will be seven.

The ERS is a division of the police force which acts only in emergency cases and supports other operations of the regular force when needed.

Mr. Nobin stated that operational control will now be exer-



cised more extensively by divisional officers.

In cases where an operation is beyond the control of a division, the divisional officer will have to inform police headquarters at Line Barracks and support will be provided.

The DCP also explained that the reorganisation of the police force started in February in line with the National Policing Strategic Framework which requires the police to be

more visible and accessible to the population.

Commenting on the recent prison break at GRNW Prison, DCP Mario Nobin expressed his satisfaction that for the first time in the history of the country, the police, the media and members of the public have closely collaborated to recapture the 34 escaped detainees.

## SPECIAL REPORT

REPORT by Mayessen Nagapa-Chetty



# LOCKDOWN!

## The inside story of life in a Mauritian prison

By Mayessen Nagapa-Chetty

The spectacular mass breakout from the Grand Riviere North West Prison put the spotlight firmly on the country's prison system.

Thirty-four inmates made a dash for freedom – short-lived for some, and lasting two weeks for the final fugitive to be recaptured.

As the detainees were led back to cells, stories surfaced about brutality and beatings within the prison system.

It was a different story from the secretary of the Prison Welfare Association (POA), Jackie Kamanah, who claimed that the security of prison guards was being threatened.

One of the alleged masterminds of the escape plan, Kamlessing Beerbul, claimed he was assaulted by three prison guards during a reconstruction of the prison break. Evidence of an assault were clearly apparent on the face of the detainee.

He later retracted this claim.

Despite this, the commissioner of police ordered an immediate investigation. "This is very serious. Those who are guilty will have to face the consequences," he said.

Lyndsay Aza, an ex-convict and president of Elan, an NGO catering for the reinsertion into society of ex-prisoners, leads us down the spiral staircase towards the dark unknown world of the prison.

A former drug addict and alcoholic, he completed a one-year programme at the Centre Solidarite in 1996 where he quit all his former habits and was trained in drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

His "big-picture" review of the prison system is that it has deteriorated so much during the years that "near absolute chaos" reigns.

"My first trip to the prison was in 1995 where I spent 17 days in three prisons – Petit Verger Detention Centre, Central Prison in Beau Bassin and the GRNW prison. I was released on bail and in 1998, I was sentenced to four years.

"I spent the whole of that time at the Central Prison. In 1995, I noticed that there was discipline and a certain control on detainees. In 1998, the prison was in chaos," he said.

Continued on Page 5

## The predators behind bars

HOMOSEXUALITY is common in prisons, but there are two types: "forced" and "accepted".

"I know notorious bouncers who sell their bodies to other men for drugs. They have accepted this way of life. Even though they were straight before getting into jail, they accepted homosexuality and they have found a way to satisfy their sexual cravings."

Mr Aza explained how first-time offenders, in particular, are snared for forced sex.

"When first-time offenders come in prison and the older inmates are pleased with what they see, they set up a plan for sex," he said.

The first step would be to befriend the new inmate by offering him cigarettes and a sense of protection and security. This will create a bond of trust.

The older prisoner, in the meantime, will talk to the cleaners, who are themselves "red-band" detainees, to change the cell cards of the new inmate and stick it on the

cell door of the older prisoner. "Red-band" detainees are those detainees with good behaviour and have been entrusted with some responsibilities.

The deal between the cleaner and the prisoner could be negotiated around cigarettes or food.

After lock-up at 4.30pm, the new prisoner will find himself in a cell with one or sometimes two older inmates. There are all sorts of complicities between detainees, red-band detainees and prison guards.



●Lyndsay Aza, an ex-prisoner who is now helping "cons" return to society.

# Drugs? Yes, but don't believe hype

"Drugs can be found in prison but do not believe the hype," Mr Aza told NEWSNOW. There are no real drug lords or gang leaders – the process is very simple.

"If today you have a drug cargo that will last for a week, you will be the drug boss for the week. But things will change quickly. When you have finished your stock and somebody else has a drug cargo, he will be the new drug baron.

"Most of the time, you will find prisoners who are supposedly drug lords in prison will work for the other guy who currently has the drug cargo," he said.

He explained how a detainee, Steeve Labonne, allegedly a drug boss in prison, was killed by small dealers. "Labonne had his gang and they used to snatch the drug cargos of the small-time dealers. But all the small dealers banded together and they murdered Labonne."

In fact, there are no "gangs" in prison who are in total control.

"Drug gang leaders such as Veeren or Le Roi du Centre who were untouchables when they were free have no control inside the prisons. I have seen Le Roi du Centre dealing for small-time dealers

because the war for power control in prison is very tough."

Drugs are traded for money, cigarettes, prostitution and the items bought at the prison canteen.

Once a week, prisoners have access to the canteen where they can buy the items they want such as Weetabix and fizzy drinks. During visits, the friends or relatives of a prisoner sometimes manage to smuggle in drugs.

Another way for drugs to enter the prison is when the prisoner is brought to court.

There are various techniques to hide drugs on the body. Some swallow the pellets of drugs whereas some can keep pellets in their throat. Others fill a condom with drugs and hide it within their body.

There are also prison guards who are involved in the traffic of drugs inside prisons, says Mr Aza. An officer can bring the drug for a detainee and he will be paid around Rs3,000 to Rs5,000 for "transport".

On the issue of violence, there are some detainees who act without thinking and this leads to violent clashes. "I have also seen some prison officers assaulting detainees but most of the officers are very good people who work with their hearts," says Mr Aza.

## The three challenges...

The three major challenges of being jailed, according to Mr Aza, are the prisons structure, medical assistance and, most obviously, the lack of liberty.

"On Sundays you spend the whole day watching television and this can be boring. But the worst is when there are holidays like Easter, Eid or Divali, you think about your family and friends who are free outside celebrating together and you are here in prison alone. This is heartbreaking."

There is no price for liberty nor is there any definition big enough to describe liberty. "When you are free, you know you are free."

The physical structure of a prison is "very disturbing" in Mauritius. Lyndsay Aza had first-hand experience. "The Central Prison is one of the worst. The cells are inhumanely small and in a very bad state. It is like a small cave which was meant for slaves. Every day at 4.30pm prisoners are locked in their cells and the doors will reopen the next morning at 6am," said the president of Elan.

The cell has only a bed and a small pot (some-

times a bucket) used for a makeshift toilet. After lock-up, if a prisoner has an "urgent need for the loo", he will have to use the pot or bucket.

On top of that, he has to sleep with the smell for the night.

First thing in the morning when the cell is opened, prisoners throw the contents of the buckets in a specific place.

Prisoners take their breakfast at 9.30am-9.45am, no lunch, and dinner at 3.30pm-4pm in Mauritian prisons. Tea is taken at 2pm.

Lyndsay experienced an incident where an inmate was suffering from pain in his cell after the afternoon lock-up. He knocked on the cell door for hours but no prison officer responded.

The procedures are so slow that the prisoner, if suffering from a serious illness, can die in the cell, says Mr Aza.

To open a cell door after normal hours, the prison officer will need to get the authorisation from the commissioner of prisons and the chief of the prison.

# Lockdown: The inside story

From Page 4

But what cause the spiral into so-called turmoil?

According to Mr Aza, the answer lies in the remittance on the term of a prisoner.

"Before 1996, if he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment, a convict would be automatically eligible to two months remittance, cutting his jail term to 10 months. This was an incentive for convicts to behave during his time in prison and keep up the hard work," he explained.

Normally, if a detainee misbehaved or got involved in a fight, he would be "under report" which would decrease his remittance and thus increase his jail term.

But a change in the law meant that remittance did not apply to those convicted of sexual or drug offences.

In 1998, says the former prisoner, conflicts and lack of control were rife in Mauritian prisons.

"This was when I was jailed in the Central Prison. I was lost in perdition. I was talking to nobody and I hardly ate. The new environment hit me with the impact of a crashing comet.

"I kept on working all alone. The idea of suicide crept gradually in my head," he says.

It was then that he met a friend who was sentenced to 22

years. He told him: "Lyndsay if you keep on behaving like this in prison, you will leave here feet-first (you will be dead)."

This chilling statement triggered a new mindset. Six months after being imprisoned, Mr Aza had a new philosophy of life in prison. He had to fight on for his own sanity and a new lease of life.

It was then that he decided to should use the Lotus Centre in the prison. It was a "rehab centre" for drug addicts. But he was denied access as the centre catered for prisoners who were sentenced for drugs-related cases only.

### Drugs and alcohol

Lyndsay Aza was convicted to four years of prison on a case of a sexual nature which was entwined with his use of drugs and alcohol.

In 1999, five hardened criminals escaped from the high security prison at La Bastille in Phoenix – an incident sparked the closure of the Lotus Centre in the Central Prison.

Months later, though, the centre reopened and Mr Aza was granted access as there were new "outdoor programmes" apart from "drug rehab programmes" that were added to the

centre's list of reinsertion efforts.

During his time in jail, there were no voluntary organisations which catered for the reinsertion into society of detainees. Only governmental associations were engaged in pre-release programmes.

"The worst thing was that there were no psychologists or psychotherapists on a full time basis. They were only there part-time.

"I visited prisons in Seychelles where the conditions are worse than those of Mauritius but at least there are in-house psychologists and psychotherapists who assist detainees during their jail term.

"I was surprised to find that they were female professionals working in the men's prison in Seychelles," said the ex-convict.

Mr Aza explained that there are vocational training programmes in prisons but detainees are not interested in them. The issue of remittance resurfaced.

Learning new skills and good behaviour earned detainees the right to remittance but this is not the case now, he claims.

If a detainee gets embroiled in a fight or an argument, he will be "under report" which probably will earn him the interdiction of using the prison canteen or his ration of cigarettes will be cut for two weeks.



●Amedee Darga and Raj Makoond of the Joint Economic Council flank the two recipients of the scholarships, Mr Vailama Moorghen and Miss Ragini Toonmoon.

# India targeted in MTPA push for tourists

By Mahesh Bugnath

The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority wants to make the most of the Indian market and has met tour operators from Bangalore and Mauritian operators in order to develop a strategy for that market.

One of the possibilities that has been discussed is increasing the number of direct flights to two flights a week on the Bangalore-Mauritius route.

The new initiative forms part of the Eductour organised by Air Mauritius and the MTPA between from July 20 to 25. During this familiarisation trip, 10 Indian tour operators and the Indian office of the MTPA have undertaken an analysis of the different assets that the island has to offer.

The Indian tour operators discovered the products that the destination has to offer which might be of

interest to Indian tourists. These are mainly sea scooters, snorkelling, undersea walks the capital city and shopping.

The sponsors of the trip were the La Plantation Hotels, Le Meridien, Ambre, Touessrok, Sugar Beach, Sofitel and Indian Resort. Among the sponsors there were also tourism operators such as Blue Safari, Undersea Walk, Pamplemousses Garden, the Caudan, Casela and Rhumerie de Chamarel.

## Scuba diving

The island received some free publicity recently in the Indian press with reports on the scuba diving lessons taken by the Bollywood star Deepika Padukone.

There was a 35.3% hike in the number of tourist arrivals from the sub-continent in June over the month of May. Arrivals reached 6,711 overall for that month and the cumulative arrivals from the Indian market over the first six months of

the year increased by 20.8% to reach 17,871.

Air Mauritius currently has five weekly flights to and from four Indian cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore.

Overall, 39,000 Indian tourists visited Mauritius last year but the figures contracted by 10.8% as compared to arrivals in 2008.

For the first three months of the year, there were 8,173 Indian tourists visiting the island as compared to 6,789 for the same period in 2009. This shows a 20% rebound of arrivals from the sub-continent. This trend was maintained over the second quarter.

For the first four months of the year, gross tourism receipts have increased by 6.1% from nearly Rs3 billion for the same period in 2009 to reach Rs3.2 billion as at end-April.

For the 12 months spanning May 2009 to April 2010, tourism receipts stood at Rs36.6 billion, a 5.5% decline over the corresponding period a year earlier.

# Special school for disabled to get training

By Rakshita Ramessur

A new school is to be set up to provide specialist training to disabled people, says the Chairman of the Special Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) Amedee Darga.

According to the most recent census, there are about 40,000 disabled people in Mauritius with varied handicaps.

Access to education remains one of the toughest challenges facing the country's disabled as schools and colleges are not adapted to their special needs.

In order to jump-start the training project, local authorities will team up with the Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeswara Mahavidyapeeth (JSS-MVP), based in Mysore, India. This organisation groups around 310 colleges.

Indian education institutions have agreed to support the setting up of a school tailored to provide education to the disabled in Mauritius.

The University of Technology will provide the infrastructure and the JSS Polytechnic of India will provide the lecturers for a period of a year.

This polytechnic has also awarded two scholarships for a one-year programme. The selection process took around six months and was based on certain criteria sent by the university. There were 110 registered which was shortlisted to 10. The final selection was made by the Indian organisation.

A ceremony was organised by the National Empowerment Fund to congratulate the scholarship winners who are leaving Mauritius today.

Mr Vailama Moorghen, a winner, is from Union Vale, and is visually impaired. Miss Ragini Toonmoon has 75% hearing impairment.

Mr. Moorghen told NEWSNOW. "I am going to follow a 12-month course in computer application for visually impaired. This will allow me to work in software application and do BPO work such as medical transcription."

He has been studying at the Training and Employment of Disabled Person's Board and has nearly completed a diploma in business information technology.

"I am handicapped, but I cannot keep on lamenting as I have big dreams for my future. The next best thing is to continually strive hard and move ahead. My message to the people like myself is to have confidence in themselves and trust their potential," he said.

As for Miss Ragini Toonmoon, she will follow an architectural draughtmanship course.

# Swine flu fight: Minister under fire

By Sunil Gopal

Minister of Health Maya Hanoomanjee was the target of a sustained attack by the opposition at the weekend over her handling of the A (H1N1) flu crisis.

MMM leader Paul Bérenger, at his weekly press conference, said the minister has not been handling the outbreak well. "If as leader of the opposition I have not called for her resignation for the time being, it is because we do not want to add to the crisis.

"In the first instance, though, I would denounce her policy of secrecy regarding the A (H1N1) flu."

He said the first case of A (H1N1) in Mauritius this year was identified on February 10, but it was only on July 10 that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life conceded that the virus had returned.

"She (the minister) did not even present her apologies after the patients affected by the virus died. Now the minister has disappeared and been replaced by an officer of the Ministry of Health at the most recent press conference. The officer has announced that tests for detecting A (H1N1) virus will no longer be undertaken to determine whether a person has died following infection from the virus".

According to Mr Bérenger, the minister "has created a lot of confusion" following her statement on commercial radio denying the resurgence of the virus.

"Now there are three cases of death resulting from infection from the virus and in the third case we still do not know whether an autopsy was performed on the deceased or not," he claimed.

Mr Berenger said that public hospitals and dispensaries have not been adequately prepared for a vaccination campaign against the flu.

He added that Mrs Hanomanjee seems to be taking things personally. "When I put the Private Notice Question to her on 13th July last, she gave the impression that the World Health Organisation (WHO) was on the point of declassifying the pandemic warning of the A (H1N1). However Reuters has on 20th July reported that the WHO has cancelled the meeting of experts on this issue. The minister has tried to hide things and downplay the problem. No one is trying to create any panic, she is the one who failed to manage the whole issue."

Mr Bérenger also commented on the power blackout that occurred in many parts of the country on Sunday, July 18, pointing out that the new Public Relations Officer of the Central Electricity Board (CEB) indicated that if the CEB

does not buy four new turbines there will be more blackouts.

He denounced the government's decision to put all its weight behind two projects, from Citipower and Gamma Coventa, instead of encouraging the optimal use of bagasse for the production of electricity.

He insisted that the two power plants, if implemented, would be catastrophic for consumers. The CEB, he added, is already some Rs5 billion in debt.

Commenting on the Noël/Ramkissoo report on the former planters of Riche Terre, the leader of the opposition said Mr Alain Noël has once more given a statement to the media inviting the government to review its position. Earlier Mr Noël said publicly that the compensation package being offered by the government was not what was proposed in the Noël/Ramkissoo report.

Mr Berenger appealed to the government to officially recognize Kosovo as an independent state, explaining that last Thursday the International Court of Justice delivered a judgment declaring the independence of Kosovo effected on December 17 as being legal. He added that 69 countries including France have recognised Kosovo as an independent state.

## NEWSLINE

### Experts meet on heart diseases

A conference on the management of cardiovascular and related diseases will be held in Mauritius on August 23 and 24.

Internationally renowned professors and consultants will participate in the event. Among these are: Professor David Owens, Consultant Diabetologist, UK; Professor Sir John Tooke, Vice-Provost (Health), University College London, UK; Professor Derek Yellon, Professor of Cellular and Molecular Cardiology and Director of the Hatter Cardiovascular Institute, University College London, UK, and Professor Paul Zimmet, Director of International Research, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Australia.

●The second meeting of the International Advisory Committee on the National Service Framework for Diabetes will be held on August 22 to review the implementation of the National Service Framework for Diabetes and the screening for NCDs carried out by mobile clinics.

### Decade honours African women

The African Union has declared the decade 2010 to 2020, the African Women's Decade, which will be officially launched in October 2010. The main objectives are to accelerate the implementation of agreed global and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The theme is "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Bottom-up Approach".

Ten thematic areas have been chosen for the forthcoming decade, including "Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship." The others are Agriculture, Health, Education, Science and Technology, Environment and Sustainable Development, Peace and Security, Governance and Legal Protection, Finance, Women In Decision-making Position; and Young Women Movement.

### New push to fight cybercrime

The National Cybercrime Prevention Committee, set up under the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, has submitted its recommendations to enhance the national approach to fighting cybercrime.

The committee proposes an overall improvement of the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to adapt to international legal instruments and provide for proportionate and dissuasive sanctions against cybercrime.

It has also suggested that a mechanism to increase exchange of information on IT security and cybercrimes at local, regional and international levels be established.

One of the recommendations is provision of a safe and secure environment for users, particularly children and young adults.

### Mauritius marks breastfeeding week

The Ministry of Health plans to organise activities to mark World Breastfeeding Week, celebrated annually during the first week of August.

The ministry will hold a workshop on the "Ten Steps Towards Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative – Each Step Counts."

The setting up of a Breastfeeding Committee in each Regional Hospital to oversee the implementation of the "Ten Steps" initiative has also been announced as well as campaigns to make women aware of the benefits of breastfeeding.

### Symposium at the university

The University of Mauritius will hold an international research symposium in service management on the theme "Service Imperatives in the New Economy". It will be held from August 24-27.

It will bring together scholars, professionals and practitioners from various disciplines with a view to sharing the latest theories and practices in dynamic service economies. It is expected that some 100 participants from 20 countries will attend.

### Population and housing census

A new housing and population census will be conducted in 2011. The housing census will be from January 31-June 19, and the population count from June 30- July 31 in respect of all persons alive in Mauritius at midnight on the night of July 3 and 4.

## SCHOOL CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

●Launching a souvenir magazine are wife of the president of the republic, Lady Sarojini Jugnauth, Lady Lydie Ringadoo and Minister Vasant Bunwaree.



# Websites for all schools – Bunwaree

By Nitesh Boodhoo

Minister of Education and Human Resources Vasant Bunwaree says the government is making massive investments in education, while announcing that the "digital revolution" will be extended to primary schools.

The teaching process and learning experience is continually being improved at primary and tertiary levels, he said in an address at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka on the occasion of the 20th anniversary celebration of the Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Government School.

"The Ministry of Education and Human Resources is encouraging every educational institution to create a website," Minister Bunwaree said.

He added that information and communication technologies will play a vital role in the learning and teaching processes.

Dr Bunwaree claimed that the transition from pre-primary level into primary level is more easily achieved with the introduction of individual adaptation programmes for every child.

The introduction of a "Diagnostic Assessment" programme at STD III for English and Mathematics will help educators identify the weaknesses of students at a very early stage.

Primary education which was earlier split into two subdivisions of three years and will now be divided into three subdivisions of two years. According to Dr Bunwaree, this will allow educators to better understand the child's learning capacity after every two years and know if he/she will be able to transit into the next level.

He added that the introduction of continuous assessment from STD III will also reinforce the follow-up mechanism on students.

The major innovation in the primary sector is the "Enhancement Programme" which aims at reinforcing the existing academic programme, while putting more emphasis on the active participation of the child.

He claimed that several parents are encouraging him to go ahead with the implementation of the E

Minister Bunwaree congratulated the personnel and the Parents Teachers Association of the Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Government School for achieving excellent academic performances.

The overall pass rate for the school improved from 95.7% in 2002 to 97.5% in 2009.

## Young people display skills during open day

An open day organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports will be held today at the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) Centre in Beau Bassin.

It aims at showing the products and services developed by young people through their numerous enterprise projects and to display the aptitudes and knowledge acquired.

Some 100 young people aged between 13 and 16 will exhibit mainly handicrafts and consumer goods.

These youngsters have been supported by the trainers of the MITD and Youth Officers of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and have benefitted from training in different facets of the setting up of an enterprise.

The activities form part of the Youth Enterprise Project in all the MITD centres.

The project aims at allowing young participants to gain experience in the world of business and to discover the opportunities in this sector. It will also help participants to learn how to set up a small enterprise.

The Youth Enterprise Project is based on Junior Achievement, which started in the United States in 1920. The project was later implemented in Canada and in Europe.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports also intends to organise a sales exhibition of all products and services offered by enterprises set up by young people in the MITD centres.

## Jackpot rises to Rs11m

There were no winners of the 38th draw of the loto on Saturday and as a result, this weekend's jackpot will be about Rs11 million.

The numbers drawn last Saturday were 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 18.

There were in all 53,145 prizewinners for the 38th draw.

Five winning numbers: 149 players each win Rs3,192. Four winning numbers: 4,593 players each win Rs214.

Three winning numbers: 48,403 players each win Rs100.

## NEWSNOW PEOPLE

# Ex-planter sows the seeds of knowledge

By Sunil Gopal

Rajcoomar Baichoo used to be a planter, growing sugar cane and vegetables. Today, he is sowing the seeds of education in young minds.

The road from the fields to the classroom has been a long and at times tortuous one, but for the man who failed three times to pass the sixth standard examinations (now CPE) it is paved with achievement.

When I reached the compound of the Orchard Kids Pre-Primary and Primary School in Les Plaines de l'Hermitage, the owner and founder was busy looking after his colourful roses.

Greeting me warmly, he introduced me to some of the staff of the school before we settled in his office in the newly-opened school.

Looking at this composed and contented man, I kept wondering how he succeeded in setting up one of the most respected pre-primary and primary institutions in the country.

Born in the northern village of Triolet, he has two brothers and three sisters. "My paternal grandfather, Sooram Sukai Baichoo, was a renowned planter. He used to wear his Indian traditional outfits like the 'langouti'. His head was always covered by his 'pagri'.

"In spite of his rustic looks, he was a shareholder in Amalgamated Tobacco Co Ltd which commercialised Mills cigarettes in Mauritius," Mr Baichoo reveals.

His illustrious grandfather, together with the Sewraz brothers Dhaneswar and Mahesh, held 48% of the company, the remaining shareholders being the British proprietors.

"I can recall that one Mr Latimer, a Briton, was the director of the company in Mauritius. As my grandfather could not speak English, it was my uncle who used to go to the United Kingdom to hold talks with the British shareholders," explains Mr Baichoo.

He told me that the name "Anand" (meaning peace in Hindi) was found to be auspicious for the Baichoo family and their business partners. Soon, several companies bearing the name of "Anand" were born, including Anand Cigarette Distributors and Anand Cinema.

They were even proprietors of buses named "Anand". Later they grouped with other bus owners and founded the Triolet Bus Service Co Ltd.

Rajcoomar Baichoo's grandfather was indeed a business visionary for along with the Nandlall family he founded the Mauritius Biscuit Making Co Ltd, manufacturer of "Subana" biscuits.

"As my father was not educated, he was given the responsibility of the family's plantations.

**'I decided school was not made for me'**

"I did my primary education at the Maheswarnath Government Primary School in Triolet. I failed the sixth standard twice. Nevertheless I was admitted in Triolet College in Form I. Thereafter I shifted to Bhujoharry College in Port Louis to continue Form II.

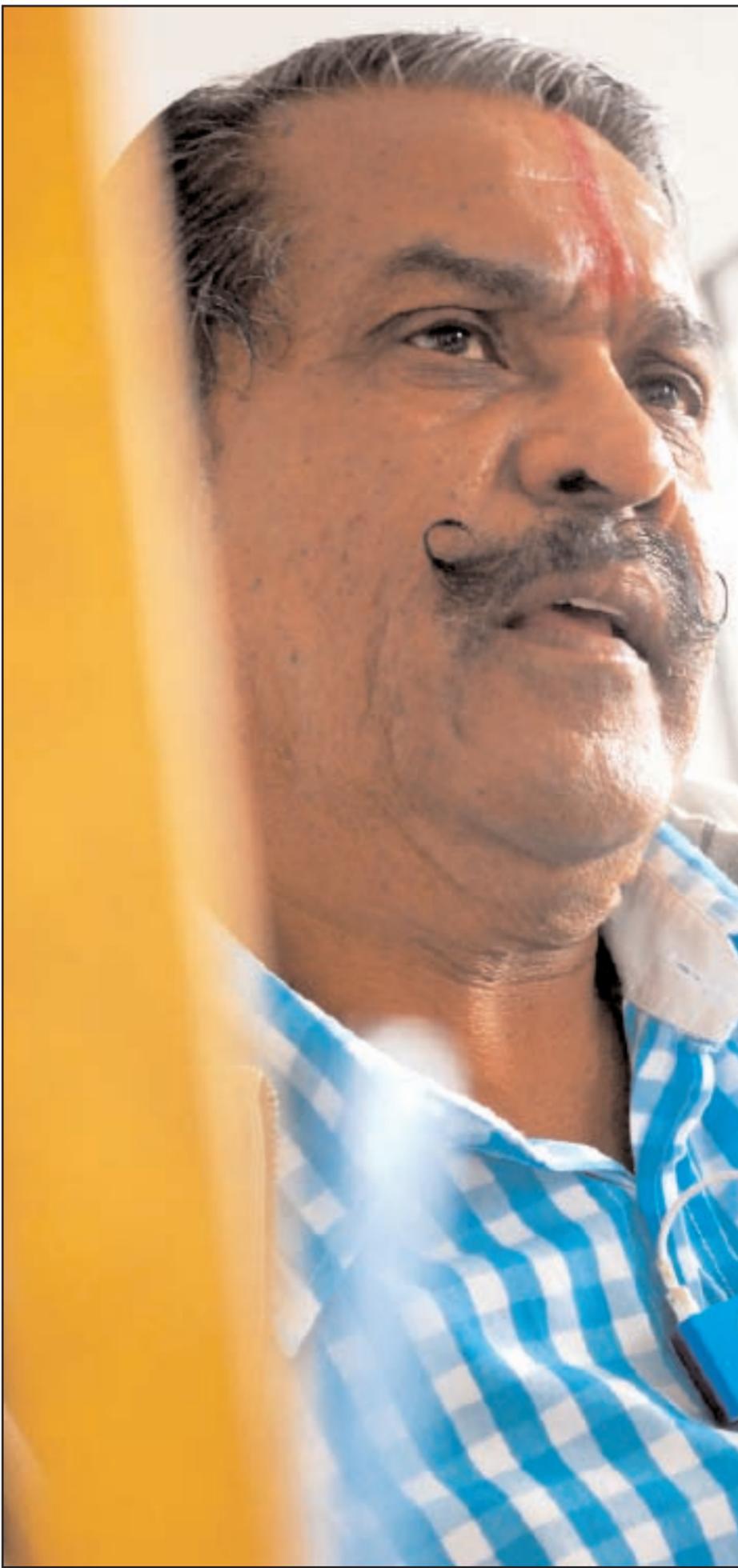
"Again I sat for the sixth standard examination and again I failed," shared a nostalgic Mr Baichoo.

At this time his grandfather, who was the patriarch of the Baichoo family, held the purse strings. And though his grandfather noticed that he was not going to stay any longer at school, he remained silent.

"He later revealed to me that he did not want to embarrass the family by deciding that I should quit school. After three failures in a row, I decided that school was not made for me.

"I went to my grandfather to announce my decision. He praised me for my decision, adding that he did not want to impose that decision on my parents," said Mr

Continued on Page 9



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Baichoo.

Grandfather Baichoo advised the young Rajcoomar to give a helping hand to his father in the fields. "You will ensure the succession," he told him.

"When my grandfather passed away things changed a lot within the family. He used to collect all the revenues and distribute it evenly to the family. After grandpa passed away, the revenues were split. Soon it became quite difficult for my father to manage as he had six children to look after," said Mr Baichoo.

By this time, Rajcoomar Baichoo was married and had three children. "I kept thinking that I had the opportunity to go to school but I did not complete my education. However, I have always been sincere with myself."

But how did the idea of setting up a pre-primary and primary school germinate?

"See, I was a planter of vegetables and sugar cane. I left Triolet to come and live in Coromandel. I always had the habit of buying and reading newspapers. It was in the 1990's.

"I read in *l'Express* that government, conscious of the lack of training, was encouraging the setting up of training institutions. I asked myself if I could set up a school of training."

Through a friend, he got in touch with the former governor of the Bank of Mauritius, Mr Dan Maraye, who at that time was a lecturer at the University of Mauritius.

### 'My ultimate aims was to set up a university'

"When I met Mr Maraye, he listened to me and asked me to give him some time. Maybe he wanted to assess the project and see if I was really keen to go ahead.

"But he contacted me again and proposed that we offer ACCA and Banking courses. Mr Maraye was the person who suggested the name of Orchard. This is how the Orchard School of Professional Studies was founded. It was situated in the ELP Building in Vacoas," explained Mr Baichoo.

"Mr Maraye was the Director of Studies of the new school but he never took a single cent as salary. He was also teaching two subjects, namely Cost and Management Account and Accounts.

"You know, when you run a training institution you must be registered with the IVTB. It is also important that you have the best professionals. I had the unique opportunity of having professionals like Mr Milan

### 'If you know how to communicate, then 75% of the work is done. Someone may have the highest qualifications but if he doesn't know how to communicate then he is bound to face difficulties'

Meetarbhan, Mr Chandan Jankee, Mr Siva Pallayathen, Mr Vijay Appanah, Mr Pravin Proag, and Mr Pravin Nagawa to work for the institution," said the former planter.

He added that it has been a real pride for him to rub shoulders with all these high-level academics. "With the presence of these professionals the public felt more confident", said Mr Baichoo.

However, he soon had to take a decision to close the school.

"I was depending too much on the Director. In fact, my ultimate aim was to set up a university but I found it difficult to establish contacts with foreign universities. Maybe there was some divine force that warned me that I would not be able to manage other situations that were lying ahead.

"In fact, DCDM, with the Telfair School, the Appavou Group and the Harel Group are all investing in the tertiary education sector.

"Maybe I would not have been in a position to compete with them, though I had in mind to start joint ventures with prestigious institutions like the IIT (India) and the London School of Economics," said Mr Baichoo.

But he wasn't to be deflected. In 1994 he opted for a pre-primary and primary school.

"The first Orchard Kids Pre-Primary was set up in Triolet with only 22 pupils. Gradually it grew to be one of the most reputed and successful schools in Mauritius.

"I felt that I could manage the school without difficulty. I then decided to close the Orchard School of Professional Studies in Vacoas, but I made a point to complete all my commitments with my students before I closed."

Mr Baichoo explained that the success of the Orchard Kids Pre-Primary and Primary School in Triolet gave him the necessary encouragement to go ahead with another school in the Plaines Wilhems area.

Asked about the secret of his success, Mr Baichoo said his communication skills played a key role.

"If you know how to communicate, then 75% of the work is done. Someone may have the highest qualifications but if he doesn't know how to communicate then he

is bound to face difficulties.

"I make it a must to know the names of my pupils. I also can identify their parents. This helps to develop a more cordial relation between the management and the parents," explained

When he looks back, Mr Baichoo has every reason to feel happy and is particularly proud of the achievements of his school.

### 'Parental support is extremely important'

"You know, when our first batch of pupils participated in the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) way back in 2001, ranking was still being practiced at this exam. Out of 22 candidates, 11 came out among the first 1,000, and the best student from our school ranked 68th.

"Since then we have always got 100% success at the CPE exams. In 2008, 10 of our pupils were admitted to the Royal College of Port Louis.

Out these 10 pupils, eight were aged only 10. Usually pupils complete the CPE at the age of 11."

In 2001 two pupils – Vashish Ramrecha and Divyaluxmee Bhagan – ranked first and second respectively at the "concours primaire" of Alliance Française. Pupils of the Orchard Kids Pre-Primary and Primary School have won several competitions in story writing, picture, essay writing, drawing and in sports.

"This school is a paid one. Results matter a lot. But I always insist that parental support for the child is extremely important.

"Parents, pupils and teachers form a triangle. In my opinion the pupils have to give maximum efforts. In fact, 70% of the efforts should come from the pupil, the remaining 30% is provided by the teachers and the parents."

Mr Baichoo has sound advice for parents. "Spend at least 10 minutes with your child or children daily. This will enable you to know how he spent his day and learn about his small problems."

He has introduced numerous innovative measures that are advantageous both for the

pupils and the parents. For instance, lunch and tea are provided by the school. Obviously this cost is included in the fees but Mr Baichoo insists that it has three main advantages.

"First, many parents give their children food that has been cooked on the previous evening. There is a risk that the food gets spoiled and the child might not even know and eat the food. Here the child is provided with fresh and hot meal.

"Secondly, children hailing from different communities attend the school and they have different eating habits. In the school only chicken, fish and vegetables are served. Thirdly, it relieves the mother from having to prepare the daily lunch of the child. This is a source of stress for many parents especially those who have to leave home early for work."

The school also offers a monthly medical check-up as well as a twice-yearly dental check-up to the pupils.

"All our pupils have a medical card. We also advise teachers to observe the pupils so they can detect any abnormal behaviour. There is a psychologist who is also attached to the school. We even arrange to get the pupils vaccinated so parents don't have to take a day off to get this done."

Today, Mr Baichoo is a contented man.

His two sons, Rakesh and Pravesh, as well as his daughter Shalinee give a helping hand in the running of the schools. His elder son Rakesh looks after the school in Triolet while Pravesh and Shalinee are on the staff of the school in les Plaines de l'Hermitage. Mr Baichoo's wife Salinee was also very active when the first school was founded in Triolet.

"I have built a five-star school in les Plaines de l'Hermitage. It is up to the parents to choose. They should not hesitate to invest in the education of their children. Here we believe in quality education that is results-oriented. We also have some teachers who have been assigned the duty of mentor. There is a constant care for the development of the child," said Mr Baichoo.

"I have not forgotten my roots as a planter. That's why I want the school to be situated in an atmosphere of an orchard. I have planted hundreds of roses and several fruit trees. I have also set up an endemic garden."

Mr Baichoo, better known as "Sada", remains a humble man, despite his obvious success. The cultivation of knowledge continues.

Extracts from opinion and commentary around the Global Village

# Sabre-rattling on the Korean peninsula

NORTH KOREA IS THREATENING a "physical response" to joint American-South Korean naval exercises which were scheduled to begin yesterday off the Korean Peninsula. China, which has abetted its neighbour's excesses for too long, needs to ensure that the North's bluster is only bluster. And it needs to tone down its own.

According to *The New York Times*, the United States and South Korea are right to demonstrate their strong alliance and resolve after North Korea sank a South Korean warship in March, killing 46 sailors. The South Koreans have exercised admirable restraint, but they need to know that the United States is with them. The North Koreans need to know that further attacks won't be tolerated.

When the issue of the warship, the Cheonan, was brought to the United Nations Security Council last month, the Security Council – at China's insistence – blinked. It

## THE NEW YORK TIMES

deplored the attack and expressed "deep concern" about the results of an investigation that held North Korea responsible. But the Council did not directly censure the North and noted its denial of responsibility. North Korea's leaders hailed the statement as a "great diplomatic victory." The danger is that they believe it.

The naval exercises have to be carefully calibrated to demonstrate strength without being provocative. They also need to be backed up by a review of what South Korea needs to defend its warships.

The Obama administration also has to carefully manage the diplomacy with Beijing. China – North Korea's main oil and food supplier – is probably the only country with a serious

chance of curbing the North's craziest impulses.

The United States should be urging China to exercise that influence – and reminding it that when it blocked a tougher Security Council statement (and watered down earlier sanctions on North Korea's nuclear programme), it took responsibility for reining in the North.

We are disturbed that instead of talking sense to North Korea, China has stoked tensions by objecting that part of the exercises were planned for the Yellow Sea – international waters, where American ships have often sailed, that are claimed by Beijing.

The US administration says – wisely – that it is still open to engagement (with North Korea). We're not sure there is a strategy to get there. But the Cheonan is one more reminder that the status quo is untenable.

## INNOVATION

### The \$35 computer for students

India has unveiled a \$35 computer prototype as part of its programme to provide connectivity to its students and teachers at affordable prices.

Kapil Sibal, the country's human resources development minister, displayed what he called a low-cost computing and access device in New Delhi. The ministry said the price would gradually fall to \$10 apiece.

India said connectivity to all its colleges and universities is key to achieving its education goals.

Home to a billion-plus population, the country's literacy rate stands at 65%, according to the 2001 census figures. Nevertheless, the South Asian nation has made giant strides in various areas since it opened up its economy in the early 1990s.

The country ushered in a telecom revolution that delivered mobile telephony to nearly 600 million people in just a little more than a decade with highly competitive call tariffs.

Now, India is preparing for another leap into the digital world.

Recently, it auctioned off its airwaves for third-generation services to enable super-fast multimedia streaming of wireless.

The move is aimed at bringing India's online market on a par with its booming cell-phone business through Internet penetration with technology allowing quick access, data transfer and entertainment on mobile handsets.

The country has announced plans to link up all its 250,000 village councils by 2012 in a bid to plug massive broadband divides



● India's human resources development minister unveils the \$35 computer.

between rural and urban communities as it emerges as one of the world's few growth markets.

Authorities say technical institutions involved in designing the new device are now setting up research to address price and quality issues in developing budget gadgets for students.

"The aim is to reach such devices to the

The country has announced plans to link up all its 250,000 village councils by 2012 in a bid to plug massive broadband divides between rural and urban communities

students of colleges and universities, and to provide these institutions a host of choices of low-cost access devices around Rs1,500 [\$35] or less in near future," the human resources ministry said at the launch of the computer.

Ministry spokeswoman Mamata Varma said the government aimed to introduce the new touch-screen computing tool at higher educational institutions in 2011.

The ministry, she said, is expected to tender out contracts to private companies for mass production of its prototype. The Linux-based computer is equipped with an Internet browser, a PDF reader and several other facilities, she said.

### No quick fix for education

Can India achieve inclusive education with cheap computing devices, when a quarter of the country's 136 million primary school students (classes I-V) drop out every year because of their inability to pay fees?

Unfortunately, this is what India's human resources development minister Kapil Sibal thinks.

The role of technology in furthering the cause of education in India is a far-fetched idea when we fail to fulfil even the basic conditions of schooling.

When most of our government-run schools in the villages don't even have basic infrastructure such as furnished classrooms, blackboards and toilets, our officials are itching to bring in subsidised computing devices.

These devices cannot compensate for our crumbling education infrastructure and absenteeism of teaching staff.

Look at the issue another way. Let's say the government actually succeeds in distributing low-cost computers to kids across the

## TIMES OF INDIA

country, itself a charitable assumption.

Computers are of little value without internet access. But how far is the internet available in backward and remote areas?

Do they even have electricity, which needs to be at least intermittently available in order to power computers? Can we ensure maintenance of millions of computers across the country?

Many of the problems in the Indian education system are a result of political and administrative negligence. They cannot be addressed through technical fixes, which offer a convenient and superficially plausible short cut when we are unable to address the real problems affecting education.

It's one thing to bring together IIT students and technical experts and have them rig up a cheap computer. It's quite another issue scaling this up so that the devices can be widely distributed throughout the country and loaded with useful educational software, says the *Times of India*.

## INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

### No room for complacency in Eurozone

In just a few months, Europe's leaders have gone from panic to complacency about the future of the Continent's common currency, the euro.

The panic was at least somewhat useful, forcing Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, to begin to recognise that her own country's prosperity is dependent on an economically viable European Union. Mrs. Merkel's belated agreement to contribute to a standby bailout fund finally helped calm the bond market anxieties her earlier hesitations helped stoke.

Today's complacency, says the *International Herald Tribune*, is more dangerous since none of the euro's underlying problems – from yawning economic imbalances among the 16 nations using the currency to a lack of credible fiscal enforcement mechanisms – have been addressed.

Austerity budgets and economic recovery alone will not solve these problems. Friday's generally upbeat financial report card given to Europe's big banks – 84 of 91 passed – won't make them go away. There are fundamental issues that need to be dealt with before the next bond market crisis hits, as it inevitably will.

Deficit countries like Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland must do a lot of painful things, including raising taxes, slashing services and postponing necessary public investments. To pay their bills, they also must increase their net exports.

They will not be able to do so if countries already running big trade surpluses push to widen their surpluses at the same time. Berlin's shortsighted adoption of fiscal austerity policies could make it impossible for others to grow their way out of today's problems.

While the Eurozone has always had clear guidelines on permissible deficits, they never have been properly monitored or enforced. Greece got away with phony figures for years until the crisis exploded. Germany and France broke the deficit guidelines repeatedly. This week, those two countries urged everyone to follow the guidelines, but with no legally binding penalties if they don't.

Harmonising economic imbalances and enforcing new fiscal rules won't be easy. Most of Europe's leaders are politically weak or otherwise distracted. But the Eurozone crisis is not over. If renewed market pressure forces one or more countries to abandon the common currency, it would bring a nightmare of disrupted trade and disputed debts. There is no time for complacency, says the *International Herald Tribune*.



●U.S. President Barack Obama (*left*) and British Prime Minister David Cameron leave the East Room after speaking to reporters last week.

# Don't confuse power of the US with it being right

DAILY TELEGRAPH, LONDON

After November 2 Mr Obama's ability to do what he wants may be circumscribed by the realities of an electoral system in which he has become deeply unpopular

THE POLITICAL CLASS in America, otherwise painfully divided, is unanimous on one thing: Dave cut an inoffensive figure when he came to visit the so-called leader of the free world. Indeed, such offence as was caused seemed to be directed back at Dave's fellow countrymen, after his obtuse remark about Britain's having been America's "junior partner" in 1940.

This idiotic mistake, says Britain's *Daily Telegraph*, shows that Dave (British Prime Minister Cameron) remains a supreme PR man with the PR man's traditional flexibility with the facts, and we must doubt he cares too much about having got them wrong. But being a PR man seems to be a valuable talent on adventures such as this, in a country where almost everything is judged by the artificial criterion of popular appeal.

Dave made that statement in an attempt – apparently successful – to suck up to Barack Obama, something he may feel he has to do less after the mid-term congressional elections on November 2.

Even in headline Democrat New York, the administration and its supporters in Congress are held in increasing contempt. Dave had little time or inclination to talk to any conservatives during his trip – much the same as his attitude to them at home – but on future visits he may have to cast his net more widely. After November 2 Mr Obama's ability to do what he wants may be

circumscribed by the realities of an electoral system in which he has become deeply unpopular, the *Daily Telegraph* avers.

All the talk of "junior partnerships" perpetuates the rather unpleasant business of a British feeling that it needs to find a special vocabulary, or unique terminology, to describe the relationship with America. Dave, with his warm show of politeness, chose not to react to a series of provocations by the president and his friends that have in recent weeks made that relationship anything but special.

Dave has briefed that he is seeking to form close relationships with India and Brazil: and it wouldn't hurt him to spend some time with the Chinese either. At the moment, America – or more to the point, its political leadership – cares very little about Britain, and indeed about Europe, so it might be worth cultivating friends elsewhere.

According to the *Daily Telegraph*, speaking the same language (in theory) and being on the same side in two world wars no longer guarantee unity of purpose. America is going through a very bad patch and an inexperienced president is taking it out even on his notional friends. America's power should not be confused with its being right. It is rare that we can learn much from our European partners, but they shook off the compulsion to be obsequious to America long ago. So should we.

## ANALYSIS

# Arms and the emerging nations

IF YOU WANT to see the shift in geopolitical and military clout from Western powers towards their growing emerging rivals, look no further than the sales stands of this year's Farnborough air show in England.

With European governments expected to slash defence spending – and the United States seen probably following suit in the coming decades – the key focus for Western defence executives and government has been new export destinations.

Asian military officers with Western liaison staff and Middle Eastern government officials wandered the halls and static exhibits, ranging from the new European A400M military transport aircraft to drones, artillery pieces and helicopters.

British officials and ministers in particular have been preaching two tales – the British defence budget is unsustainably large and needs to be cut, but they are looking to exports from the defence and security industry to help growth.

"We see huge opportunities from emerging markets," said a UK Trade and Industry spokesman. "We have a global market share of close to 20% and we have been bringing delegates from as many countries as possible to Farnborough."

Defence firms have been putting a brave face on bad news from Europe – Italy said during the show it was cancelling orders for 25 Eurofighters, surprising some.

Europe-wide coordination on defence still seems occasionally troubled. A dispute has broken out between Britain's Royal Air Force and Franco-German EADS on whether or not the A400M will be officially named the "Grizzly".

Instead, defence firms point to buyers especially in the Middle East, where high oil prices, the perceived threat from Iran and ageing aircraft are all seen fuelling demand for fast jets.

BAE Systems said Middle Eastern buyers were "awash with money", while others enthused over India – a growing market that Western firms believe they are wooing away from its traditional Russian suppliers.

As well as its traditional rivalry with Pakistan, some believe India is entering an increasing arms race with China. Certainly, India seems keen to upgrade its military

jet sells for \$20 million to poorer countries such as African nations.

Not everyone seems to be buying. Some sales staff complain that military officers from some emerging nations have a tendency to turn up at the well-appointed stands, consume coffee and other handouts and appear reluctant to leave.



●A U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft is pictured at Farnborough Airshow in southern England... India talking to Boeing about a \$6 billion deal

capabilities to Western standards including working on a \$5.8 billion deal with Boeing on C-17 cargo planes.

"We're seeing unbelievable demand from India," said Mike Alvis, executive vice president of IIT Defence International, manufacturing nightvision equipment. "There's a lot of willingness to spend on defence."

Brazil's air force was also being watched closely ahead of a decision on fighter purchases. Other emerging buyers sighted by Reuters included a delegation from the Libyan air force.

While most of the major defence firms are looking to sell their most expensive items, for those looking at the other end of the spectrum Farnborough saw the international debut of the JF-17, a Chinese-Pakistani warplane. A redesigned and updated version of the 1950s MiG-21, the

Nevertheless, the global demand appears there. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global defence spending rose 5.9% in real terms in 2009, led by increases in the US, China, Brazil and India.

Most analysts see U.S. defence spending – currently roughly half the global total – beginning to fall back once troop levels in Afghanistan start to be reduced. Chinese spending is seen growing at near the same rate as 2009's 15% level.

China and Russia looked largely absent from Farnborough this year. China is still covered by arms restrictions from Europe and the United States. It did send dele-

gates to a Paris arms fair last month – but to sell rather than buy.

The presence of so many visitors means firms and government alike are always wary of cyber attacks, hacking and spying at such events – itself seen as a key growth area.

With China still nowhere close to challenging the United States as a global military power, analysts say it is particularly focusing on asymmetric warfare capabilities, particularly cyber warfare.

"Cyber attacks are changing the nature of war we mean by military power and national security," said Ian Bremmer, president of political risk consultancy Eurasia Group. "That's an area I expect the United States to spend a great deal more on as they are presently behind."

REUTERS

# NORTH KOREA WARNS OF NUCLEAR RETALIATION

## U.S. and South in war games, tension mounts

By Jack Kim  
SEOUL

The U.S. and South Korean militaries kicked off large exercises yesterday to underscore deterrence against North Korea after accusing the reclusive communist state of sinking a warship.

Pyongyang warned that the drill had pitched the peninsula onto the brink of war.

U.S. naval vessels, including the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington, began the drills by setting off from South Korean ports where they had called last week in a show of force timed with a high-level meeting between the two allies.

North Korea drove tensions to new heights after a team of investigators, led by South Korea's military, accused it of firing a torpedo in March to sink the corvette Cheonan, killing 46 men.

The United States announced new sanctions on the North last week, freezing the assets of Pyongyang's leaders it said were earned through illicit activities and cutting off the flow of cash to them. The moves would also ban travel by some individuals.

China had objected to the drills.

Beijing criticised the introduction of large-scale military equipment into the Yellow Sea off the peninsula's west coast, prompting a move of the bulk of the exercises to areas off the east coast.

On Saturday, the North's powerful National Defence Commission vowed to launch a "sacred war" against the United States and South Korea at "any time necessary", in response to the drills, denounced as "reckless".

The drills involve more than 200 aircraft, including the F-22 Raptor fighter, and three destroyers, including the USS John S. McCain, part of the 97,000-tonne USS George Washington's strike group.

Four Japanese military officers were on board the carrier to observe the drills.

Pyongyang has routinely been shrill in voicing its anger in the past when the allies conducted exercises. But U.S. officials say further provocations are possible in coming months, especially as the North tries to build political momentum for the succession to leader Kim Jong-il, expected to hand power to his youngest son.

North Korea has called for the resumption of six-party nuclear disarmament talks that it had boycotted since late 2008, a move analysts said was an attempt to put the Cheonan incident behind it and win lucrative aid through negotiations with the South, the United States, Japan, Russia and China.

The North's foreign ministry said it was ready for dialogue but vowed to respond by force if it had to. "We are not the one who would be surprised by military threats or sanctions," a ministry spokesman said.



● Anti-North Korea activists, including North Korean defectors, release balloons carrying anti-Kim Jong-il leaflets towards the North to mark the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1950-53 Korean War near the demilitarised zone separating the two Koreas in Paju, about 55km north of Seoul.

## Taliban capture soldier, another American killed

KABUL: The Taliban said on Sunday they were holding prisoner one of two U.S. soldiers who strayed into territory controlled by the insurgents, and that the other had been killed.

The Taliban leadership would decide later on the fate of the captive, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Reuters by phone from an undisclosed location.

The two U.S. servicemen were reported missing on Friday after failing to return in a vehicle they had taken from their compound in Kabul, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said.

"We have the body of the dead soldier and the other one who is alive. We have taken them to a safe place," Mujahid said.

His account was disputed by a provincial official in Logar, a short but dangerous drive south of the capital, who said U.S. forces had recovered a body.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said the soldier now captive was likely to have also been injured. They had ended up in a Taliban-held part of the province and liquor had been found in their vehicle, he said.

ISAF scrambled helicopters and planes to look for the pair after they went missing, but officials have declined to give anything but scant details since, prompting speculation that the two had been acting outside the chain of command.

ISAF's 150,000 troops in Afghanistan rarely move outside their bases unless on heavily armed patrols or convoys on predetermined routes.

Leaflets depicting photos of the two soldiers were distributed in Logar on Sunday. "Now this soldier needs the help of Afghanistan's people and return him to his dear ones," read one leaflet.

Announcements on local radio stations offered a \$20,000 reward for information leading to a rescue.

The only other ISAF service member believed held by the Taliban is Idaho National Guardsman Bowe Bergdahl, whose capture in June last year triggered a massive manhunt.

His captors have issued videos of him denouncing the war, in what the U.S. military has called illegal propaganda.

Last month was the deadliest of the nine-year war in Afghanistan for foreign troops, with more than 100 killed.

# Gaza ships warned

UNITED NATIONS

Israel has warned the United Nations that two ships preparing to sail from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip to bring aid to the blockaded territory would not be allowed to reach their destination.

"The stated intention of these vessels is to violate the existing naval blockade of Gaza," Israel's U.N. ambassador Gabriela Shalev said in a letter to secretary general Ban Ki-moon and Nigerian ambassador Joy Ogwu, the current president of the Security Council.

Israel recently eased its blockade of the Gaza Strip in response to intense international criticism of a May 31 Israeli commando raid on a flotilla of aid ships.

## BLOCKADE WON'T BE BROKEN SAYS TEL AVIV

Nine pro-Palestinian Turkish protesters died in the confrontation. Israel is allowing more food and other aid into Gaza via land crossings but continues to maintain the naval blockade. Gaza has been controlled by the militant Palestinian group Hamas since 2007.

"Israel reserves its right under international law to use all necessary means to prevent these ships from violating the

forementioned naval blockade," Shalev said. "Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that these vessels carry weapons or individuals with provocative and confrontational intentions," she added.

U.N. officials have urged countries not to attempt to break the Israeli naval blockade and urged all parties to show restraint. U.N. under-secretary-general for political affairs Lynn Pascoe told the Security Council on Wednesday that "such convoys are not helpful to resolving the basic economic problems of Gaza and needlessly carry the potential for escalation".

Shalev said aid could be delivered to Gaza by land and those sending ships to the territory were doing so not to bring aid to the Palestinians but "to incite a confrontation and raise tension in our region".



## 'DARTH VADER' STRIKES BANK

● An unidentified man dressed as 'Star Wars' villain Darth Vader is seen robbing a Chase bank branch in Setauket, New York, in the surveillance camera frame grab. Armed with a gun instead of a lightsaber, the man entered the branch and demanded cash from a teller. He fled through a parking lot with an undisclosed amount of money.

Vader originally appeared as the Empire's villainous enforcer in the original 'Star Wars' trilogy (Episodes IV, V, VI), and as a tragic figure near the end of Episode III: Revenge of the Sith, the third and final film of the prequel trilogy.

## UN appoints death convoy probe team

GENEVA: The United Nations Human Rights Council has appointed a team of international experts to investigate Israel's raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla and called on all parties to cooperate.

The fact-finding team comprises three independent experts – Sir Desmond de Silva (Britain), Karl Hudson-Phillips (Trinidad and Tobago) and Mary Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia), a U.N. statement said. The 47-country Council voted to set up the independent inquiry on June 2 to look into what it called violations of international law in Israel's commando attack in May, in which nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists were killed.

"The expertise, independence and impartiality of the members of the mission will be devoted to clarifying the events which took place that day and their legality," said Thailand's ambassador Sihasak Phuangketkeow, current Council president.

"We call upon all parties to fully cooperate with the mission and hope that this mission will contribute to peace in the region and justice for the victims," he said.

The Israeli navy stormed the flotilla on May 31 killing eight Turks and a Turkish-American on board a Turkish ship.

Israel said its commandos acted in self-defence and has rejected calls for an international inquiry into the raid. A recent Israeli inquiry concluded that there were severe intelligence flaws in the mission and added that the commandos were defending themselves during the raid.

But Pakistan and Sudan led a move by Muslim countries at the U.N. human rights body, where they hold an effective majority, to condemn the raid as outrageous and demand "full accountability and credible independent inquiries".

The U.N. team is expected to travel to Israel, Turkey and Gaza in August to interview witnesses and gather information before reporting back to the Council in September.

The Council opens a three-week session in Geneva on September 12.

It was not yet clear whether Israel – which has a long history of rejecting U.N. probes as one-sided – would cooperate and allow the team to visit, according to U.N. sources.

A separate Israeli military inquiry released on July 12 found intelligence and operational errors in the raid but defended the use of force.

De Silva is a former chief war crimes prosecutor at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Hudson-Phillips is a former judge at the International Criminal Court who also served as attorney-general of Trinidad and Tobago.

Shanthi Dairiam is a Malaysian women's rights activist working in U.N. and Asian regional forums.

## NEWSLINE

### Call for justice in Cambodia

BANGKOK: The first U.N.-backed trial of a top member of the murderous Khmer Rouge "Killing Fields" regime will deliver a verdict this week that could bring some closure in one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century.

The Khmer Rouge's chief torturer and jailer, 67-year-old Kaing Guek Eav, is charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity for overseeing the deaths of 14,000 people as commander of Phnom Penh's notorious Tuol Sleng prison. Better known as "Duch", he is widely expected to receive the maximum sentence of life imprisonment by a joint U.N.-Cambodian court set up to prosecute the ultra-Maoist regime blamed for 1.7 million deaths that wiped out almost a quarter of the population.

### Somalis in Kenya hit

GENEVA: Somali refugees are being harassed and rounded up in Kenya and the semi-autonomous enclave of Puntland in the wake of deadly bombings by al Shabaab Islamist rebels in Uganda, the United Nations said last week.

Authorities in Puntland sent back more than 900 displaced Somalis to the conflict zone in central Somalia this week, but so far Kenya has not deported Somalis who can prove they have refugee status, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said. "Against the backdrop of recent terrorist attacks, we have noted growing numbers of incidents of xenophobia, round-ups and deportations of displaced Somalis," Melissa Fleming, UNHCR spokeswoman, told a news briefing in Geneva.

### Thai 'red' rally before vote

BANGKOK: Supporters of Thailand's main opposition party rallied in Bangkok over the weekend in the first big political gathering since a deadly military crackdown on anti-government protesters two months ago.

At least 4,000 massed at a theme park ahead of a pivotal Bangkok by-election in a defiant show of support for detained "red shirt" protest leader Korkeaw Pikulthong, representing the Puea Thai Party, the movement's powerful parliamentary arm.

Supporters dressed in red braved the rain to rally in spite of a state of emergency in place across a quarter of the country since fierce fighting, arson and deadly riots in May that marked the worst political violence in Thailand's modern history.

### No jailhouse rock in Britain

LONDON: Prime Minister David Cameron has said prisoners will not be allowed to hold parties behind bars after a minister proposed lifting a ban on arts events for inmates introduced by the previous administration.

"Number 10 has instructed the Ministry of Justice to make it very clear that there will be no prison parties," a spokeswoman for the Prime Minister told reporters last week. Justice minister Crispin Blunt had suggested allowing prisoners to hold fancy dress parties and stage comedy workshops in a speech to a crime reduction charity, prompting howls of outrage from newspapers.

Cameron still had confidence in Blunt, the spokeswoman said adding, however, that policy needed to be discussed.

OCEAN TEMPERATURES ARE INCREASING WITH SEAS RISING BY 3mm EVERY YEAR

# Monster is crawling deep down the abyss

By David Fogarty SINGAPORE

In the remote, frigid abyss of the deep oceans, temperatures are slowly rising. Not by much, but spread over the vast depths of the deep, the change is significant adding to sea level rise and possibly heralding even greater impacts for mankind and the planet.

While scientists aren't yet certain if the warming is caused by climate change, they are scrambling to learn more about what's going on. This is because the layer starting roughly 2 kilometres from the surface makes up about half the world's oceans and plays a key role in regulating the planet's climate.

"A decade or so ago, we had this picture in our minds that deep oceans were pretty stable and that things didn't change much there," said oceanographer Steve Rintoul of Australia's state-backed science and research body CSIRO.

"What's changed in the last decade is that we've started to accumulate enough measurements to show there are widespread changes happening in the deep ocean. And those include really remarkably widespread warming of the deepest layers of the ocean," he told Reuters from Hobart, Tasmania. Water expands as it gets warmer and this, along with the melting of glaciers and ice caps, is a major force behind rising sea levels.

Seas, on average, are rising at a rate of 3 millimetres a year, but some studies suggest they could rise by up to a metre by 2100, inundating low-lying coastlines.

"The heat storage aspect is important because over the past 50 years, about 90% of the extra heat stored by the earth is now found in the ocean," said Rintoul. The deep ocean takes up 10 to 20% of this. Scientists say that extra heat is being trapped by greenhouse gases released by agriculture, deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels.

The greatest warming of the deep oceans has been recorded near Antarctica and the North Atlantic. These are the two regions where very cold, salty water sinks from the surface to the depths in a motion that helps drive a global circulation of ocean currents that regulates the climate, for example by giving northern Europe its mild weather.

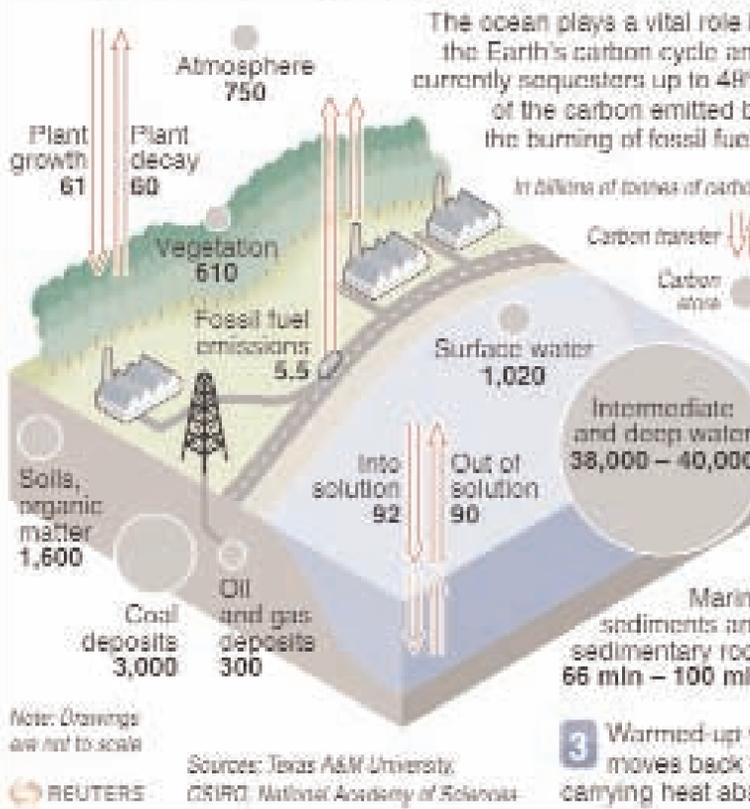
The water that sinks off parts of Antarctica heads north into different ocean basins as it branches out. It can take centuries to make its way back to the surface.

"We're seeing warming. We've only seen

## DEEP OCEAN CARBON STORAGE

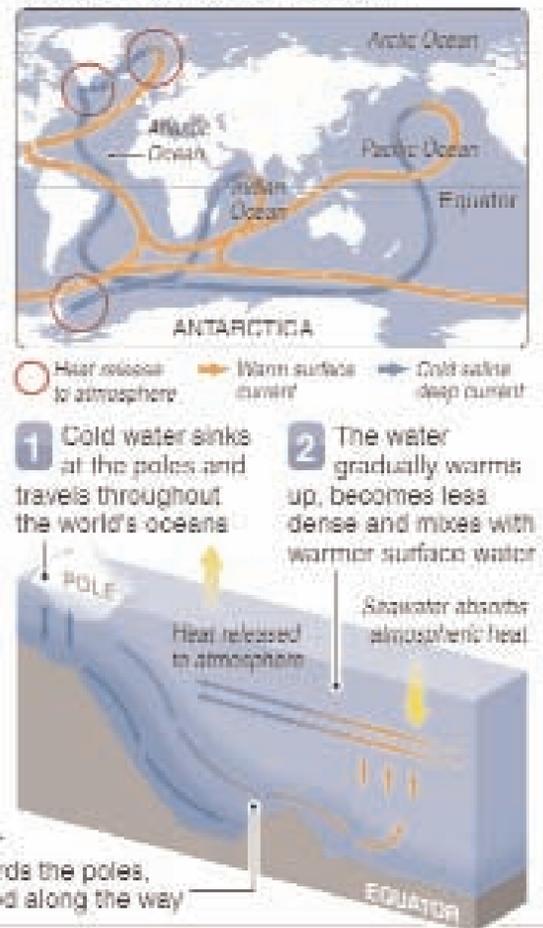
The oceans are a major carbon "sink", soaking up large amounts of the main greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, including about a quarter of all the CO2 emitted by human activity

### MAJOR CARBON STORES AND TRANSFERS



## OCEAN CIRCULATION SYSTEM

Also called the ocean conveyor, the system helps regulate the Earth's climate



'What's changed in the last decade is that we've started to accumulate enough measurements to show there are widespread changes happening in the deep ocean. And those include really remarkably widespread warming of the deepest layers of the ocean'

this pattern for a decade or two now," said Gregory Johnson, an oceanographer of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He pointed to the difficulties of taking measurements in the crushing depths, which have limited scientists to taking samples every decade on costly voyages that transect an area of ocean.

"When we go out and do these measurements, we go out and stop the ship and lower the instrument down to the bottom and bring it back. It's sort of like going across the ocean at a slow jog because you spend more than half your time stopped and sampling."

He said the observed warming rate for the deep layers of the Southern Ocean, between Australia and Antarctica, was about 0.03 degrees Celsius per decade. "It seems very



● Waves crash against a tree as sea water floods Mayangan village in Subang, Indonesia's West Java province.

small, but it's actually a huge amount of energy uptake. Compared with mankind's global energy consumption rate, it's three times that rate going into the deep ocean," he told Reuters from Seattle. "That's about four Hiroshima bombs every 5 seconds, or five hairdryers for all 6.8 billion people on the planet going continuously," he said.

Some areas, such as the Southern Ocean, have been sampled more than others. And what scientists have found is worrying. The water sinking off Antarctica is becoming fresher and therefore less dense though it's unclear if this will lead to long-term changes in the speed of deep ocean currents. Changes in wind patterns are also causing more deep, carbon-rich water to come to the surface.

The oceans are a major carbon "sink", soaking up large amounts of the main greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, including about a quarter of all the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by human activity. Oceans store about 50 times the CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. And most of this is stored in intermediate and deep ocean waters. "There are huge amounts of carbon stored in those waters below the 2,000-metre mark," said Bernadette Sloyan of the CSIRO's Marine and Atmospheric Research division in Hobart.

"And changing the temperature changes the ability of the ocean to hold and store that carbon as a reservoir," she said. Mankind's fossil fuel emissions

are the equivalent of about six billion tonnes of carbon annually, a fraction of the estimated 38 to 40 trillion tonnes of carbon stored in the intermediate and deep ocean layers. At present, while the ocean naturally releases carbon dioxide gas in upwelling currents off Antarctica and in parts of the tropics, the world's oceans overall soak up more than they emit.

But scientists say that could change. "The changes we project will happen in the Southern Ocean will tend to make the ocean less effective at storing CO<sub>2</sub>," said Rintoul.

For now, scientists are trying to speed up measurements to figure out if mankind has woken up a monster in the deep. Rintoul and Johnson said more study was needed to pin down any direct climate change connection.

"At the moment, we can't really say that the pattern of deep warming that we see is a signal of human-caused climate change," said Rintoul. "And the reason we can't say that is partly because we only have a few decades of observations and also because we don't really understand the processes that control variability in the deep ocean as well," he said. Self-propelled gliders being developed to take deep water samples will help. Engineers are also working to expand a network of floats, which can presently sink to 2,000 metres to take data readings.

# 19 die in Love Parade Parade crush

## MASS PANIC AT GERMAN TECHNO MUSIC FESTIVAL

By Tom Kaeckenhoff  
DUISBURG, Germany

A stampede killed at least 19 people after mass panic broke out in a tunnel at a "Love Parade" techno music festival in Germany on Saturday night.

Overcrowding at the entrance tunnel to a former freight rail station where the event was being held sparked the stampede and then a crush among the mainly young festival-goers, police said.

The festival, which police said drew about 1.4 million people, was not immediately cancelled because authorities feared an abrupt halt could spark a second panic.

Music blared out after the stampede and people danced on, unaware of the unfolding tragedy nearby. Organisers finally called the event off in late evening hours after the deaths.

"There were piles of injured on the ground, some being resuscitated, others dead and covered with sheets," 18-year-old Love Parade participant Isabel Schloesser told Reuters.

"It was way too full, everybody wanted to get in," she said after leaving the rubble-strewn entrance where echoes of a throbbing bass beat could still be heard more than three hours after the crush.

Rescue work was initially hampered by the huge crowds attending one of Europe's biggest electronic music events in fine weather, officials said. People had come from all around Europe to the Love Parade, most in the 18-25 age bracket.

Police in the industrial Ruhr city of Duisburg in western Germany had tried to close the tunnel entrance about a half an hour before the chaos broke out.

"Apparently some tried to enter the area by climbing a fence along a ramp and then fell," the head of an emergency task force, Wolfgang Rabe, said on ARD television. "It is still a presumption at the moment, but this could have caused a panic."

North Rhine-Westphalia state interior minister Ralf Jaeger arrived at the scene and said 5,500 police and emergency workers had been mobilised to organise evacuation and an orderly end to the festival, which left thousands in a state of shock.

German President Christian Wulff expressed sympathy in a statement and Chancellor Angel Merkel sent a message of condolence to the relatives of the victims.

Authorities put the death toll at 19, with at least 80 more injured, many severely.

## 51 bodies found in mass grave

MONTERREY, Mexico: Police have unearthed at least 51 bodies in a mass grave outside Mexico's business capital Monterrey since Thursday, a grisly sign of the escalating drug violence in the northern city, authorities said yesterday as the digging continued.

Acting on a tip from an informant, investigators have been digging up a rural area 12 miles east of Monterrey, uncovering dozens of corpses, some burned beyond recognition, others with bullet wounds, said the governor of Nuevo Leon state, where Monterrey is located.

"(Investigators) believe these could be people related to organised crime, a product of war between these cartels," Governor Rodrigo Medina told reporters. "This is the level of violence we expect when these groups clash."

Many of the victims found in the mass grave were believed to have died as recently as two weeks ago, police said.

Wealthy Monterrey, whose residents earn on average twice as much as other Mexicans, was until recently an oasis of relative tranquillity amid the drug violence that has gripped northern Mexico since President Felipe Calderon launched an army-led crackdown on drug cartels.

# Britain bats for BP in row with Senate

'OIL GIANT ROLE IN TERROR EXCHANGE NORMAL'



● Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, in wheelchair, was convicted for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing over Scotland. Britain has told the U.S. that BP had no part in Megrahi's release last year.

## Facebook feud leads to murder

DETROIT: A Pontiac, Michigan, woman has been charged with murder after chasing down and ramming another car in a fight over a man that started on Facebook, police said.

Torrie Lynn Emery, 23, was charged with second-degree murder, assault and child abuse. Emery had a dispute with Danielle Booth, 20, that began with Facebook postings about a jailed man they both know, said Pontiac Police Sergeant Kevin Braddock. On Thursday, Booth went to Pontiac police to report that Emery had threatened her at her home after the exchange on Facebook.

A few hours after that report, Emery spotted Booth at a McDonald's joint in Pontiac. As they left the restaurant, Emery chased a car carrying Booth being driven by a friend Ayesha Abernathy, 21. Emery, who was riding with her 3-year-old daughter, rammed the car several times with her vehicle. Abernathy ran a red light to get away from Emery, and hit a truck. Abernathy was killed, and Booth was taken to the hospital, where she was in critical condition.

By Susan Cornwell  
WASHINGTON

British oil major BP Plc behaved in a "perfectly normal and legitimate" way in lobbying the British government in 2007 over a prisoner transfer agreement with Libya, British Foreign Secretary William Hague has said in a letter to a U.S. lawmaker.

In the letter to U.S. Senator John Kerry, Hague reiterated the British government's position that there is no evidence BP had any connection to the Scottish authorities' release last year of the man convicted of the 1988 bombing of an airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. British documents show several discussions between BP and the then-British government in 2007, Hague said, when a prisoner transfer deal with Libya was being negotiated at the same time BP was pursuing an oil exploration deal with Libya.

But the convicted bomber, Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, was not released under the prisoner transfer deal; he was released by Scottish authorities in 2009 on compassionate grounds because of illness.

"This was a perfectly normal and legitimate practice for a British company," Hague said of BP's 2007 lobbying. "It is the sort of exchange which occurs regularly around the world, and one that certainly did occur between a range of companies with interests in Libya and their national governments during this period," he said in the July 22 letter to Kerry, which Reuters obtained from a British diplomat.

"I believe we have a responsibility to address the unsubstantiated rumours that there was some sort of conspiracy involving

BP which led to Mr. Megrahi's release," Hague wrote.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Kerry, has scheduled a July 29 hearing to examine whether BP's oil interests influenced the 2009 release of the only person convicted in the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. The bomb killed 270 people, most of them Americans.

The bomber's release by Scotland last year triggered an international outcry that has complicated U.S.-British relations, already frayed by the BP Plc oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. More facts on BP's role may emerge in a review Prime Minister David Cameron ordered during a visit to the United States this week. "Once that review is complete, I will let you know the outcome," Hague promised Kerry.

There were three discussions between BP and then-British Justice minister Jack Straw or his office between October and November 2007, and at least two contacts in the same period between BP and the British Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor, Hague wrote to Kerry.

"... the progress of negotiations on the UK-Libya Prisoner Transfer Agreement and likely timing of signature of the Agreement being signed was discussed," Hague wrote.

BP had been made aware by the Libyans that failure to clinch the prisoner transfer deal could impact a BP oil exploration deal, "and wished to bring this fact to the attention of the UK government", Hague said.

The letter will likely be the British government's main submission to Kerry's committee for the hearing, the British diplomat who provided it said. Current or former British government officials are not expected to testify, he said.

## NEWSLINE

### Scribe gets 15 years in China

BEIJING: A Chinese court in the restive western region of Xinjiang has given a Uighur journalist and website manager 15 years in jail for endangering state security by speaking to foreign journalists, his employer said last week.

Uighurbiz.net, where Gheyret Niyaz worked, posted a notice saying he was sentenced quoting his wife, who was in the court. "Gheyret Niyaz admitted in court that he accepted interviews from foreign media, but insisted that he had no malicious intentions and was only doing what a reporter should do," his wife Reshalaiti said.

### French ships for Russia

PARIS: French President Nicolas Sarkozy has said he is "certain" France would build two Mistral class helicopter carriers for Russia.

Russia hopes to buy four Mistral class warships to modernise hardware that was exposed as outdated during its war against Georgia in 2008. France has said it is willing to sell the ship, but talks have got bogged down over technology sharing.

"We will build with our Russian friends the two (Mistral)," Sarkozy told workers at a shipyard in Western France. "The contract is still in negotiations, but the decision is taken... it's certain," he said.

### Child killer gets two-year jail

LONDON: One of two men convicted as children of killing two-year old James Bulger 17 years ago was jailed for two years last week after he admitted charges of downloading and distributing indecent images of children.

Jon Venables, now aged 27, appearing by video link from prison, pleaded guilty to three charges at London's Old Bailey, the Press Association reported. Venables said he had thought about Bulger's death "every day" since 1993 and has accepted responsibility for it.

But Bulger's mother Denise Fergus, who was present in court said, "These were very serious offences and two years is simply not enough to meet the gravity of what this person did."

### 25 dead in India bus accident

JAMMU, India: More than 25 people were killed when an overcrowded bus veered off a mountain road in Indian-ruled Kashmir and fell down a deep gorge into the River Chenab, police said over the weekend.

The driver lost control of the bus carrying passengers near Ponga Marh, 220 km east of Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state. "Surprisingly, three gravely wounded people managed to wriggle out of the mangled vehicle and swim to safety," a witness said. Rescuers struggled with the rocky terrain to bring the wounded to hospital.

### Re-arrest of Turkey suspects

ISTANBUL: A court in Turkey has ordered the arrest, or in many cases re-arrest, of 102 people, including retired military commanders suspected of plotting to overthrow Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's government in 2003.

This year's investigations into the alleged plot, codenamed "Sledgehammer", shocked Turkey and aggravated tensions between the AK Party government and the secularist armed forces.

"It is a black stain in legal history," Cetin Dogan, retired former head of Turkey's prestigious First Army, told CNN-Turk news channel after the court ordered his re-arrest.

## MOVIE INSPIRES FAMILIES TO ADOPT NEGLECTED CHILDREN

# 'Blind Side' opens eyes

By Chelsea Emery  
NEW YORK

When Leigh Anne and Sean Tuohy welcomed a 16-year-old stranger into their home, they had no idea their story would become the plot of the best-selling book and award-winning film *The Blind Side*.

In their own book *In a Heartbeat*, the couple describes why they took Michael Oher, a boy from the ghetto who had been living in foster homes, into their care, provided a tutor for him to improve his grades and later adopted him. They also describe their charitable approach to helping others, which they call the "popcorn theory".

"Stay low key. Work around your area. Help those to the left and to the right," Leigh Anne Tuohy said in an interview. "It'll start a huge ripple effect. We've seen it." She and her husband barely thought about the possible risks when they took in 6.5 foot Oher, who later joined the Baltimore Ravens of the National Football League.

"The popcorn theory is that there're all these kernels in the pan and if it heats up, the hottest pop up," Tuohy explained. "We believe Michael was a hot kernel, a big one; and he popped right up in front of our face. We had no agenda."

The Tuohys have received thousands of letters from Americans who say they were inspired to give up holiday gifts or even adopt children after hearing about what they did. "There are some amazing, amazing stories," said Tuohy who plans to write a book about them.

The couple believes giving should be done with a cheerful heart. Too often, guilt or obligation spur donations and taint the experience. They donate their time, money and energy to local, children-focussed activities. Money is important, they say, but insist that the gift of time is more vital. She is worried that there is more concern in the country about the welfare of animals than of children. "I'm sorry. There are kids in this country who want a home. We're worried about the wrong things. We've got to refocus our attention."

Author Michael Lewis' book and the film, which earned Sandra Bullock an Academy Award for best actress for her feisty portrayal of Tuohy, made the couple famous. "It's scary how much we have similarities," said Tuohy, who said that Bullock even bossed her husband in the film around in the same way she might.



● American country singer and actor Tim McGraw (left), who played Sean Tuohy in the movie "Blind Side", actress Sandra Bullock (right), who played his wife Leigh Anne, and Quinton Aaron (behind as Michael Oher) in a scene from the movie. The film shows real characters, Sean and Leigh, who adopted Oher, who went on to become a star player in American football.

## Kerr, Bloom get hitched

SYDNEY: Supermodel Miranda Kerr, who was raised in an Australian country town, has married her Hollywood leading man, Orlando Bloom, just a month after the couple announced their engagement.

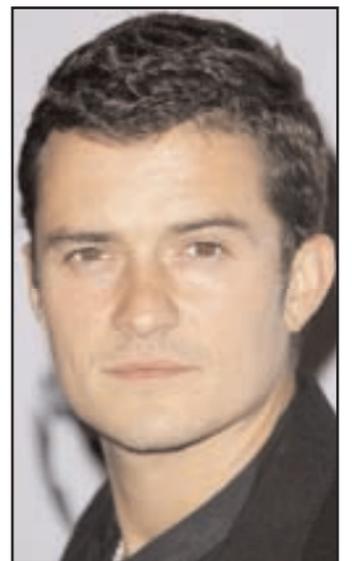
Kerr, 27, who shot to international fame as a Victoria's Secret lingerie model, and Bloom, 33, star of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Lord of the Rings* movies, began dating in 2007 and have frequently denied rumours of an impending wedding.

But the couple's publicists last month confirmed that this time the reports were true and they were engaged. Australian store David Jones, for which Kerr is an ambassador, confirmed the wedding in a statement released to the Australian media over the weekend, that said Kerr had cancelled her appearance at the store's upcoming spring/summer fashion launch.

"We have been trying to plan this for some time and unfortunately the only window of opportunity for our honeymoon fell at the same time as the David Jones fashion launch," Kerr said in the statement.

"David Jones very graciously released me during this period so we could celebrate an intimate ceremony and honeymoon together."

Kerr, who was raised in the country town of Gunnedah in the state of New South Wales, was ranked ninth on the Forbes' Top 10 Earning Models list this year after earning an estimated \$4 million in the past 12 months. The mayor of Gunnedah, Adam Marshall, offered the star couple a street parade and use of the town's award-winning brass band if they chose to marry in his town, but it appeared the couple opted instead for a small Los Angeles wedding.



SPAIN, GREECE AND GERMANY IN FOCUS BUT ANALYSTS DOUBT CREDIBILITY OF THE PROCESS

# Seven fail 'soft' bank stress test in Europe

By Steve Slater & Fiona Ortiz  
LONDON/MADRID

Seven European banks are not strong enough to withstand another recession and would face a capital shortfall of €3.5 billion (\$4.5 billion), far less than expected, stoking fears the keenly-awaited stress tests were too soft.

While the modest findings cast doubt on the credibility of the bank tests – released on Friday in a bid to restore investor confidence – with the European economy apparently improving fast, some analysts said that may not matter. Five of Spain's smaller regional lenders, known as *cajas*, failed the test and their recapitalisation will almost complete a state-funded drive to consolidate the country's network of its unlisted savings banks. They need €1.8 billion, the Bank of Spain said.

Banks in Germany and Greece were also seen as weak spots and in need of restructuring, but state-owned Hypo Real Estate was the only German lender to flunk and state-controlled ATEbank was the only Greek bank to fail. Analysts had expected five to 10 banks to fail the test, but estimated the capital shortfall could be over €30 billion. As expected, no big banks failed the health check.

"Arguably, the failure here is not the banks concerned, but the test itself. There is little evidence that the tests have been applied consistently and there is a distinct lack of credibility, making this a wasted opportunity," said Richard Cranfield, chairman Global Corporate Group at Allen & Overy.

The Committee of European Bank Supervisors (CEBS), a previously little known group with 25 staff at a small London office that coordinated the process, said its test was more severe than the U.S. process. Europe tested how 91 banks would cope with another recession and losses on government debt after the Greek crisis hit markets and raised fears the euro zone could unravel.

It aimed to repeat a health check on U.S. banks last year that helped restore investor confidence and underpinned a recovery by bank shares. With latest data showing signs of a strengthening recovery in Europe,

banks could find themselves in a healthier position than expected perhaps explaining the muted market reaction.

"Despite questions about transparency and how the Euro stress tests don't measure up to the U.S. tests last year, I think these tests will start to put these euro zone concerns behind us," said Chris Rupkey, chief financial economist at Bank of Tokyo/Mitsubishi UFJ in New York. "There might be some initial disappointment leading to some selling on Monday when European markets reopen, but the market will soon get over it." Under the most severe scenario banks were tested on how they would cope with a moderate recession this year and next with additional losses on government bonds thrown in. As part of the process many of the banks revealed all of their sovereign debt holdings, but some dodged full disclosure raising further question marks.

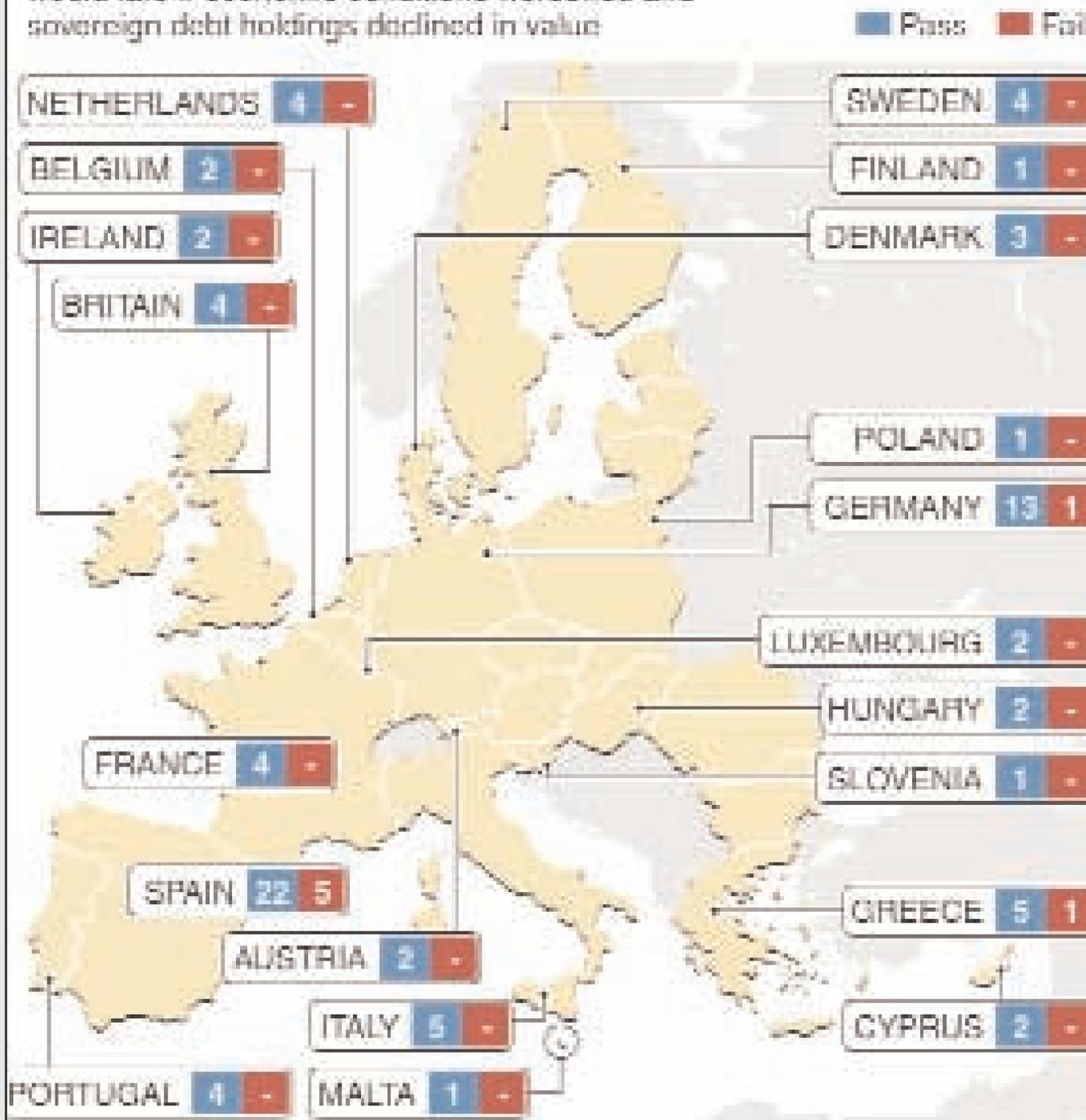
Any bank whose Tier 1 capital ratio falls below 6% by the end of 2011 failed the test, and would be expected to raise funds to make up the capital shortfall. Of most concern to investors was that government bond losses were only applied to trading books, and not held to maturity bonds as the test did not consider there was a risk of any sovereign default.

Banks' holdings of government bonds were subjected to a 23.1% loss on their Greek debt, a 12.3% loss on Spanish bonds and a 4.7% loss on German debt, all based on 5-year bonds and their value at the end of 2009. The hunt for weak spots in European banking has focussed on Spain's regional savings banks as well as regional German lenders, known as *landesbanks*. Spain and Germany have set up funds to help weak banks recapitalise and Spain wants more *cajas* to merge.

The Spanish banks to flunk were Banca Civica, Diada, Espiga, Unnim and Cajasur. The worst case scenario included a 28% fall in Spanish house prices during 2010-11. Banks that came close to failing with a Tier 1 ratio of less than 7% under the most stressed scenario included Germany's Deutsche Postbank, Greece's Piraeus, Allied Irish Banks, Italy's UBI Banca and Spain's Bankinter.

"The banks that have scraped through may have more of a challenge on their hands and they may be the ones the market focusses on," said Cranfield. Last year's U.S. bank test helped draw a line under worries about the sector there and Europe's attempt to match it has faced splits in the 27-nation EU about how to model the test and how much to divulge. European banks have also already raised about €300 billion since the start of the crisis whereas the U.S. tests kick-started the fundraising. Banks in Ireland, Greece, Spain and Germany have also already received funds or are in the process of doing so possibly pre-emptively to help them pass the test.

Results of the tests, which assessed how banks would fare if economic conditions worsened and sovereign debt holdings declined in value



## Moody's warns of slashing Hungary

BUDAPEST: Ratings agency Moody's put Hungary on review for a possible downgrade over the weekend citing increased fiscal risks after it suspended talks with the IMF and EU on its existing \$25 billion aid deal.

The new government halted the talks last weekend. Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Thursday he would likely not renew the safety net and would row back on a commitment to cut the budget deficit to European Union-prescribed levels next year.

"Moody's decision to initiate this review was prompted by the increased uncertainty regarding Hungary's fiscal outlook and economic prospects," the agency said. "This uncertainty is the result of the recent breakdown of Hungary's talks with the IMF and EU (after a disagreement over the country's 2010-11 fiscal deficit targets), which in turn led to a suspension in the next disbursement from the IMF/EU €20 billion loan programme for Hungary."

Orban has spurned warnings that Hungary – where households have a large stock of foreign currency debt – could face market pressure and currency weakness without support from its lenders.

He said the current EU and International Monetary Fund deal would expire in October, and while Hungary would meet its 2010 budget target under the agreement, the government would negotiate with the EU about how and when to bring the deficit below 3%.

# Greece awaits second EU/IMF aid tranche



● Greek Finance minister George Papaconstantinou addresses a news conference in Athens.

ATHENS: Greece will now get a second aid tranche of a European Union and International Monetary Fund bailout as it has met the conditions set in an austerity plan, its Finance minister was quoted as saying over the weekend.

EU, IMF and European Central Bank officials will be in Athens today to check whether Greece is implementing its €110 billion (\$141.6 billion) programme to secure another €9 billion in aid. Greece received a first payment of €20 billion from its euro zone partners and the IMF in May.

"The disbursement of the second tranche depends on whether we meet the targets we have been set to meet by June 30," Finance minister George Papaconstantinou said in an interview with the weekly *Kosmos tou Ependyti* newspaper.

"These conditions have been met and we have taken a further step by passing the pension reform bill." The EU, ECB and IMF mission gave the debt-laden country good marks at the end of June saying it seemed on track with the plan to cut public expenditure, boost revenues and make structural reforms.

But they pointed to some trouble spots, including hospital spending and social security overruns.

The minister also reiterated his call on Greek banks to join forces in order to be able to pour liquidity into the market and help boost the country's economy. "Any decisions that lead to bigger groups with high capital adequacy, international expansion and scale economies will help towards this direction," Papaconstantinou said.

Earlier this month, Greece's fourth-largest lender, Piraeus Bank, offered to buy the state's controlling stakes in Hellenic Postbank (TT) and ATEbank setting the stage for mergers in the sector.

Papaconstantinou said the government would not make up its mind on the bid until its advisers finished their evaluation.

## Oil spill workers return as storm passes

HOUSTON: Ships and workers moved back into BP Plc's Gulf of Mexico oil spill site yesterday as seas calmed, and BP could begin pumping mud into the blown-out well later this week in a bid to plug the gusher.

As remnants of Tropical Depression Bonnie dissipated over the Gulf, retired Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen, head of the U.S. spill response, said a "static kill" operation to plug the well by pumping in heavy drilling mud and possibly cement could start in three to five days.

"The 'static kill' could go very quickly," Allen said.

The rig drilling a relief well intended to permanently stop the leak was back in place at the spill site, although Allen said the storm could push back BP's mid-August target date for completing it back seven to nine days.

BP sealed the leak on July 15 with a tight-fitting containment cap, choking off the flow of oil for the first time since an April 20 rig explosion killed 11 workers and sent crude spewing into the Gulf, soiling coastlines in five U.S. states and devastating tourism and fishery industries.

As the storm threat passed, the independent administrator running a \$20 billion fund set up by BP to compensate people for financial losses from the spill said the British energy giant was holding up payments to economic victims.

"I have a concern that BP is stalling claims. ... I doubt they are stalling for money. It's not that. I just don't think they know the answers to the questions" from claimants, Kenneth Feinberg told reporters in Alabama.

Thousands of businesses in Gulf Coast states have been crippled by the spill, the worst in U.S. history. BP agreed to set up the \$20 billion fund under pressure from President Barack Obama.

At a town hall meeting in southern Alabama, fishermen and other business owners told Feinberg of their frustration and anger at what they say is a slow and complex claims process that lacks transparency.

"After today there will be no more business as usual. I learned today the depth of frustration in people here on the coast," Feinberg told the meeting.

The weak remnants of Bonnie were on course to make landfall over southeast Louisiana or southern Mississippi last night. The ruptured deep-sea well – a mile (1.6km) under the ocean surface – is off the coast of Louisiana.

Though toothless in the end, Bonnie had prompted oil and natural gas producers to evacuate many offshore workers, halting more than half of the oil production in U.S.-regulated areas of the Gulf and about 25% of gas output.

Several oil companies such as Exxon Mobil Corp and Anadarko Petroleum Corp said at the weekend they were returning workers to offshore operations in the Gulf as the storm threat faded and planned to restart production of oil and gas.

# Stocks, euro go up

NEW YORK: Global stocks rose over the weekend on solid corporate earnings while the euro gained against the dollar after fewer-than-expected European banks failed stress tests.

Safe-haven assets such as gold and U.S. Treasuries dropped after European regulators reported that only seven of 91 banks failed the tests, which were designed to show the impact of Europe's sovereign debt crisis on its financial institutions.

The market recovery seemed fragile however. Some analysts questioned the credibility of the tests after regulators revealed they were applied only to the bank's trading books – not their banking books.

"The market expectation was that you were going to have about 10 bank failures – two from Germany, one from Greece and about six from Spain – and capital shortfalls totaling at least €100 billion," said Cary Leahey, an economist at Decision Economics in New York.

A larger number of failures, Leahey added, would have added credibility to the tests. Other analysts bet the positive results will calm down investors and let them focus on some recent positive economic and corporate data.

"Despite questions about transparency and how the Euro stress tests don't measure up to the U.S. tests last year, I think these tests will start to put these Euro-zone concerns behind us," said Chris Rupkey, chief financial economist with the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi in New York.

Investors' optimism increased following

solid second-quarter results from major U.S. companies, including Microsoft and Ford. Data showing Germany's business sentiment jumped in July to its highest level in three years also supported markets.

World stocks measured by the MSCI All-Country World Index advanced 0.69% in late trading on Friday. Before the stress test results were announced, the FTSEurofirst 300 index of top European shares rose 0.48% to close at 1,044.31.

### Dow industrials

On Wall Street, each of the three major U.S. stock indexes finished Friday's session about one percent higher with the Nasdaq edging back into the black for the year. At the close, the Nasdaq had erased its 2010 losses. In early afternoon, the Dow industrials briefly turned positive for the year and then gave up some of those gains.

The Dow Jones industrial average climbed 102.32 points, or 0.99%, to end at 10,424.62 – just about four points shy of its close at the end of 2009.

The Standard & Poor's 500 Index rose 8.99 points, or 0.82%, to finish at 1,102.66 – or about 13 points below its year-end 2009 close.

The Nasdaq Composite Index gained 23.58 points, or 1.05%, to close at 2,269.47.

Shares of General Electric Co climbed 3.29% to \$15.71 after the company raised its dividend by 20% and resumed a share-buyback program it had halted in September, 2008.

Shares of Microsoft dipped 0.12% to close at \$25.81 even after the company's stronger-than-expected results.

Ford's stock jumped 5.2% to \$12.72.

The euro gained 0.19% to \$1.2913 late in the afternoon after a very volatile session. Initially, the euro had fallen as the results of the stress tests came out. Investors remained cautious however taking the results of the stress tests with a grain of salt.

"There's definitely suspicion out there about these tests, but the euro is coming off a very good week – thanks to solid economic data, and that's lending support," said Brian Dolan, chief strategist at Forex.com in Bedminster, New Jersey. Against the Japanese yen, the greenback gained 0.54% to 87.38.

The dollar, which had lured investors earlier in the session with its safe-haven appeal, gave up some of those gains against a basket of major currencies late in the afternoon.

By the end of the day, the U.S. Dollar Index was down 0.10% at 82.516 – off its session high at 83.028.

U.S. crude oil futures fell 32 cents, or 0.4%, to settle at \$78.98 a barrel. Earlier, U.S. oil futures reached an 11-week high at \$79.60.

Oil's decline from that high tracked the release of the stress test results, but the market found support in the temporary loss of some Gulf of Mexico oil production as Tropical Storm Bonnie made its way across south Florida. As stocks gained, the 10-year U.S. Treasury note fell 17/32 in price with the yield rising to 3%.

## IRAN MAY USE CHINESE CURRENCY IN OIL TRADE



● A watermelon vendor looks at a yuan banknote at a market in Shenyang, Liaoning province in China.

# Tehran sees a ray of hope in yuan

By Chen Aizhu  
BEIJING

Iran and China are in talks to use the Chinese yuan to settle transactions of oil and projects as heightened sanctions from the United States and Europe seek to further isolate Tehran from the global financial system, sources said.

The idea was raised internally several months ago by state refiner Sinopec, one of the world's largest Iranian oil buyers, and Iran recently made more formal proposals to China, industry sources with direct knowledge of the situation told Reuters.

The proposal is for Iran, China's No.3 crude supplier, to set up a yuan account in a Chinese bank and receive payments for its crude sales, that can be partly offset by Iran's purchases of Chinese fuels, equipment and other projects, they said. While both sides see it as a technically plausible solution, China is wary that the shift carries significant political risk. A switch also means China loses possible gains in hedging in other international currencies such as the euro.

"At this moment, it is tough for China to say a firm yes," said one official with a state oil firm who declined to be named. "But we do see the need for it as we've encountered difficulties in trade with Iran such as whenever we use Iranian ships or need Iran to issue a letter of credit for payment."

China scaled back nearly a third of crude imports from Iran in the first half of the year to 366,000 barrels per day with Chinese traders attributing the change to unattractive prices rather than politics. But Chinese firms have stepped up fuel sales into Iran long suffering a lack of refining capacity, taking up the void left by fuel suppliers such as Russia's Lukoil and western traders, including Vitol and Tranfigura, who halted trade under threat of U.S. retribution.

Energy giants CNPC and Sinopec, both with New York-listed vehicles, are drilling for oil and gas in Iran. Other Chinese firms are building pipelines and power stations there. The yuan was not the only currency Iran wanted to switch to. Tehran proposed last October to conduct bilateral trade with Turkey in their own currencies. Last week, an Iranian official said Tehran was discussing internally the idea of using the dirham, of the United Arab Emirates, instead of euro as a possible way to deal with tougher EU sanctions, an idea later dismissed by the UAE as a joke.

## BOTTOM LINE

### Taiwan wins tariff case against EU

TAIPEI: Taiwan has won a World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute against the European Union over LCD flat-screen panel tariffs saving island exporters up to \$611 million a year.

A WTO dispute settlement body ruled late on Friday that the European Union could not levy tariffs on panels bigger than 19 inches and with high-definition interface terminals, officials and media in Taiwan said. Taiwan, in its first WTO dispute since becoming a member in 2002, had argued that the EU violated a 1994 information technology agreement that exempts tariffs on certain items, local media said. It had charged a 14% tariff.

Taiwan firms will save \$162-\$609 million per year on tariffs when the deal takes effect by December 25.

### Oil rig alarm 'disabled' before blast

HOUSTON: An emergency alarm that could have warned workers aboard the doomed Deepwater Horizon Gulf of Mexico drilling rig was intentionally disabled, a rig engineer has told U.S. investigators.

Mike Williams, chief engineer technician aboard Swiss-based Transocean Ltd's rig, said the general alarm that could have detected the cloud of flammable methane gas that enveloped the rig's deck on April 20 was "inhibited". "They (rig managers) did not want people woke up at three o'clock in the morning from false alarms," Williams told a six-member federal board in the New Orleans suburb of Kenner, Louisiana.

Williams' testimony capped a week of testimony from company officials from the rig, which exploded on April 20 and sank two days later killing 11 crewmen and sparking the worst oil spill in U.S. history.

### Tax cuts to stay – Geithner

WASHINGTON: The U.S. economy is not likely to slip back into recession but letting tax cuts for the wealthiest expire is necessary to show commitment to cutting budget deficits, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said on Sunday.

In appearances on several Sunday talk shows, Geithner said only two to three percent of Americans – those making \$250,000 or more a year – will be affected when tax cuts enacted under former President George W. Bush end on schedule this year.

Republicans want to extend the tax cuts and Democrats are divided but Geithner said reductions for top earners should end.

"We think that's the responsible thing to do because we need to make sure we can show the world that (we're) willing as a country now to start to make some progress bringing down our long-term deficits," he said.

## Indian PM says inflation will dip

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has reiterated his prediction headline inflation would ease to 6% by December, a forecast more optimistic than that delivered by his economic advisers.

The Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council had said inflation would be at 7-8% by the year-end compared with 10.55% in June, and its chairman recommended strong monetary action to tame runaway prices.

Singh's statement comes amid a growing divergence between the government and the central bank on the need for monetary tightening to cool inflation that has been in double digits for five straight months.

New Delhi puts high food prices as the

cause and argues normal monsoon rains would cool inflation while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) says demand-side factors will continue to keep up pressure on inflation.

Singh has backed his officials' view. "The present high rate of inflation is mainly due to food price inflation," he told a conference of top federal and state policymakers gathered to assess the country's development plans.

"The government has taken a number of steps to curb inflation. With a normal monsoon, which is the expectation at present, the rate of inflation will abate in the second half of the year."

The RBI is widely expected to raise rates by 25 basis points for the fourth time since

March when it reviews policy on Tuesday and many observers see the main lending rate rising to 6-6.25% by end-December from 5.50%.

Singh also called for cutting subsidies and reducing losses at state-run firms to shore up public finances needed for development.

"The financing of the plan expenditure has depended far too much on debt. That must change." India plans to reduce its fiscal deficit to 4.1% of GDP by end-March 2013 from the projected 5.5% for this year and to cut its debt to GDP ratio to 68% by end-March 2015 from around 80%. The Opposition has slammed the government for "failing" to control inflation.

## FRANCE SUSPEND THEIR WORLD CUP MUTINEERS FOR NEXT GAME

Down,  
but not  
worried:  
Ribery

BERLIN: France forward Franck Ribery, placed under judicial investigation by French authorities this week on suspicion of soliciting sex with an under-age prostitute, is depressed but not worried about his career.

"There are moments in life that are stressful and depressing. This is definitely one of those moments," the Bayern Munich playmaker told the German tabloid *Bild* newspaper in an interview published last week. But he added: "No, I'm not worried for my future or my career, neither in the national team nor with Bayern. I'm convinced I'll win back the trust of people who maybe doubt me at the moment."

Ribery, along with France team mate Karim Benzema, who was also placed under investigation, faces months of uncertainty. They will have to wait for police to unravel a prostitution ring centred around a night club in Paris' Champs Elysees district, the first stage of a criminal investigation that can lead to charges.

The offence carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison and a €45,000 (\$58,390) fine although a conviction hinges on proving the accused knew the minor's age. Ribery's lawyer said he did not know that the girl at the centre of the probe was under 18 at the time.

Ribery, who took part in a disastrous World Cup campaign in South Africa when France were knocked out in the first round, said it was hard for him to concentrate on football.

"At the moment, it's a bit difficult for me," he said. "I hope that the discussions around my private problems and my injuries will soon come to an end. The most important thing for me is the football." He added: "I must get past this low point. I'm a player who is very much in the public eye, about whom everything gets reported and who everyone knows. I must live with that."

Ribery thanked the Bundesliga champions for their support.

Rebels  
feel the  
heat

● French players supported striker Nicolas Anelka, who insulted coach Raymond Domenech during the World Cup.

## PARIS

France's 23-member World Cup squad have been suspended for the country's next game after their first-round exit from this year's tournament, the French Football Federation (FFF) said over the weekend.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the FFF's Federal council on the recommendation of new coach Laurent Blanc.

France's ignominious departure from South Africa followed a players' boycott of a training session in support of striker Nicolas Anelka, who was sent home for insulting coach Raymond Domenech. Blanc, who was appointed on July 2 to replace Domenech and restore the pride of the 1998 world champions, will announce on August 5 the players selected for the game against Norway in Oslo six days later.

The FFF's council was also expected to discuss the positions of playmaker Franck Ribery and striker Karim Benzema, who are under judicial investigation on suspicion of soliciting sex with an under-age prostitute.

However, caretaker president Fernand Duchaussoy, holding his first news conference after replacing Jean-Pierre Escalettes, who resigned after the World Cup, said no decision had been taken. "Personally, I'm convinced that people who play for the national team have to be absolutely clean, but I'll have to discuss the matter with Laurent Blanc. I shall respect his wishes and the general interest," he said.

Some council members had also called for the dismissal of Domenech, whose six-year tenure ended in shame after the boycott.

"It's a tricky problem. We discussed it, but the only thing I can say is that Domenech will be summoned in the next few days and if he wants to resign, I shall not object," Duchaussoy said. Duchaussoy said the council fully approved Blanc's proposal to omit all 23 players selected by the French Federation for the World Cup.

He said heavier sanctions against the leaders of the team's mutiny in Knysna, where the players refused to train two days before their last group game, would depend on the result of an inquiry already ordered by Escalettes.

Norwegian national coach Egil Olsen said he had no objection to facing a new-look France team.

"I will just have to accept that," he was quoted as saying on the website of the Norwegian broadcaster TV2 ([www.tv2.no](http://www.tv2.no)).

"I think they have many good, young teams. I am sure the players who will come will be hungry and looking for revenge." The first official game under Blanc is on September 3, when France host Belarus in a Euro 2012 qualifier.



● Newly appointed coach of France's national soccer team Laurent Blanc addresses a news conference at the headquarters of the French Football Federation in Paris.

## Menezes Brazil coach after Ramalho snub

SAO PAULO: Mano Menezes, a specialist in leading big clubs out of the doldrums but little-known outside his own country, became the coach of Brazil over the weekend when he accepted an offer from the five-times world champions.

The 48-year-old, currently coach of Corinthians, confirmed he had said yes to the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), which had been turned down by Muricy Ramalho the day before after his club refused to release him.

"For the whole of Brazil, I say that I officially accept the invitation," Menezes told a news conference at his club.

Menezes, who replaces Dunga in the hot seat, will have the huge task of trying to rebuild Brazil's national team, discredited after their quarter-final exit World Cup exit against

Netherlands three weeks ago, and win a sixth world title when they host the 2014 World Cup.

Winning their own World Cup is seen as an obligation by Brazil's 190 million inhabitants. With Brazil's failure to win on home soil in 1950 still being mentioned regularly, the pressure on Menezes and his team will be greater than ever.

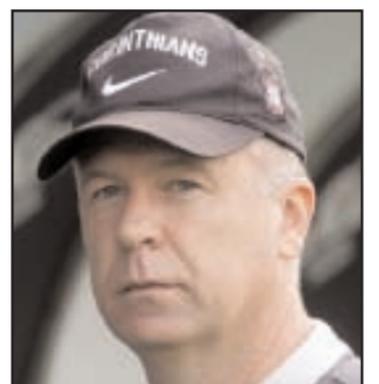
Menezes, 48, made his name in 2005, when he led former South American champions Gremio out of the second division. In an extraordinary decisive game, Gremio had four players sent off, survived a penalty miss by opponents Nautico and then snatched a goal to win 1-0 and clinch promotion. Two years later, he took them to the final of the Libertadores Cup, the South American equivalent of the Champions League.

He then joined Corinthians, another hugely popular team, and led them out of the second

division in 2008. Since then, his side have won the Copa Brasil and signed former Brazil World Cup winners Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos.

Ramalho, who has considerable domestic success but like Menezes is little known outside Brazil, sat down for talks on Friday with Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira, who praised the gruff 54-year-old's track record.

But hours later, Fluminense said that they wanted Ramalho to see out his contract, which runs until 2012. "Muricy is going to continue at Fluminense fulfilling his contractual commitments," club president Roberto Horcades told reporters. In another twist, the CBF then said in a statement that Menezes had been approached and gave the impression his appointment was a mere formality.



● Corinthians' coach Mano Menezes attends a training session in Sao Paulo.

## On-form Sri Lanka dial 'M' for Mendis

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will look to their third "M" to bring victory over India in the second test as they bid to replace the visitors atop the ICC test rankings.

Already 1-0 up in the series, a win over India in the second test starting today would propel them to top spot and, according to Sri Lanka Cricket Secretary Nishantha Ranatunga, be the hosts' greatest accomplishment in the sport.

"In the event we manage to beat India 2-0 in the current test series we will be ranked as the number one test team in the world, which would be the greatest cricketing achievement since winning the 1996 World Cup," said Ranatunga.

Sri Lanka are currently fourth in the standings behind India, South Africa and Australia.

Ajantha Mendis is the likely successor to Muttiah Muralitharan, who retired after the first test at Galle with a record haul of 800 test wickets, and will have another opportunity to display his varied spin against the Indians.

While he was left out of Muralitharan's farewell test, Mendis showed what he is capable of in a three-day warm-up game against India when he took six wickets for 67.

With Muralitharan out of the picture and Lasith Malinga rested because of a sore knee, Mendis has a big challenge ahead of him to spearhead the Sri Lankan bowling attack.

"It is now Mendis' turn and we need to give him a go. We feel he's a bowler for the future," said Sri Lanka's chairman of selectors Aravinda de Silva.

"The only way we can make Mendis a better bowler is to play him against top class opposition. He may go for a lot of runs but that is where he will start learning."

# Wallabies hit by injury, ban

## TRI-NATIONS BID ROCKED AHEAD OF ALL BLACKS MATCH

By Ian Ransom  
BRISBANE



● South Africa's Springboks Flip Van Der Marwe (left) and Victor Matfield (right), battle for a high ball during their Tri-Nations test match in Brisbane.

Australia's Tri-Nations campaign has been dealt a double-blow with Quade Cooper suspended for two weeks for an illegal tackle during their match against South Africa and Digby Ioane ruled out for the season with a shoulder injury.

Flyhalf Cooper was sinbinned midway through the second half of the Wallabies' 30-13 win over the Springboks at Lang Park on Saturday after lifting Morne Steyn in a tackle.

He was suspended after a hearing in Brisbane yesterday, where SANZAR judicial officer Bruce Squire likened the tackle to that which Jean de Villiers received the same penalty for after the Springboks' loss to New Zealand in Wellington last week.

"This is consistent application in terms of like penalties for like offences," Squire said in a statement.

A stony-faced Robbie Deans said the Wallabies would consider appealing to have the verdict overturned before their clash against the All Blacks in Melbourne on Saturday.

"Obviously Quade's disappointed, we're disappointed but we're in the process now of contemplating where to go from here," Deans told reporters. "It obviously means that we're posed with a different challenge I guess, but it will still be a significant challenge that we'll bring to Melbourne."

Cooper's loss would mean another midfield reshuffle for Deans, who had been pleased with the successful reunion between Cooper and his Queensland Reds team-mate Will Genia on Saturday.

Berrick Barnes, who came off the bench on Saturday, could replace Cooper, with Deans satisfied with Giteau's performance at inside centre.

"We do have some (depth) now, which is great, which we didn't have this time last year," Deans said. "(Barnes) is capable of playing both (centre and flyhalf), Gits (Giteau) can play both."

Ioane, who had been targeting a return for the Wallabies clash against the All Blacks in Melbourne on Saturday had sustained the injury when being tackled by his brother last week, a team spokesman said.

"He went down, his brother fell on him and the shoulder popped," he told reporters. "He's gone for the Tri-Nations."

Ioane had dislocated his left shoulder during the Wallabies 21-20 loss to England in Sydney last month in an injury initially deemed season-ending, but later downgraded after doctors said he would not need surgery.

No injury concerns were reported from the Springboks match, though lock Nathan Sharpe lost a tooth in the physical clash and later had it returned to him after a team of ground staff were deployed to find it.

● Springbok Jaque Fourie has been banned for four weeks for a dangerous tackle in the defeat to Australia, dealing another blow to South Africa's calamitous defence of their Tri-Nations title. The outside centre will miss two domestic Curry Cup matches and their third Tri-Nations test against New Zealand on August 21 after being cited for the spear tackle on Wallabies' number eight Richard Brown in the second minute of the Brisbane match.

## Pakistan end test wait

LEEDS, England: Pakistan scrambled the 40 runs they required to beat Australia in a test for the first time in 15 years over the weekend winning the second test at Headingley by three wickets to draw the series 1-1.

Pakistan, chasing 180, lost four wickets on a sunny morning in what was expected to be a comfortable run chase, but was eventually far from it as a resilient Australia went on the attack. Umar Gul scored the winning run with a drive through cover off Mitchell Johnson. They made the runs with seven wickets down to deny Australia an eighth straight test win. Australia won the first match at Lord's by 150 runs, also inside four days.

The Pakistan team took a lap of honour around the sparsely-attended ground in what was Salman Butt's first test as captain as a smattering of vocal Pakistanis cheered them. "Honestly, it was a bit nerve-racking, but that's the way cricket goes. When you have this added responsibility (as captain) you

think a bit more. But thankfully, we got it won positively and it ended easily for us," Butt said.

Number eight and man of the match Mohammad Aamer had five and Gul one as Pakistan got home despite the late wobble that saw the loss of six batsmen for 42 runs. Left-arm pace bowler Doug Bollinger made a late impression on the series with three for 51. Ben Hilfenhaus claimed three for 39.

Kamran Akmal scored 13 and calmed the nerves with three late boundaries – a cover drive off Bollinger to reduce the target to 15, an edge to third man off Hilfenhaus to take the target to 10, and a more convincing push through cover in the same over to leave six runs needed. Akmal survived a scare with five runs needed when he square cut Johnson to Mike Hussey at gully. The fielder claimed the catch and the fielders celebrated, but Akmal stood his ground. After a third umpire review as to whether the shot was grassed, Akmal was reprieved.

Once Aamer edged Hilfenhaus through the slips for another boundary to leave one for victory, the result was as good as sealed. There was time for one last blip though when Hussey did catch Akmal in Johnson's next over with a flying leap to his left to leave Gul the task of finishing off the game. Australia struck early with the wicket of Azhar Ali (51), caught behind off Bollinger to the tenth ball of the morning.

Overnight batsman Umar Akmal (8), usually aggressive in his approach, pushed at a Hilfenhaus ball outside off stump and gave Tim Paine his third catch. That was 150 for five. It could have been 156 for six if Michael Clarke had not dropped Malik (on four) diving to his right at second slip off Bollinger. But Malik did not remain for long, clouting a half-volley from Hilfenhaus straight to Marcus North at short extra cover. Australia captain Ricky Ponting said his side were up against it from the moment they collapsed to 88 all out in their first innings.



● Pakistan's Umar Gul looks up after his team defeated Australia in the second test match at Headingley Carnegie cricket ground in Leeds.

# Snooker mourns The Hurricane



● Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins died of throat cancer.

LONDON: Alex "Hurricane" Higgins, the twice world snooker champion who died at the weekend aged 61, dragged a staid and stuffy sport into the modern era with his outrageous talent and scandalous behaviour.

Higgins, who lost his long battle with throat cancer, had a fast and thrilling style as well as a foul mouth and fiery temper which once prompted him to head-butt a referee.

The heavy-drinking Northern Irishman claimed the world title in 1972 and again 10 years later and was a losing finalist in 1976 and 1980.

But his influence extended far beyond the trophies he won. He helped elevate a sport from parochial gentlemen's clubs to a worldwide television audience.

"He was a player who had so much fascination for the crowds," six-times world champion Steve Davis told Sky Sports.

"For the fans who watched him he was a competitive animal. He wore his heart on his sleeve and you knew what he was feeling as he played.

"In a game that is reserved, with

bow ties and dress suits, where you are not supposed to show emotion at the table, you could read what Alex Higgins was thinking and for that reason he had a magnetism that is very rare in sport.

"He drew a lot of people who wouldn't watch snooker to come and watch the game. He dragged the sport kicking and screaming forward."

Higgins, who started playing snooker at 11, threw the textbook out of the window with his high potting stance and body swerve cueing action.

He was just 22, the youngest ever at the time, when he claimed his first world title, and it came at his first attempt.

"He was a very exciting player to watch, he was totally unique and there will never be another one to play the game the way Alex did," former world champion Dennis Taylor told the BBC.

"There was just something about the way he played the game there was a little bit of magic in there and there was always going to be a little bit of controversy."

## Pompey's nightmare tour ends in defeat

WASHINGTON: With scarcely any sleep, in sweltering heat and after losing their kit, Portsmouth ended a farcical North American pre-season tour with a 4-0 drubbing at the hands of Major League Soccer's DC United.

Relegated from the Premiership, in administration and placed under a transfer embargo by England's soccer authorities, Portsmouth could scarcely field a team during their week-long tour of the United States and Canada, relying heavily on youngsters with little or no first-team experience.

But if anyone thought things could not get any worse for the embattled club, they were wrong.

Stranded in Chicago by a lightning storm en route from their last game in Edmonton, the players had just four hours sleep the night before Saturday's game with DC United and with no time to train for three days.

As if that wasn't bad enough, 14 bags went missing en route, including the one containing their kit, meaning they had to play Saturday's game in a strip borrowed from their hosts.

They probably wished they had never arrived at all, after a thrashing at the hands of the MLS strugglers, which included a hat-trick by Australian striker Danny Allsopp.

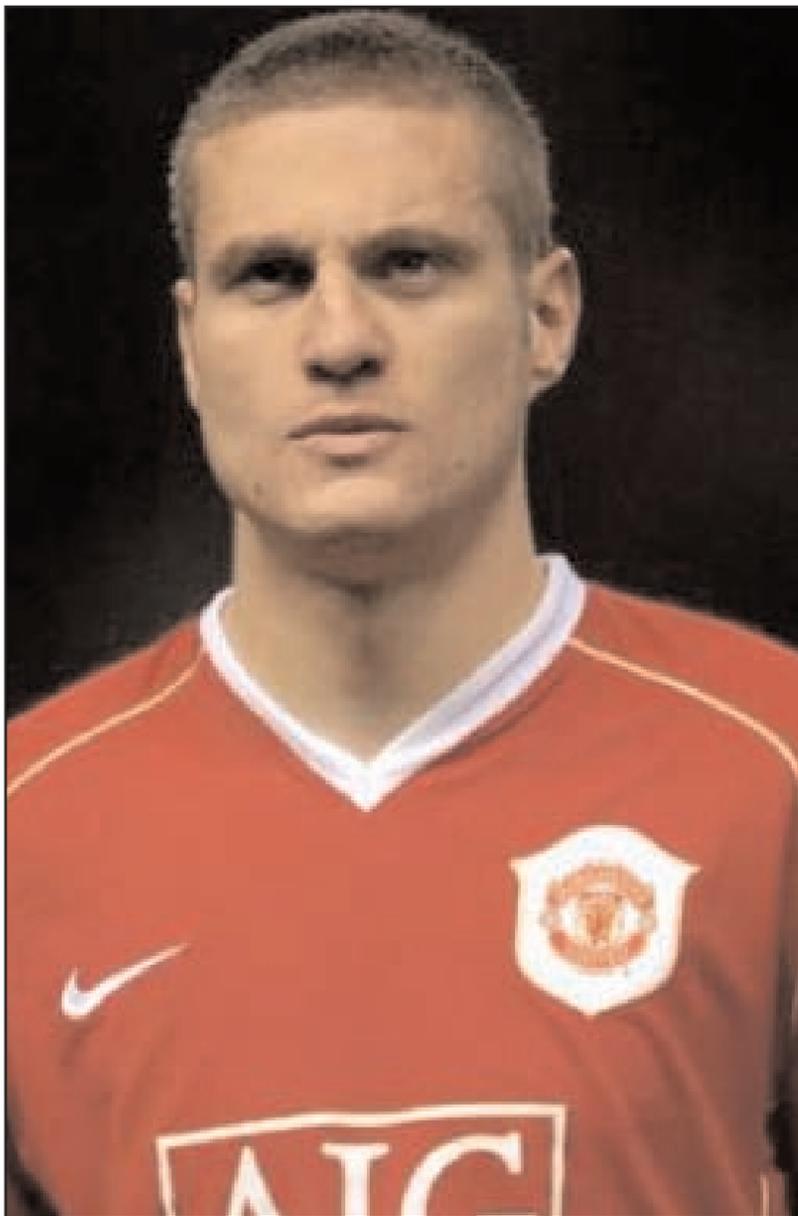
"Probably that result summed up the tour for us really - it has been extremely tough," Portsmouth manager Steve Cotterill told reporters.

The journey from Edmonton had taken 27 hours. The flight from England to their first game in San Diego took 42.

"The time it took us to get here, we could have flown to Australia," a furious Cotterill told Reuters after the game.

The newly installed Pompey boss has made no secret of his frustration with the gruelling tour.

Two players went home injured after the Edmonton game, one with a broken leg.



## Vidic agrees new deal at United

LONDON: Defender Nemanja Vidic has agreed a new long-term deal with Manchester United.

The 28-year-old Serbia international, who recently returned from World Cup duty in South Africa, had been linked with a move away from the club but has now shaken hands on a new deal.

"I'm very pleased to confirm that we agreed terms with Nemanja three or four weeks ago on a new long-term deal with the club," United's chief executive David Gill told the club's website (www.manutd.com).

"It's yet to be signed, the paperwork is now being sorted by our lawyers and being checked by Nemanja's 's still away on holiday but the plan is that when he gets back the papers will be signed.

"We've shaken hands on it and we're confident it will all be signed and sealed in early August."

Vidic joined United in 2005 and has made 186 appearances, scoring 13 goals.

# Man City snatch Serbian stopper

LONDON

Manchester City have continued their close-season spending spree with the signing of Serbian international defender Aleksandar Kolarov from Lazio.

The 24-year-old left back has been granted a work permit and passed a medical but will not join City on their pre-season trip to New York, the club said on its website (www.mfc.co.uk).

"I have watched him a lot since then (2007) and so have the Manchester City scouts.

"His attacking capability is very good. He is fast and can shoot with power and accuracy," City's Italian boss Roberto Mancini told the club website.

"He also has the ability to play in numerous positions and is very good in midfield. This is an additional benefit to the team. He has a fantastic international career ahead of him. I am looking forward to working with him."

British media have reported Kolarov has signed a five-year contract and leaves Serie A side Lazio for a fee of 19 million pounds (\$29.03 million).

The versatile left-sided player, who joined Lazio in 2007, joins new signings David Silva, Yaya Toure and Jerome Boateng at Eastlands ahead of the new season and takes their spending to a reported 75 million pounds.

## Drogba misses opener

LONDON: Chelsea striker Didier Drogba is set to miss next month's Community Shield clash with Manchester United and their Premier League opener after undergoing groin surgery which will rule him out for three weeks.

The Ivory Coast international, who was troubled by the groin problem during Chelsea's Premier League and FA Cup double-winning campaign last season, successfully had "minimal invasive surgery" on Friday, the club said on their website (www.chelseafc.com) Saturday.

The 32-year-old is expected to return to full training in three weeks meaning he will miss the August 8 Wembley clash with United and possibly the beginning of their league title defence at home to West Bromwich Albion on August 14.



●Ferrari Formula One driver Fernando Alonso (centre) of Spain celebrates on the podium after winning the German Grand Prix. He won the race ahead of his team-mate Felipe Massa (left) of Brazil and Red Bull Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel of Germany.



## Contador, as expected, wins Tour de France

PARIS: Spaniard Alberto Contador claimed his third Tour de France title last night as seven-times champion Lance Armstrong made his final exit from the race.

The 27-year-old Contador stayed safe in the main bunch as the last stage, over 102.5km from Longjumeau, went to Briton Mark Cavendish for the second year in a row.

Over three weeks, Contador showed some weaknesses in the mountains and almost cracked in the final time trial but it was enough for him to beat Luxembourg's Andy Schleck by 39 seconds.

Russian Denis Menchov took third place, 2:01 off the pace.

Contador said on the podium: "I'm happy, very happy. I've had difficult days, from a psychological and a physical point of view."

The Spaniard took the overall leader's yellow jersey when he benefited from Schleck's chain problem in Monday's mountain stage to Bagnères de Luchon.

Armstrong, 38, riding his final Tour de France, finished 23rd overall after losing all chance in the first mountain stage.

Cavendish outsprinted Italian Alessandro Petacchi and New Zealand's Julian Dean in impressive fashion to notch his fifth stage win in this year's race.

But it was Petacchi who clinched the sprinters' green jersey for the points classification. France's Anthony Charteau won the polka dot jersey for the best climber.

# Ordered to lose!

## MASSA COMES SECOND IN FERRARI 1-2

By Alan Baldwin  
HOCKENHEIM

Fernando Alonso led a Ferrari one-two in the German Grand Prix yesterday after denying Brazilian team-mate Felipe Massa an emotional victory one year on from a near-fatal crash.

While the Spaniard celebrated his second triumph of the season, and 23rd of his career, it was accompanied by a whiff of controversy with Massa sent a veiled message to allow his team-mate through.

"So, Fernando is faster than you," Massa's race engineer Rob Smedley told the Brazilian on the 47th of the 67 laps after his driver had led from the start. Alonso then passed two laps later, prompting Smedley to say to Massa: "Good lad. Just stick with it now. Sorry."

Massa's disappointment, evident at the finish when he shrugged off Alonso's attempted embrace as they stepped out of their cars, was matched by that of the home fans hoping to see Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel win from pole position.

The young German made a poor start, with the Ferraris scything past on either side, and had to make do with third place. McLaren's Lewis Hamilton finished fourth to extend his championship lead over team-mate and reigning champion Jenson Button, who

was fifth, to 14 points.

The one-two finish was Ferrari's second of the season after they placed in the same order in the Bahrain season-opener and re-established them and Alonso as contenders after a difficult run of races.

Vettel, on pole for the sixth time in 11 races, moved aggressively to his right at the start to try and block Alonso, handing Massa a clear track to beat both of them into the first corner.

With the Ferraris one-two for the first 13 laps before Alonso pitted, the main thrill was the battle of wills between the determined Brazilian and a Spanish team-mate whose frustration became increasingly evident.

"This is ridiculous," Alonso was heard saying over the team radio as he tried, and failed, to squeeze past on lap 21. When the double world champion, who will celebrate his 29th birthday in Hungary on Thursday, finally did get past, it was a muted success. "That was as blatant as it comes. He might as well have put his arm out of the cockpit and waved him through," British driver Anthony Davidson told BBC radio listeners.

With Ferrari, Red Bull and McLaren in a different race to the rest, Renault, Mercedes and Sauber scrapped for the remaining points.

Australian Mark Webber was sixth for Red Bull, Poland's Robert Kubica seventh in a Renault and followed by the Mercedes of Germans Nico Rosberg and Michael Schumacher.

## TEAM ORDERS COST WINNERS \$100,000

Ferrari were fined \$100,000 by stewards yesterday for the use of illegal "team orders" in winning the German Formula One Grand Prix.

The governing International Automobile Federation (FIA) also said in a statement that the case would be referred to its world motorsport council for further consideration.

The team, whose drivers finished first and second after Brazilian Felipe Massa allowed Spaniard Fernando Alonso to overtake him, were found to have breached both the sporting regulations and code.

Article 39.1 of the sporting regulations states that "team orders which interfere with the result of the race are prohibited".