

NEWSNOW

MAURITIUS Monday, December 13, 2010

newsnow.mu

Issue No. 382

Chagossian Rita, 85, has a message for Britain:



OPEN LETTER
TO THE BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER IN
MAURITIUS – Pages 2-3

YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED



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CHAGOS...

The WikiLeaks revelations have sparked a diplomatic controversy throughout the world – and even in Mauritius, the aftershocks are being felt. Here, it is the “secret” cables between the United States and Britain over the Chagos archipelago, and more particularly the future of the US base on Diego Garcia, that caused a storm. Foreign Minister Arvind Boolell called in the British envoy Nick Leake for an explanation about the cables, the most damning of which implied that the setting up of a Marine Protected Area in the archipelago would more or less put a final nail in the coffin of the Chagossians’ 40-year-long battle to return to their homeland. But the WikiLeaks expose, filling acres of newspaper columns in the past couple of weeks, had a more human impact, as NEWSNOW reveals today...

A SIMPLE MESSAGE FOR BRITAIN:

**You should
be ashamed**

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3

By Sanjana Bhagmal-Cadervaloo

Marie Rita Elysée Bancoult, 85, has outlived all but one of her children in a land 1,000 miles from her home in Peros Banhos, one of the islands of the Chagos archipelago.

The islands were part of the Mauritian territory until they were detached just prior to independence from British colonial rule in 1968.

In her little house in Cite Zilois, Pointe aux Sables, Rita Bancoult talked to NEWSNOW and asked that we "deliver" a letter to Nick

Leake, the British High Commissioner to Mauritius.

Her message for the British envoy in Mauritius comes two weeks after WikiLeaks released American diplomatic cables which revealed that one of the reasons for the UK setting up a Marine Protected Area in the archipelago was to make it more difficult for the displaced Chagossians to return to their homeland.

The cables also revealed that internationally banned cluster bombs were stored on ships anchored off Diego Garcia, the American military base in the archipelago.

Dear Mr Leake

I am Marie Rita Elysée Bancoult, the mother of Olivier Bancoult, leader of Chagos Refugee Group (CRG). I am sorry to take your precious time, but I would pray you to bear with me while I pour my heart out to you.

I must tell you that the recent revelations of WikiLeaks were in no way a revelation to us, Chagossians. We always knew that the creation of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) was to prevent us going back on our islands. This is a very mean and cruel way of denying us the right to live as a whole nation.

Your government should be ashamed of this.

The released secret documents came only as a proof of what we already knew.

Today, as a Chagossian, aged 85, I want you to understand my plight, my suffering, and to realise all the pains that I have been through since I set my feet here in Mauritius.

I have lost my husband, I have lost five children, of whom I have buried two on Peros Banhos and three here in Mauritius. Today I am left only with Olivier, my last-born. He is my messiah. He is the one who will free us all.

He is not alone in this battle. All our people are behind him. So do not make the mistake of thinking that we are a harmless bunch. We may not have education and arms, but we have our faith in God and the will to fight injustice.

Your government has taken us heartlessly and brutally from our heaven and dumped us here in hell.

My son is relentlessly struggling to get us all back on our island.

I want you today to know that I will stop fighting only when I breathe my last and lie down with my hands crossed over my chest...

I will not surrender my dignity and I will show the British of what mettle I am made.

Today, December 10, is also Human Rights Day. But for us Chagossians, there have been no respect for our rights. This is something that is unknown to your government – our rights.

I am also very disappointed that my dear Olivier has not been able to meet the Mauritian Prime Minister, Dr Navin Ramgoolam, this week.

The Chagossian community had high hopes about this meeting as this would have given us

a sense of direction and we would have then celebrated Human Rights Day.

You must know that, for me, the British have robbed the Chagossians of their right to live.

Believe me, this crime will not go unpunished.

The day I heard that I would never be allowed again to go back to my island it was as if a knife had been plunged into my heart. I could feel the blood oozing out. I can still feel it. We have been sold like animals.

Do you know how it feels to be snatched from one's homeland and dumped in the wild? You are treated worse than an animal. You have no dignity. But worst of all, you have no identity.

We, Chagossians, have been robbed of our dignity. This is how I feel here.

Mr Leake, my navel is buried there, in Peros Banhos. I cannot stop craving for my land and the tombs of my near and dear ones I left behind.

The day I lie on my death bed, with me will also die the craving I have carried in my heart since the day I left my homeland – that is to go back there. Living far from Peros Banhos has been a curse on my family and my people.

Please understand me. I have only one wish now and that is to die in Peros Banhos and be buried in the cemetery where I have already buried two of my children, and my parents.

I fear that I may die before my wish is fulfilled.

I will never forget all the pain and miseries that have been forced upon me and my family.

I'd rather continue looking for food out of dustbins. But never would I renounce my rights. I would never wish the same to my worst enemy.

This is all I wanted to tell you. I hope this letter touches your heart. I also wish you never go through what I and my people have been through these past years.

This is the worst curse than a person and a nation can sustain.

Marie Rita Elysée Bancoult
Cite Zilois
Pointe aux Sables



The day I lie on my death bed, with me will also die the craving I have carried in my heart since the day I left my homeland – that is to go back there

No leaks after this meeting...

A meeting on the Chagos issue between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration Dr Arvin Boolell and British High Commissioner Nick Leake took place on Friday, minutes before the minister attended the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Both parties refused to make any statement about the outcome of the talks.

Minister Boolell had told NEWSNOW on last week that he and Mr Leake

would discuss the Chagos issue and the UK's creation of a Marine Protected Area in the archipelago.

The foreign minister had decided on this face-to-face meeting with the envoy after WikiLeaks released American diplomatic cables which revealed that one of the reasons for the UK setting up the Marine Protected Area was to make it more difficult for the displace Chagossians to return to their homeland.

AIR MAURITIUS BOSS SACKED

‘Mr Bungsrz has been the victim of his plan to cancel free air ticket facilities which some senior officials of Air Mauritius and people in the public and private sectors used to obtain during the past 40 years’



●Ajay Daby

Misconduct not a factor in dismissal

– FORMER CEO’S LAWYER

By Clifford Vellien

Lawyer Ajay Daby told NEWSNOW yesterday that the dismissal of Air Mauritius Chief Executive Officer Soobhiraj Bungsrz is not linked to misconduct, “as is being perceived by certain media”.

He also said that contrary to some media reports, his client is not flying to Australia soon as he plans to spend the festive season in Mauritius with his family.

“Last week my client received a letter from Air Mauritius telling him that his contract has been terminated. The letter did not mention any misconduct or indiscipline charges against him, as some are saying outside,” Mr Daby told this newspaper.

Mr Bungsrz’s lawyer said they are not contemplating suing the national carrier at this stage “as we believe in negotiation. We have no relational conflict with Air Mauritius. For instance, we are replying to their letter,” the lawyer added.

Mr Daby claimed that the airline’s

move to dismiss “punitively” Mr Bungsrz had caused “damages” to his client’s dignity.

“These damages are not repairable,” he said, adding that he will fight to put things “in their right perspective”.

The lawyer said he will ask for “fair and reasonable” compensation for his client, but was unable to reveal the amount as they are “still working out the figures”.

He charged that Mr Bungsrz has been the victim of his plan to cancel free air ticket facilities which some senior officials of Air Mauritius and people in the public and private sectors used to obtain during the past 40 years.

“Some people are talking about good corporate governance, but are not putting it into practice. When someone comes and implements discipline and hard work in Air Mauritius, they qualify him as a bad guy,” Mr Daby said.

Mr Bungsrz became an all-time Air Mauritius record-holder last Wednesday – sacked after just 69 days as CEO of the national airline.

He also became the seventh CEO in 13 years to be given his marching orders. He was appointed on September 28 this year.

‘When someone comes and implements discipline and hard work in Air Mauritius, they qualify him as a bad guy’

AJAY DABY



●Soobhiraj Bungsrz.

Move to tighten up on proceeds of crime

By Sanjana Bhagmal-Cadervaloo

A new Asset Recovery Bill will soon be presented in the National Assembly.

The legislation provides for the recovery of assets suspected to be the proceeds or “instrumentalities” of crime, including drugs, or terrorist property, even in the absence of a criminal conviction.

It will also address the present difficulty faced by authorities when dealing with cases where the tainted assets have been transferred in the name of third parties.

NEWSNOW learned yesterday that the consultation exercise is at the final stage and the draft Bill will be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

This year the office of the Drug Commissioner has carried out 1,407 enquiries in drug-related cases, of which 25 cases have been recommended for asset forfeiture.

According to authorities, many more assets would have been seized had there been a appropri-

ate legislation.

Hearings are held at the Office of the Drug Commissioner every Tuesday or on alternate Thursdays at Beau Bassin Prison. On a monthly basis, at least 60 hearings are held.

A computerised database management system has been set up, which includes profiling of drug dealers.

We also learn that an Enforcement Authority, headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions himself, will soon be set up.

This authority may apply to the Supreme Court for a retrieval or recovery order, and seek a restraining or restriction order from the Judge in Chambers in relation to property or other economic advantage.

Government is fully conscious of the need to reinforce the measures taken to combat the drug problem.

Lately a multi-pronged strategy has been adopted geared towards supply and demand reduction, education, treatment and rehabilitation.

CPE results out today

D-day for the 26,040 candidates who took part in this year’s Certificate for Primary Education (CPE) exams.

Head teachers have to go to the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES) as from 6.00 this morning to get the result for their respective schools and as from 9.00 candidates have to go to their respective schools to get their result slips.

Depending on their results, they will gain admission to a secondary school.

The results are also available online on the website of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate.

This year’s exams were marked by “issues” related to the Marathi and Maths papers. Enquiries had even been set up to look into the matter but the matters were resolved.

Candidates and parents received the assurance that no candidate has unjustly benefitted from the “similarities” between the papers and certain textbooks.

Caudan: You have been warned...

MOTORISTS BEWARE: The Caudan roundabout is currently undergoing major infrastructure works which will last until November next year.

The roundabout is used by more than 35,000 vehicles on a daily basis during peak hours.

The main focus of the work, which will cost about Rs180 million, is the construction of a "grade separated junction" which means that the motorway will "fly-over" the roundabout.

The system will remain the same and the roundabout will be kept in its current location. The junctions that go from Residences Vallejee, the Caudan Waterfront and connecting the old road will still be accessible with the creation of connecting roads with the motorway.

The contract for the work was awarded to GCC (General Construction Company). It is a "design and build" contract and the total duration of the project is 15 months.

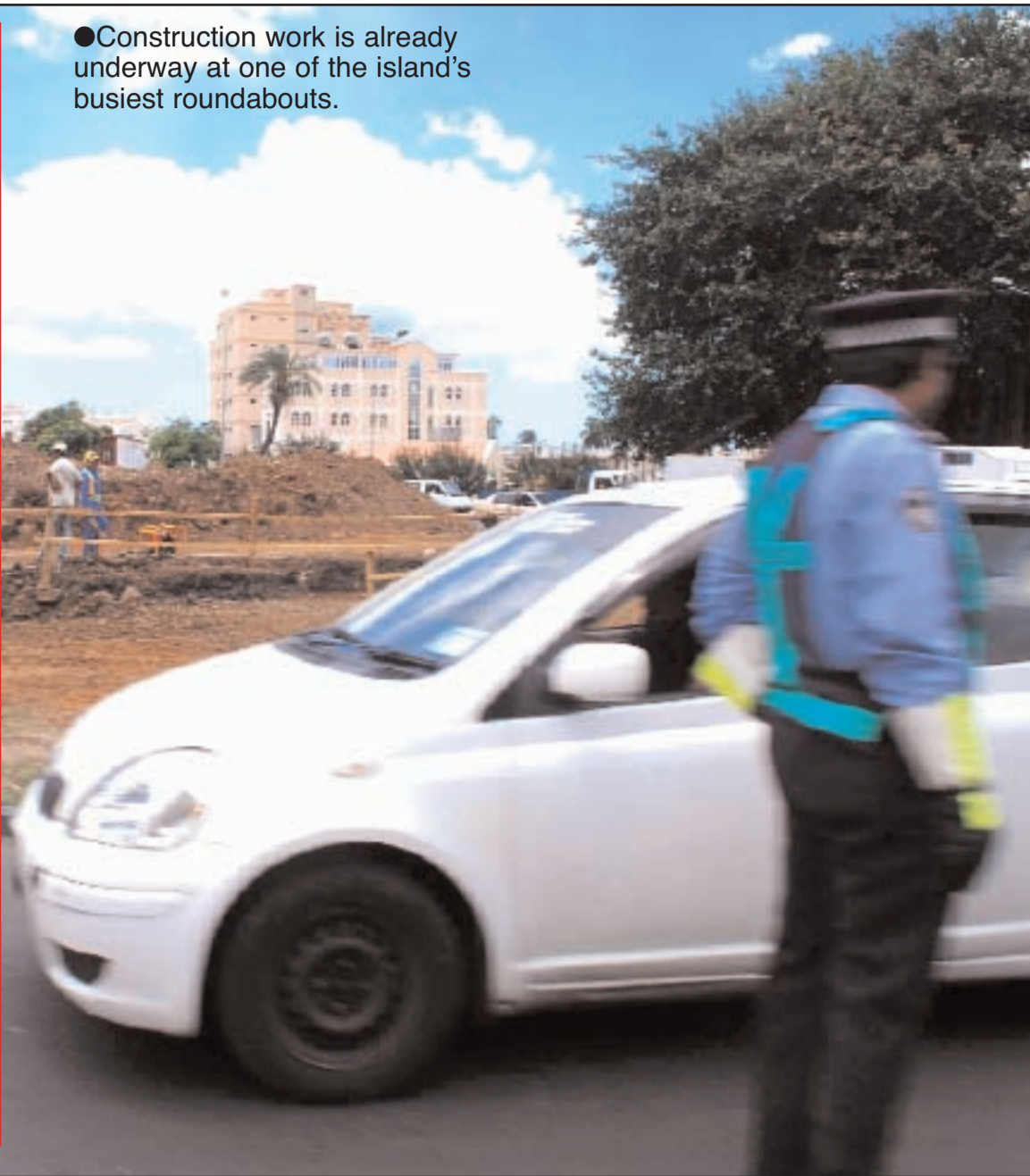
Currently, talks are being held between the Road Development Authority (RDA), the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit and the contractor to look into diversions that might have to be implemented during construction.

According to an officer at the RDA, traffic diversions will be kept to a minimum given the importance of this trunk road on the overall traffic converging towards Port Louis on a daily basis.

The four lanes of the motorway will be maintained "as far as possible" in order to mitigate the impact on congestion.

The project is part of the larger Road Decongestion Programme. Other projects in the programme will also near completion at the same period, that is by end 2011, and some projects will be completed by mid-2012.

●Construction work is already underway at one of the island's busiest roundabouts.



More price increases hit pocket

By Nitesh Boodhoo

Workers whose salaries have been increased by Rs175-Rs190 as from January next year, now face a series of price increases.

An official communiqué from the National Transport Corporation revealed that bus fares would be increased by an average of 20%.

As from today, bus fares rise by 14.3% to 25% depending on the distance of the trip. For a short-distance trip ranging from stages 1 to 7, the increase will be 22.3% for adults, 16.5% for students and 19.7% for children.

Fares for a medium-distance trip ranging from stages 1-14 will rise by 21.9% for adults, 19% for children and 20% for students; from stages 1 to 30 the increase is 22.6% for adults, 19.2% for children and 26.1% for students.

Fares have been increased within the range of Rs2 to Rs7 for adults, Rs1 to Rs3 for children and Rs2 to Rs6 for students.

The Central Electricity Board also recently announced a 10% rise in electricity prices which took effect as from December 1.

The latest figures from the Central Statistics Office showed that the Consumer Price Index for November has gone up by 0.9%.

The Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, Mr Rundheersingh Bheenick, last week also announced that according to the Monetary Policy Committee which last met in September, inflation will shoot up to 7% by July next year.

The president of the Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Maurice, Mr Jayen Chellum, said that the subsequent rise in household commodities was already too much. "It is shocking that the government has increased the prices of bus fares which is unacceptable."

He added that the poor section of the population will become even poorer. "The whole population must come together to contest the consequent rise in electricity, bus and household commodities prices."

Cruising boost for Mauritius



COSTA ROMANTICA DOCKS

Costa Cruises has officially announced that Port Louis will be its first port of call for the Indian Ocean region.

The Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Pacific Asia Operations, Mr Dario Rustico, said at a press conference on board the Costa Romantica in Port Louis harbour at the weekend that the company has brought about 15,000 travellers to Mauritius this year.

Minister of Tourism and Leisure Nando Bodha said that Mauritius is planning to make optimal use of its strategic position in the Indian Ocean region to attract more cruises.

Cruising will be "very crucial" to position the Indian Ocean region as a booming tourist destination.

He said that the new Christian Decotter cruise terminal which was inaugurated recently has cost government around Rs500 million. "This terminal was honoured as one of the most improved cruise facility terminals this year at an event in Miami."

Mr Bodha also said that his ministry is working towards training around 2,000 Mauritians every year to work on board cruise liners – 500 Mauritians will be enrolled on such training courses in January next year.

He explained that other regional islands like Reunion, the Seychelles and Madagascar are all important actors to "transform the Indian Ocean region into a booming tourist destination".

Anomalies in equal opportunities law

Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam has made it clear that enforcement of the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA) passed in 2008 will be a reality early next year after amendments are made to the existing legislation.

He made the remarks at the opening the fifth Festival International Kreol at La Plantation Hotel, Balaclava.

He said that EOA, which provides for meritocracy in all spheres of society, contains some anomalies that prevent its enforcement, adding that there was an "urgent need" to withdraw from the Act a clause relating to human rights, without elaborating on its controversial nature.

"The aim of this law is to allow all the components of

the population to actively participate in the economic development of the country," said the prime minister.

The amendments are being finalised by the State Law Office and will be introduced and passed in the National Assembly during the first quarter of 2011.

He also described the Creole language "as a common legacy which unites the Mauritian nation".

Social Integration Minister Xavier Luc Duval, who initiated the Festival International Kreol in 2006 when he was Tourism Minister, expressed his pride that Creole has been officially recognised as a teaching medium in schools across the island.

About the organization of the festival, he made an appeal to the promoters to decentralize across the island the activities marking the 5th Festival International Kreol.

The festival on Friday with an opening ceremony preceding a conference on "Creole language and culture" at La Plantation Hotel.

A 12-hour nonstop concert, with the participation of local, regional and international artists, such as Jamaican singer Diana King, was held on Saturday night at Domaine Les Pailles, while Caudan Waterfront hosted an exhibition on Creole foods and culture. The festival closed last night at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

Tourist injured by lion at park

An Indian on honeymoon here was injured by a lioness named "Lundi" – literally translated as Monday – on Saturday at the Casela Nature and Leisure Park.

The incident, described as "not serious" by the Director of Safari Adventures, Graeme Bristow, occurred around 11am.

Juhi Harlalkar, who was visiting the park

with husband Mohit Kumar, entered a cage containing four lions and was scratched and injured on the leg by "Monday" because she started to run away and make loud cries, according to Mr Bristow.

"There can never be any incident if visitors stick to the rules and listen to our guides. The lady's first mistake was to run away. And then everything followed. She was not seriously injured; she only sustained cuts," Mr Bristow was quoted as telling *Le Dimanche* newspaper.

Yesterday, NEWSNOW called Mr Bristow but his secretary claimed he was out of office and that no further comments that will be made on the incident.

Mr Bristow said on Saturday that the incident was the first of its kind since the opening of the attraction of lions in 2007.

Bambou police were not able to file any record of this incident as there was no information on the identity of the Indian national.

According to Mr Bristow, the population and tourists in general have no reason to fear for their safety while posing and taking photographs with the lions in Casela. "Do what you're told, follow the rules and everything will be fine."

According to information received by NEWSNOW, the Indian honeymooners will be leaving the island tomorrow.



●The lioness involved in the incident.

Rs27 million jackpot on offer

This coming weekend's Loto jackpot will be about Rs27 million as no one found the correct combination of numbers – 3, 4, 6, 11, 21, 32 – for the 58th draw.

Fifty-three people found five correct numbers and each won Rs16,653.

●3,476 people found four numbers, entitling each of them to Rs524 each.

●Three numbers were found by 58,344 people who each win Rs100.

Loterie Nationale announced the bonus-

es that the public can win for Christmas, which will also mark the 60th draw.

Two bonuses of Rs12 million will be added to the 60th draw. A first bonus of Rs6 million will be added to the jackpot of the draw for Christmas Day. Added to this, will be another Rs6 million for those players who find five of the drawn numbers.

In case of a roll-over, the jackpot for the New Year's weekend will amount to more than Rs50 million.



●PEM, a wood carver, was among those taking part in an exhibition of Creole culture and arts and crafts at Caudan Waterfront at the weekend.



Riot of colour at Reduit

State House in Reduit held its annual Flower Show at the weekend with about 50 exhibitors taking part. It was opened by the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and Lady Sarojini. Among the most popular attractions were the stall of the Orchid Society of Mauritius, the

Cactus stalls and the "lucky bamboo" exhibit. The Food and Agricultural Research Council (FARC) was also present at the show to give a demonstration on "tissue culture" and banana Micro propagation and plantlets production.

Rising prices attacked by opposition

The main opposition party, Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM), has criticised price increases of electricity and bus fares, describing them as "gifts from Father Christmas".

In a press conference at the weekend, MMM leader Paul Berenger denounced the government for a 10% rise in electricity prices since December 1 and an average 20% increase in bus fares starting today.

"We are expecting other very special Christmas gifts from the government shortly," joked Mr Berenger, speculating on an increase in water charges.

He also attacked Finance Minister Pravind Jugnauth for having forecast 2010 inflation at 2.7% while the Bank of Mauritius forecast 5.7%. "There is a big gap between both estimates," he said.

The situation at national carrier Air Mauritius (the CEO was sacked last week) was another issue raised by MMM leader. He found "very dangerous" the fact that the "headless aviation company" is being temporarily managed by South African Andre Viljoen, its Chief Financial Officer.

He expressed his party's opposition to this nomination and detailed the "bad performance" of the acting CEO of Air Mauritius when he was heading South African Airways (SAA) from 2001 to 2004.

Mr Berenger claimed that Andre Viljoen was behind SAA hedging losses amounting to six billion rand (Rs30 billion) which he qualified as a "monumental error".

He added that under Andre Viljoen, SAA's purchase of 42% shares of Air Tanzania had resulted in losses of 27 billion Tanzanian shillings.

Sacked MBC officer in 'justice' call

By Nitesh Boodhoo

Former traffic officer at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Mrs Rehana Ameer, told NEWSNOW yesterday she will go to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment today to discuss her sacking.

"I will have to discuss my unjustified dismissal. I still believe in the institutions of this country, I still believe that justice will be done," she said.

Mrs Ameer added that her last resort would be to stage a hunger strike.

She had been suspended for the past two months, accused of having circulated a defamatory letter against some members of MBC management.



Following her suspension, the ministry of Labour asked Professor Ved Prakash Torul, chairman of the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, to look into the matter.

Minister Shakeel Mohamed told NEWSNOW that suspensions must always be justified and must only take effect after the employer has proved that the employee has broken employment laws.

Trade Unions Confederations insists on the reinstatement of Mrs Ameer

Seven trade union confederations held a press conference on Friday to contest the dismissal of Mrs Ameer, who was also the president of the Mauritius Broadcasting Services Staff Association at the MBC.

Secretary of the Confederation des Travailleurs du Secteur Prive (CTSP) Jane Raghoo claimed that the disciplinary committee which decided to sack Mrs Ameer was "one-sided".

She said that representatives of the International Labour Organisation would be in Mauritius soon for the signing of the Decent Work Country Programme and they will have to consider the Ameer case.

PM offers a tribute to Burty David

CENTRE RENAMED FOR LATE MINISTER

By Clifford Vellien

The late Dr James Burty David was paid a heartfelt tribute by Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam as a centre for old people was named after him.

Dr Burty David died on December 13 last year.

Underlining his appreciation of the former minister of his two previous governments, Dr Ramgoolam renamed a recreation centre for old people in Pointe aux Sables as the "Dr James Burty David Centre" in the presence of the Burty David family, relatives and friends of the Labour Party stalwart.

Member of Parliament for Constituency No. 1 Port Louis-Grande Riviere, Dr Burty David was also Local Government and Outer Islands Minister from July 2005 to December 2009. He also served as Education Minister in Navin Ramgoolam's first mandate from 1995 to 2000.

In his address at the centre, the prime minister underlined Dr Burty David's sincerity and loyalty in his actions, words and thoughts, and his sense of belonging to the Labour Party which he served successively as president, secretary general and director of communication.

"A politician must do politics to serve

people, but not to be served," he said referring to the late minister's "immense contribution" to his constituency electors and the population across the island and Rodrigues.

Dr Ramgoolam was scathing about "those politicians who were members of the Labour Party but have betrayed it for personal interests". He also said that a politician must do what he has to do and not rely on rumours and lies that "exist in a certain press".

Social Security Minister Leela Devi Dookhun-Luchoomun invited those, particular young people, who wanted to join politics to be inspired by Dr Burty David's great achievements for his country.

"He had the conviction and also a strong character that motivated him to adhere the Labour Party since he was 16 years old," she said.

She described him "as a man with a great vision for the education sector" as he was a teacher and afterwards a rector, and an author of many school manuals before becoming minister.

"He had a vision of education which is linked to his political commitment, that is education must respond to the needs of society and not simply be a door to academic success," she added.



Entranced by exhibition

●Prime Minister Ramgoolam with Lilette Burty David, and her son Fabrice and daughter Chrystelle look at exhibition of photos of the late minister and his work.



●Lisa Sarah Ducasse

Collection Maurice makes another bow

The 17th edition of the "Collection Maurice" – *Intelligentes bêtes, Animaux, Zistwar zaimo* – was launched yesterday by the President Sir Anerood Jugnauth at Four Points by Sheraton.

The collection is a series of short stories written by Mauritian writers and authors and edited by Rama Poonosamy of Immedia. For the past 17 years, a new collection is launched every year.

The stories mostly narrate Mauritian life in its various aspects. This year's edition, on animals, groups 26 untold stories by 21 authors. For the first time, the Collection Maurice has a story written by 13-year-old Lisa Sarah Ducasse.

The president said that after a slow start, Collection Maurice has a real name today and is among the few publications made by Mauritians for Mauritians and narrating Mauritian life in all its splendour.

●Collection Maurice contains a story of by 13-year-old Lisa Sarah Ducasse, daughter of famous author and writer Shenaz Patel, entitled "Un cadeau" (a gift).

It is a story about a poor family and a

dog which, according to Lisa, is narrated from two different point of views – that of the girl of the family and the dog.

Lisa has a deep affinity for animals, especially dogs.

She has been writing short stories since she was very young. Currently a student at the Pierre Poivre College in Moka, Lisa has taken after her mother when it comes to writing.

●Also present at the launch was the former president of republic Cassam Uteem who was highly critical towards the British following the revelations made by Wikileaks on the Chagos issue.

This year's collection of stories on animals is a good reason, according to Mr Uteem, to think about the way the British have been treating the Chagossians – "no less than animals".

"The Brits have crossed the barrier of humanity", said tMr Uteem, adding that the British have been adopting a "diplomacy of lies and deceit".

●Collection Maurice – *Intelligentes bêtes, Animaux, Zistwar Zaimo* – is available from today in bookstores around the island at Rs300.

Elections for 2011

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVAMP PLANNED

By Clifford Vellien

The Local Government (Amendment) Bill introduced and passed in the National Assembly last week has helped the government to postpone municipal elections, scheduled for 2010, until next year.

"The amendment in the bill makes provision for the postponing of the local government elections to next year," Local Government Minister Herve Aimee told NEWSNOW.

This revised legislation provides for the extension of the mandate of municipal, district and village councillors, currently in office, until 2011.

"This allows the local authorities to carry out their nor-

mal business until the holding of the elections next year," Mr Aimee pointed out.

According to the previous Local Government Act, the elections of every urban authority were supposed to be held between November 21 and 24, 2010.

Minister Aimee explained that the introduction of comprehensive new legislation on local authorities next year motivated government's decision to postpone the municipal elections.

"The revamping of local government has profound institutional, financial and administrative implications," he said, adding that wide public consultation and consensus would be needed before the New Local Government bill is introduced in Parliament.

"It would be useless and a waste of public funds if we hold local government elections this year as we intend to increase the number of towns next year," said Mr Aimee.

Government plans to create 11 new towns, bringing the total number to 16. At the 2005 municipal elections covering the five towns of the island, some 348,000 electors were involved. If the 11 new towns are included before the next election, more than 500,000 electors would be voting.

The forthcoming reforms, described as "revolutionary" by Minister Aimee, will be spelled out in the new bill to be voted in March 2011.

Question on drugs at the assembly

Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam will be questioned in the National Assembly tomorrow on drug trafficking and drug-taking in the country.

MP Reza Uteem of the MMM wants to know the amount of drugs seized since July 2005 at the airport and port. The market value and the types of the drugs are also of importance to the first-time deputy who was elected in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South/Port Louis Central.

Ten questions covering other issues will be addressed to the prime minister, such as the number of seats to be allocated to women in the forthcoming municipal and village council elections, the financial situation of national carrier Air Mauritius, vacancies in the Prisons Services and the sales of cigarettes at retail in some shops despite a ban.

Other ministers will also be in the spotlight with 46 questions addressed to them. Finance Minister Pravind Jugnauth will give details about the Mauritius Commercial Bank's compliance with the provisions of the Banking Act and will also answer to questions on the Board of Investment (BOI) and the Central Procurement Board (CPB).

Questions on income per capita, the Jin-Fei Riche Terre project and the Gambling Regulatory Authority are also on the agenda for the finance minister.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities Dr Rashid Beebeejaun will explain to what extent the Central Electricity Board (CEB) would be capable to meet demand from new projects such as Neotown, the Land Based Oceanic Industry, the Binani Cement Factory (Mauritius) Ltd, the Bagatelle City and the expanded airport.

Health Minister Maya Hanoomanjee will have to give details about the number of people suffering from Alzheimer disease and the budget allocated for their treatment.

New bills will be introduced at Tuesday's sitting. Labour Minister Shakeel Mohamed will present The Additional Remuneration (2011) Bill to provide for the payment of a salary compensation with effect as from January 1, 2011 to private sector employees drawing a monthly salary of Rs30,000 or less.

Finance Minister Pravind Jugnauth will introduce The Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill of 2010 to provide for the implementation of measures announced in the Budget Speech 2011 relating to tax and national finance.

The Appropriation (2011) Bill will be read for a third time before sending it to the President of the Republic for his ascent.



● Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, left in our photo, attends the funeral service for Mario Flore yesterday.

Mario Flore buried

The funeral of Mario Flore, leader of Muvman Morisyien Kreol Afrikin (MMKA), who died on Wednesday at the age of 57, took place yesterday.

Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam and other personalities attended the mass at the Notre Dame de l'Assomption church in Roche Bois.

Mr Flore was buried at the Roche Bois Cemetery.

Mario Modliar, also known as Mario Flore,

was the editor of *La Voix Kreol* newspaper and was the spokesperson and main negotiator for the Port Louis Harbour and Dock Workers Union.

In July this year he received the insignia of Member of The Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (MSK) from President Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Mr Flore was well known for his staunch support of the downtrodden.

He was married with two children.



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Extracts of views and commentary from around the Global Village

UNIVERSITY FEES RIOTS

The wrong policy for UK

There can be no excuse for the behaviour of a minority of student protestors in Britain, who battled police, smashed windows and attacked a car carrying Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla. The legislation they opposed, a tripling of university tuition fees, is bad public policy, both myopic and unfair.

It only squeaked through Parliament after multiple defections from the government's junior coalition partner, the Liberal Democrats. Its support by the remaining Liberal Democrats, led by Nick Clegg, the party leader, cannot be easily justified.

Opposing these tuition increases was a central plank of the Liberal Democrats' election programme. Since joining the coalition government, Mr. Clegg has been far too willing to endorse the Conservatives' harsh austerity programme, which imposes five-year across-the-board

spending cuts of nearly 20%.

It takes some of its cruellest bites out of higher education, an investment in future growth that should have been spared but wasn't. Funds for undergraduate teaching, for example, will be cut by 80%. Higher tuition fees will have to plug the gap, writes the NEW YORK TIMES.

The new legislation raises the cap on university tuition fees from \$4,800 per year to \$14,500 a year by 2012. While the fees may still look good to some Americans (they are about half the average level of American private universities but nearly double the average charged by public universities in the US), the increase is too much, too fast and would not be needed without the arbitrary spending cuts.

The law requires students to repay these fees only

after they graduate, with payments calibrated to future earnings. That adds a progressive twist.

But educators warn that the poor and middle-class students who have finally gained access to British universities in recent decades will be squeezed out again by the prospect of decades of future indebtedness. Compounding the problem, government payments meant to allow students from poorer families to finish high school are also being phased out.

Britain's crisis-swollen budget deficits, like America's, need to be brought down as the economy recovers. The cutting must be done wisely, protecting investments in the economic future, like education. The sacrifices must be equitably shared. By any of those terms, this new policy is an utter failure.

Prince Charles and his wife Camilla were caught up in the violent London protests.



There's no excuse for violence

The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall exhibited characteristic sangfroid after what must have been a terrifying few moments on Thursday night, when their car was attacked by rioters in central London, writes the DAILY TELEGRAPH.

The couple continued with their planned visit to a theatre, looking none the worse for their ordeal. Even though the Duchess was hit by a stick through the open window of the car, she was composed enough to quip: "First time for everything."

But while she was commendably nonchalant about the incident, it should not have happened at all – and has raised a host of questions about the royal family's security in particular and the policing of the student protests in general.

It is clearly unacceptable that the heir to the throne and his wife should have been placed in such jeopardy. While Prime Minister David Cameron was correct to say that the true culprits were the thugs who targeted the couple's car, it is still hard to understand why the Prince and the Duchess were travelling in such a conspicuous vehicle close to where violent protests had been taking place for several hours. It is too easy to blame their protection officers for failing to take the proper precautions – and it would be a mistake to hide royal personages away – but the authorities will no doubt reflect upon

what might have happened.

The incident, however, was merely the most prominent, on another day of shameful behaviour by the hooligans who have attached themselves to the protests against student fee increases. This was the third – and worst – outbreak of serious rioting and again the police's tactics were found wanting, despite the presence of 3,000 officers.

Spontaneous rampages

Sir Paul Stephenson, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, has launched an inquiry to see if the protests might have been handled better; but in truth, the police are up against new circumstances that may require a different approach.

Old-style demonstrations, supervised by stewards and sticking to an agreed route, have been replaced by an amorphous form of protest reminiscent of the mob that was once a common and feared sight in London. The spontaneous rampages of the rabble were one reason that the Met was established in 1829 as the country's first police force.

Today, it has to deal with something similar – outbreaks of violence aimed at the Establishment and the wealthy. Whereas in the past, word of mouth brought the mob together, today the mobile phone, the internet,

Twitter and Facebook provide easy and instant opportunities to organise its fury. While ostensibly about tuition fees, these protests have, in fact, become a focus for a motley array of fringe anti-capitalist causes and jobs looking for trouble. Since it is clear that the National Union of Students cannot control them, it should consider halting these demonstrations before someone is killed.

Yet without condoning the violence, we should be mindful of the deep sense of grievance among today's youth – the widespread feeling that they have a raw deal. This generational inequity is most starkly exemplified by the imposition of student fees by people whose own university education was lavishly subsidised.

Ironically, David Willetts, the minister in charge of the policy, was among the first to identify this phenomenon in his book "The Pinch – How the Baby Boomers Took Their Children's Future". Pension schemes and property booms have concentrated wealth and power in the hands of the older generation, while excessive public and private borrowing has left their children with a heavy debt burden, to be paid off through higher taxes.

Today's younger generation may be the first in modern history to be bequeathed a worse standard of living than its predecessor.

Policing and protests: A balance has to be found

The mayhem in central London was as shocking as any in recent memory: protesters breaking down barriers and using them as weapons; windows smashed at the Treasury and the Supreme Court; a car carrying the heir to the throne attacked after straying into the path of roaming demonstrators.

And on the other side, police laying about them with truncheons; police horses charging the crowd, and a return of the hated "kettle", with protesters held for hours on Westminster Bridge.

Even allowing for the selectivity of the camera, it is a minor miracle that more people were not seriously injured.

Granted, the Houses of Parliament remained secure. MPs were able to debate and vote on raising the cap on university tuition fees unhindered. If that was the central objective of the day's police operation, then, to that extent, it was achieved.

The attendant damage – in all senses – however, was enormous, and it poses the same question that the last university-fee protests also raised. Is it really impossible for protesters to be able to exercise their right to be heard, while police meet their responsibility to keep public order – and do so without deploying the sort of deterrents, such as water cannon, that are used in many other countries?

We do not suggest this is easy. Provision for the tripling of university tuition fees raised impassioned opposition that went beyond today's students and their families. This tapped into a more general mood of public anger and anxiety about impending spending cuts. Clearly, too, there were groups of protesters on Thursday who were bent on provocation and violence, says THE INDEPENDENT in its editorial.

But there was advance agreement between organisers and police that the march would take a particular route, on which police contingency plans were presumably predicated. The fact that this plan went awry so quickly, with protesters determined, and able, to reach Parliament Square, has to be accounted a major failure. Ditto the way even a small number of protesters were able to smash windows at nearby government buildings and run amok in the West End.

An operation involving almost 3,000 police officers – at corresponding cost to the public purse – was not capable of protecting highly symbolic public property. Nor is it sufficient to imply, as the Coon Friday, that protesters were pretty lucky that the Prince of Wales's armed security detail did not open fire. More truly alarming, from the perspective of the Prince's safety, was that his security detail seemed nowhere to be found.

The police will doubtless object that they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. The softer methods used against the first fees protest – in reaction, perhaps, to complaints about "kettling" at the 2009 G20 protest – culminated in the assault on Conservative Party headquarters. Policing of the second protest was tougher, but winter weather also reduced the numbers.

Protesters will be out again today. The cause will be the abolition of education grants for older pupils from low-income families. The demonstrators are likely to be younger and even less cautious than those who spearheaded previous protests. The police will have to plan for a test at least as severe as the one they proved so unequal to last week.

I, filled with optimism, look forward to the advent of a future, free China. For there is no force that can put an end to the human quest for freedom, and China will in the end become a nation ruled by law, where human rights reign supreme. Hatred can rot away at a person's intelligence and conscience. (The) enemy mentality will poison the spirit of a nation, incite cruel mortal struggles, destroy a society's tolerance and humanity, and hinder a nation's progress toward freedom and democracy.



Statement by jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo read out during award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

"The United States will not be a passive participant. We will push the parties to lay out their positions on the core issues without delay and with real specificity. We will work to narrow the gaps, asking tough questions and expecting substantive answers"

US Secretary of State on the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks breakdown.

ANALYSIS

Student riots a precursor of violence yet to come

The mounting intensity of protests against higher university fees suggests that more and more ordinary people may be angry enough about austerity cuts to take to Britain's streets in coming months.

The government aims to almost triple tuition fees to up to 9,000 pounds (\$14,260), shifting the burden of paying for higher education from state to student as part of severe spending cuts intended to tackle a record budget deficit.

"If I were the government I would be very worried ... I think the protests are going to grow. This is a government with a bit over six months in office and it's confronting the most intense social protests for over 20 years," said Alex Callinicos, professor of European Studies at King's College London.

Analysts have begun to recall how a hugely unpopular local tax was scrapped after mass riots in London during a demonstration by 200,000 people in 1990, which also hastened Margaret Thatcher's fall from power.

Student fees are not seen as bringing down the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, which took office only in May, and polls indicate that the public support the austerity drive in principle. But the effects of the harshest cuts in a generation have only just begun to be felt.

Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers will lose their jobs and millions of Britons will have to scrimp as unemployment, child and housing benefits are slashed or capped.

Sales tax on many goods will rise from next year, many public services will be cut, and the retirement age will rise.

"In the abstract, everybody's in favour of everybody else saving money. But when it's your library, your hospital, that's when you get mobilised," said Patrick Dunleavy, professor of political science at the London School of Economics.

Stoking public anger now is the fact that the Lib Dems have gone back on a pre-election pledge not to raise

tuition fees.

Some student leaders in London refused to condemn the violence, and many protesters said it was the only way their cause would be noticed.

The law raising tuition fees advanced in parliament on Thursday despite abstentions or "No" votes from a number of government lawmakers. But it still has a number of stages to go before becoming law, and students say their protests are not over yet.

"There are going to be a whole series of further actions, direct actions, further occupations, and I think in the new year we will see this rise ten-fold," Clare Solomon, president of the University of London students' union, told reporters.

Until recently, Britain's students were seen as much less political, and militant, than those of earlier generations. But many have spoken of campaigning for wider social justice, and making common cause with the trade unions, who are planning a mass demonstration in March. Some union representatives have also been present at the student rallies.

"There is a sense that people are beginning to feel that the coalition government has sold them a pup (deceived them), that the spending cuts aren't the way forward and there is an alternative, and are beginning to protest about that," said Paul Nowak, head of organisation for the umbrella Trades Union Congress.

The prospect of peaceful protesters mingling with increasingly agitated youths is a challenge for police, who failed to prevent the attack on Prince Charles's car on Thursday.

Their preferred tactic is "kettling", in which groups of protesters are hemmed into a small area for hours at a time. Police say it limits the damage from violent protests, but students say it causes anger to boil over.

"Once you've got a fear of violence, police adopt tactics to try and stop the violence, and that causes the violence," said Ivor Gaber, political journalism professor at City University London.

'There is a sense that people are beginning to feel that the coalition government has sold them a pup (deceived them), that the spending cuts aren't the way forward and there is an alternative, and are beginning to protest about that'

STOCKHOLM RECEIVES LETTERS ON PROPHET SKETCHES

'Terrorist' attacks kill one in Sweden

By Mia Shanley & Patrick Lannin
STOCKHOLM

Swedish police investigating two blasts that rocked central Stockholm on Saturday night killing one person and wounding two said yesterday they had good leads into what they said were "terror crimes".

Before the explosions, the Swedish news agency TT received a threatening letter about Sweden's military presence in Afghanistan and caricatures of the prophet Mohammad drawn several years ago by a Swedish cartoonist. A senior Swedish security police official told a news conference yesterday the blasts were being treated as "terror crimes" and police had established good leads.

Anders Thornberg, director of operations at the Security Police, said police could neither confirm that the man who died was a suicide bomber nor discuss his identity as some family members had not yet been informed. "We are investigating this as terror crimes according to Swedish law ... we have not raised the security (threat) level," Thornberg said adding that the police were stepping up their presence in the capital.

The drama began when a car burst into flames near a busy shopping street in the city centre, followed by explosions inside the car which police said were caused by gas canisters. The second explosion, about 300 metres (yards) away and 10 to 15 minutes later, killed one man and wounded two people.

"Most worrying attempt at terrorist attack in crowded part of central Stockholm. Failed – but could have been truly catastrophic," Foreign minister Carl Bildt said in a message on Twitter, which was also shown on his blog.

Police vans cordoned off several streets around the body and towed away the car. The rest of the city centre was calm with people having a normal Saturday night out. Several hours after the blast, the man's

body was still lying on the pavement, covered with a white sheet.

Swedish newspapers all said the dead man had blown himself up. *Dagens Nyheter* quoted a man called Pascal, a trained medic, as saying, "It looked as if the man had been carrying something that exploded in his stomach. He had no injuries to the face or body in general and the shops around were not damaged."

The *Aftonbladet* quoted a source as saying the man was carrying six pipebombs, of which only one exploded, and a rucksack full of nails and suspected explosive material. The paper quoted eyewitnesses as saying the man was shouting in what was apparently Arabic.

TT said the email it received was also sent to the Security Police and had sound files in Swedish and Arabic. "Our actions will speak for themselves, as long as you do not end your war against Islam and humiliation of the prophet and your stupid support for the pig Vilks," TT quoted a man as saying in one recording.



● A still image taken from a video footage shows a firefighter attempting to put out the fire

WikiLeaks backers change cyber tactics

LONDON: A loose grouping of cyber activists supporting WikiLeaks has abandoned its strategy of online attacks on organisations seen as hostile to the site in favour of spreading the leaked documents far and wide online.

Internet activists operating under the name "Anonymous" temporarily brought down last week the websites of credit card giants MasterCard and Visa – both of which had stopped processing donations to WikiLeaks.

The United States, enraged and embarrassed by WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of confidential U.S. diplomatic cables, has leant on organisations from Amazon to online payments service PayPal – which have now withdrawn services to WikiLeaks. In an overnight blog post, Anonymous announced a change of strategy saying it now aimed to publish

The group supporting WikiLeaks has announced a change of strategy saying it now aims to publish parts of the confidential U.S. diplomatic cables as widely as possible and in ways that made them as hard as

parts of the confidential U.S. diplomatic cables as widely as possible and in ways that made them as hard as possible to trace.

The cyber activists briefly brought down PayPal's official blog by bombarding it with requests last week, but failed to harm retail and Web-hosting giant Amazon, which withdrew its services to WikiLeaks more than a week ago. "We have, at best, given them a black eye. The game has changed. When the game changes, so too must our strategies," said the blog post announcing "Operation: Leakspin".

The activists are now encouraging supporters to search through leaked cables on the WikiLeaks site and publish summaries of ones that have been least exposed, labelling them so they are hard to find by any authority seeking to quash them.

"Use misleading tags, everything from "Tea Party" to "Bieber". Post snippets of

the leaks everywhere," the blog said referring to the U.S. grassroots conservative movement and the 16-year-old Canadian pop phenomenon Justin Bieber.

Similar strategies have been used in the past on YouTube and the now defunct Napster by users seeking to share video and music while dodging copyright crackdowns. The activists had previously been using denial of service attacks in which they bombarded the Web servers of the perceived enemies of WikiLeaks with requests that crashed the sites in an operation named "Operation Payback".

U.S. President Barack Obama told Turkish and Mexican leaders last week that WikiLeaks' actions were "deplorable" as the U.S. administration kept up damage control efforts over the website's embarrassing release of masses of secret U.S. cables.

U.K. deputy PM's popularity plunges

Britain to probe lapse in royal security

LONDON: British police has promised an investigation after Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, was caught up in London's worst riots in years as student protests over a rise in fees boiled over.

At one point the protesters surrounded a limousine carrying prince Charles, queen Elizabeth's oldest son and heir, and his wife Camilla, kicking the doors, cracking a window and throwing white paint on the car. The couple escaped unhurt. The *London Evening Standard* newspaper reported that a protester managed to push a stick through an open window and jab Camilla in the ribs. Protesters could be heard shouting "Off with their heads!" in a shaky filmed recording of the incident.

London police chief Paul Stephenson would investigate the riot and the incident, Prime Minister David Cameron said promising the "full force of the law" would come down on offenders. "There were quite a lot of people who were hell bent on violence ... The crowd behaved sometimes in an absolutely feral way."



● Britain's Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg leaves after a cabinet meeting at number 10 Downing Street in London.

SUPPORTERS ANGRY OVER FEE RISE DECISION

By Michael Holden
LONDON

The popularity of Nick Clegg, the leader of Britain's coalition government's junior partner, has plummeted and supporters are deserting his party over plans to raise university tuition fees, said a poll published yesterday.

Parliament voted on Thursday in favour of government's plans to allow English universities to charge students almost treble the current limit, a policy that has divided Clegg's Liberal Democrat party and led to violent protests in London.

Before May's election Clegg and all his party's lawmakers had pledged to vote against any rise, and his decision to renege on that promise has seen his personal standing sink, an Ipsos MORI poll for the *News of the World* newspaper found.

In April, a poll rated him as the most popular British party leader since World War Two Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Now 61% of those surveyed thought the deputy Prime Minister was untrustworthy.

The policy has also damaged his party with nearly half the voters who supported the centre-left Liberal Democrats in May saying they were unlikely to do so in future.

The findings were backed up by another poll for the coalition's senior partner, the Conservative party, published in the *Sunday Telegraph* which indicated only 54% who backed Clegg's party would do so at the next election.

Less than half of the 57 Liberal Democrat lawmakers voted in favour of raising tuition fees, one of the government's measures to erase a record budget deficit, and the revolt led some commentators to suggest Clegg's leadership could be in question.

However, analysts say the growing unpopularity of the Liberal Democrats means the party is unlikely to take any action that would jeopardise the coalition.

"I think in coalition governments there's always going to be issues on which there is going to be some disagreement," John Leech, a Lib Dem who voted against the policy, told Sky News.

The MORI poll found two-thirds of Britons opposed the rise in tuition fees and most thought it would deter those from deprived families from going to university.

However, it also found Conservative support had been little affected by anger over the policy and Prime Minister David Cameron's personal ratings were almost unchanged. Protesters attacked government buildings and attacked a car carrying British heir-to-the-throne prince Charles on Thursday during London's worst riots in years and the fourth violent demonstration in the capital against the plans.

NEWSLINE

Bail in South Africa killing

LONDON: The British millionaire accused of murdering his bride while the couple were on honeymoon in South Africa was granted bail by a High Court judge in London over the weekend.

A previous application for bail by businessman Shrien Dewani had been blocked when South African authorities appealed against it. Dewani, 30, is accused by South Africa of hiring a hitman to murder his 28-year-old wife Anni, a former model and Swedish national, who was shot dead last month in Cape Town.

The couple's taxi driver Zola Tonga pleaded guilty to four charges, including murder and robbery with aggravating circumstances, for which he has been sentenced to 18 years in prison.

H1N1 flu kills 10 in Britain

LONDON: The H1N1 swine flu virus, which swept the globe last year, has returned to Britain with 10 people dying in the last six weeks, health officials said over the weekend.

Britain's Health Protection Agency said the 10 deaths had occurred in adults all under the age of 65. "Over the last few weeks, we have seen a rise in the number of cases of seasonal flu both H1N1 (2009) and flu B in the community," professor John Watson, head of the HPA's respiratory diseases department, said in a statement.

"We have also received reports of patients with serious illness requiring hospitalisation and outbreaks of flu in schools across the country."

Preacher raped girl

SALT LAKE CITY: A homeless street preacher has been found guilty of the 2002 kidnapping of a Utah girl who was abducted from her bed in the middle of the night and endured a harrowing, nine-month ordeal in captivity.

A U.S. federal court jury in Salt Lake City convicted Brian David Mitchell, 57, on two counts: kidnapping and unlawful transportation of minor across state lines to engage in sexual activity. Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 at the time of the abduction, testified about her abduction at knife-point, rape and captivity. Prosecutors told jurors that Mitchell kidnapped Smart from her Salt Lake City home on June 5, 2002, with the intent of forcing her to live as his bride.

Boy names Putin puppy

MOSCOW: Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has named his new male puppy Buffy picking a name suggested by a five-year old boy in a nationwide competition. The large, cream and caramel coloured Karakachan pup was given to Putin as a gift by his Bulgarian counterpart in November after Moscow and Sofia signed a series of natural gas accords.

"I really liked your suggestion," Putin told Muscovite Dima Sokolov. Though a male puppy, Buffy shares his name with a sexy vampire slayer on the eponymous U.S. television show starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, which is broadcast in Russia. Putin signed a football for the boy. The Karakachan breed originates in Bulgaria and can grow to 55 kg.

Balkans peace broker seriously ill

WASHINGTON: Richard Holbrooke, the veteran diplomat U.S. President Barack Obama tapped as his special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, is in critical condition after surgery to repair a tear in his aorta, the State Department said.

The 69-year-old Holbrooke, who brokered the 1995 accord ending the Balkans war, has been a key player in Obama's efforts to turn around the faltering nine-year-old war in Afghanistan, where violence has surged and at least 477 U.S. soldiers have been killed this year alone.

Holbrooke fell ill at the State Department on Friday and was admitted to nearby George Washington University hospital. "This morning, doctors completed surgery to repair a tear in his aorta," the State Department said on Saturday. "He is in critical condition and has been joined by his family."

Obama said in a statement he and his wife Michelle were praying for Holbrooke. "Richard Holbrooke is a towering figure in American foreign policy, a critical member of my Afghanistan and Pakistan team, and a tireless public ser-



●U.S. State Department special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke.

vant who has won the admiration of the American people and people around the world," Obama said.

A tear in this major artery of the body, known as an aortic dissection, is a painful and life-threatening condition that carries the risk of complications such as stroke, heart attack and kidney failure, according to Dr. Duke Cameron, chief of cardiac surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Recovery often entails a week in the hospital and three to four months for full recovery, said Cameron, who is not one of Holbrooke's doctors.

"Half of the people who have it (a tear in the aorta) will die within 48 hours if there is no treatment for it," Cameron said in a telephone interview. "Even those who go to surgery, the chance of dying either in the operating room or a short time afterwards in 20 or 25 percent."

A prolonged absence for Holbrooke could be a blow to Obama's efforts to demonstrate swift progress in Afghanistan next year, when Washington hopes to start putting Afghan forces in the lead and start bringing U.S. troops home in July.

A frequent visitor to both Afghanistan and Pakistan, Holbrooke had worked to build personal relationships with the region's leaders while at home he has sought to allay concerns in the U.S. Congress over the course of the war.

Holbrooke's illness comes just before the White House is due to roll out an assessment of the revised strategy for the troubled region that Obama unveiled a year ago. Next week's review is expected to conclude that despite entrenched corruption and weak governance, U.S. and NATO forces are making progress on security in parts of Afghanistan. The review will not bring any major changes to strategy.

Kamran Bokhari, director for Middle East and South Asia at intelligence firm STRATFOR, said a lengthy absence for Holbrooke could be a short-term setback because he had developed a rapport with President Asif Ali Zardari and military leaders in Pakistan, and to a lesser degree with leaders in Kabul. "In the long run, the role of one person is minimal, especially in a place like the United States with strong institutions," he said.

Iranian woman acts out murder of husband on TV

TEHRAN: Iranian television aired a documentary over the weekend in which a woman whose stoning sentence caused global outrage staged a graphic reconstruction of her husband's murder for which she faces possible hanging.

State-run English language Press TV said its half-hour film was meant to show the other side of a story that has been misrepresented by international media. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani's sentence to be stoned for adultery – the only crime that carries that penalty under Iran's Islamic sharia law – was declared to have been suspended in September after an international outcry.

Rumours that she had been released spread around the Internet on Thursday after human rights campaigners in Europe apparently misinterpreted photographs released ahead of the broadcast, showing Ashtiani at her home where the crime scene reconstruction was filmed, as indicating she was free.

Ashtiani acts out her alleged role in the murder of her husband in a reconstruction filmed in black-and-white in a shaky hand-held camera style, accompanied by dramatic music. It is not clear why she had agreed to take part in the film. She is shown injecting her husband with a sedative before an actor playing her lover attached wires to his feet and neck and plug them into an electrical socket.

In memory of the 'lost souls'

JAILED CHINESE DISSIDENT AWARDED NOBEL

By Wojciech Moskwa & Walter Gibbs
OSLO

Jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in a ceremony where he was represented by an empty chair and he dedicated it from prison to the "lost souls" of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

China called the award in Oslo a "political farce". U.S. President Barack Obama, a Peace Prize laureate last year, called for the prompt release of 54-year-old Liu, who was jailed last year for 11 years for subversion.

In Beijing, police stepped up patrols at key points on Friday, including Tiananmen Square, where witnesses say hundreds or thousands were killed when troops crushed reform protests, and Liu's apartment, where his wife is believed to be under house arrest. Authorities tightened a clampdown on dissidents.

There were no signs of trouble in Beijing, where memories of Tiananmen have faded for many as China has risen as a global economic and political power while guarding the Communist Party's tight hold on society.

Instead of awarding the Nobel medal and citation to Liu, it was simply placed on his chair in the ceremony in Oslo's City Hall as the audience cheered. A large portrait of the laureate, bespectacled and smiling, hung nearby. Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann read out an address made by Liu, who was closely involved in Tiananmen and more recently helped found the reform group Charter 08, to a court during his trial for subversion in December 2009. "I, filled with optimism, look forward to the advent of a future, free China," the address said. "For there is no force that can put an end to the human quest for freedom, and China will in the end become a nation ruled by



●The Nobel certificate and medal is seen on the empty chair where this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo would have sat as a portrait of Liu is seen in the background during the ceremony at Oslo City Hall.

law, where human rights reign supreme."

It was the first time that a laureate under detention had not been formally represented since Nazi Germany barred pacifist Carl von Ossietzky from attending in 1935. Several jailed or detained laureates since had been represented by family, but China did not allow anyone near Liu to travel to Oslo.

The thousand guests in city hall rose to a standing ovation when Norwegian Nobel committee chairman Thorbjørn Jagland called for Liu's release. "Liu has told his wife that he would like this year's Peace Prize to be dedicat-

ed to 'the lost souls from the 4th of June'. It is a pleasure for us to fulfil his wish," Jagland said.

The Peace award has stirred international diplomatic conflict, with China accusing the Committee of representing the interests of arrogant Western nations who seek to impose their ideas on an unreceptive world. "The facts fully show that the Nobel Prize Committee's decision does not represent the majority of the world's people especially the will of most developing countries. Prejudice and lies will not stand," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.



● Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin sings with a young participant as French actor Alain Delon (right) applauds at a charity concert for children suffering from eye diseases and cancer in St. Petersburg.

Putin, known for macho posturing, sang 'Blueberry Hill'. 'Like an overwhelming majority of people, I can neither sing nor play, but I very much like doing it,' Putin said after being

prodded by the event's hostess, who reminded him that he had sung before a group before.

His audience included Sharon Stone, Monica Bellucci, Kevin Kostner and Gerard Depardieu. Putin went on stage and played the opening notes to 'Blueberry Hill' on the piano, then stepped behind the microphone and sang, backed by several musicians and singers.

MEXICO GOVT. GUNS DOWN
EVANGELICAL DRUG CHIEF

Cult cartel boss killed

By Miguel Garcia
APATZINGAN

Mexican security forces killed a top leader of the cult-like La Familia drug cartel, the government said over the weekend, after a days-long shootout brought chaos and escalating violence to western Mexico.

Nazario Moreno, known as "The Craziest One", was killed late on Thursday in President Felipe Calderon's home state of Michoacan, where La Familia (The Family) controls methamphetamine trafficking and marijuana fields and operates extortion rings.

"Diverse pieces of information obtained during the raid all indicate that Nazario Moreno Gonzalez was killed yesterday," national security spokesman Alejandro Poire said.

Moreno – dubbed by officials as "the spiritual leader" of the cartel – ran La Familia with a pseudo-religious philosophy preaching *Bible* scripture mixed with self-help slogans to prevent gang members from abusing drugs. The group promotes the idea that it protects the local population from other traffickers and gives gifts to the poor. Founded in 2000 under a different name, the cartel is also known for its brutality, first bursting onto the public stage four years ago by tossing severed heads into a disco in the town of Uruapan.

Violence flared on Wednesday night in Michoacan, when federal police and security forces streamed into the town of Apatzingan, responding to an anonymous call reporting the presence of armed men. At least 11 people were killed as security forces fought cartel members in ensuing street battles, including five police officers and three drug traffickers.

The authorities did not specify exactly where Moreno was killed and said gunmen were retrieving the bodies of dead and wounded cartel members, making the number of casualties unclear. Three civilians, among them an 8-month-old baby and a teenager, died in the clashes that brought a new level of violence to Michoacan, where Calderon first launched his army-backed drug war in late 2006.

Swindler Madoff's elder son commits 'suicide'

NEW YORK: Mark Madoff, the elder son of convicted swindler Bernard Madoff, was found hanged in his New York City apartment in an apparent suicide on the second anniversary of his father's arrest, police and his lawyer said over the weekend.

The 46-year-old Mark Madoff, who had worked at his father's firm, "succumbed to two years of unrelenting pressure from false accusations and innuendo", his lawyer said. He was found dead in his apartment in the city's SoHo neighborhood, New York City police spokesman Paul Browne said.

Bernard Madoff, 72, is serving a 150-year prison sentence after confessing to running a decades-long Ponzi scheme that bilked investors out of billions, considered the biggest financial fraud in history.

"Mark Madoff took his own life today. This is a terrible and unnecessary tragedy," Martin Flumenbaum, a lawyer for Mark Madoff and his younger brother Andrew said in a statement. "Mark was an innocent victim of his father's monstrous crime." Mark Madoff's two-year-old son was in the apartment when the body was discovered by his father-in-law, said police at the

scene who declined to be identified.

The Madoff sons and other family members had worked for Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC, which crumbled when the Ponzi scheme was revealed. Bernard Madoff was arrested on Decemebr 11, 2008, after his sons turned him in to authorities. The sons said Madoff had confessed the fraud to them a day earlier.

Defrauded Madoff investors have long viewed the convicted swindler's sons, wife and other family members suspiciously arguing it is impossible that they

did not know about his lies. No family members have been criminally charged and they reject accusations that they were aware of the fraud.

Mark Madoff, a married father of four, was distraught over speculation about potential criminal charges against him, said a person familiar with his activities but who was not authorised to speak publicly about him. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in February that Bernard Madoff's sons and brother were the subject of criminal tax-fraud probes by federal prosecutors in Manhattan.

Jazz boss Moody loses cancer battle

LOS ANGELES: Jazz saxophonist James Moody, a master of improvisation, has died in San Diego after a 10-month battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 85.

Moody died last week at the San Diego Hospice and Institute for Palliative care, his wife Linda Moody said in a post on his website. "I feel so grateful for the privilege of being this amazing man's wife for almost 22 years. I learned so much from this beautiful gracious, kind person," Linda Moody said.

Born in Georgia and raised in New Jersey, Moody became one of the greats of American jazz. He played with Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton and B.B. King, and was nominated for four Grammy Awards, the U.S. music industry's highest honor.

Moody began recording in the late 1940s after serving in the military during World War Two, and he continued to write and perform music well into the 2000s. He played both alto and tenor saxophone as well as flute, and he was best known for his *Moody's Mood for Love*, an improvisational version of popular 1930s song *I'm in the Mood for Love*. But Moody recorded more than 60 albums.

Later in life, he performed with his James Moody Quartet, and in 2007 The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., gave Moody its Living Jazz Legend Award.



● Fans surround a wax figure of US singer Lady Gaga at Madame Tussauds museum in New York. New York has joined seven other Madame Tussauds attractions around the world in revealing new Lady Gaga figures.

Eight wax models of 'Poker Face' Lady Gaga have been unveiled, each dressed differently in celebration of the star's provocative style.

London's version of the current queen of pop had her dressed in a Giorgio Armani suit accessorised with Rococo coifed hair and a Philip Treacy hat in the shape of a telephone, a reference to one of her biggest hits. The museum chain spent around \$2.4 million on the project banking on legions of fans

queueing up to catch a glimpse of a replica of their idol.

'Each of the figures is styled differently and each of the launches has been a surprise outfit,' said Madame Tussauds sculptor Stephen Mansfield in London. 'It's a nice little bit of fun and it adds to the hoopla around the whole Lady Gaga figure.'

The other participating cities were New York, Las Vegas, Hollywood, Amsterdam, Berlin, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Lady Gaga, 24, whose real name is Stefani Germanotta, has dominated the music world for the past two years turning out dance hits like *Bad Romance*, and *Telephone* and amassing more than 20 million followers on Facebook.

ACTOR STARTS SERVING THREE-YEAR SENTENCE FOR TAX EVASION

Snipes in new prison role...

PITTSBURGH

Actor Wesley Snipes reported last week to a U.S. federal prison in Pennsylvania to begin serving a three-year sentence for failing to file income tax returns, a prison official said.

The star of the *Blade* action movies, convicted in 2008, arrived at Federal Correction Institution McKean in Lewis Run, Pennsylvania on Thursday, said Ed Ross, a Federal Bureau of Prisons spokesman.

"He surrendered a short time ago and is now inside the facility," Ross said. "He'll go through an orientation process and will begin serving his sentence."

Snipes, 48, was convicted in an Ocala, Florida, court for willful failure to file federal tax returns from 1999 through 2001.

Each of the misdemeanor counts carried a maximum one-year prison term. He was found not guilty on five other counts.

Snipes' attorney Daniel Meachum has said he believes



the case contains irregularities, and he plans to seek a review.

The minimum security prison camp is worlds away from the harsh prison fortresses depicted in the Snipes' films *Undisputed* and *Brooklyn's Finest*. The minimum-security camp doesn't have fences around its perimeter.

According to U.S. prosecutors, the actor failed to file any tax returns for at least a decade, and

owed \$2.7 million in taxes on \$13.8 million in income from 1999 to 2001 alone.

Snipes, a dues-paying member of a tax-protest group that challenges the government's right to collect taxes, described himself at his 2008 sentencing as a naive truth-seeker.

"I am an idealistic, naive, passionate, truth-seeking, spiritually motivated artist, unschooled in the science of law and finance," said Snipes, who had pursued theatre and dance from an early age attending the vaunted High School for the Performing Arts in New York City.

Tuesday night, he told CNN's *Larry King Live* that he was not nervous about reporting to prison. On Wednesday, he made a last-minute request for a new trial, but on Thursday a judge in Florida rejected the emergency motion. Snipes had argued said that a judge erred by not allowing defence attorneys to interview jurors about misconduct allegations, but U.S. District Judge William Terrell Hodges said the motion merely re-argues issues that have already been decided.

NO to bigger euro safety coffers

By Erik Kirschbaum & Emmanuel Jarry
FREIBURG, Germany

Germany and France pledged over the weekend to better align their tax and labour policies to foster convergence in the euro zone, but rejected calls for an increase in the bloc's rescue fund and joint sovereign bonds.

On Friday, European central bankers had told euro zone governments they could not count on the ECB alone to solve a debt crisis which has forced bailouts of Greece and Ireland, and heaped pressure on countries like Portugal and Spain.

At a news conference in the southwestern city of Freiburg, Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy presented a united front ahead of a crucial summit this week where EU leaders are expected to agree the terms of a permanent rescue mechanism for the bloc.

LIMITED COORDINATION

Berlin has opposed calls by Spain and other countries to move towards a full-fledged "fiscal union" in the 16-nation bloc, but appeared on Friday to have agreed to a limited form of policy coordination although little detail was offered.

"We have agreed to the convergence of German and French tax policies and I thank the German Chancellor for this opening," said Sarkozy.

Merkel said it was up to Germany and France to set an example on questions of competitiveness, showing partners how far the bloc's biggest economies could cooperate in areas "beyond pure budget policy". "We are talking about labour law, about tax law and if we are to improve the coherence of the economic aspects of the euro zone, then we should target these issues step by step and propose solutions," Merkel said.

"We will defend the euro because the euro is Europe," Sarkozy said. "Our determination, both German and French, is total."

ECB WARNINGS

Pressure on high-deficit euro members eased slightly over the past week after the ECB bought government bonds in a thin end-of-year market pushing down the borrowing costs of countries on Europe's southern periphery.

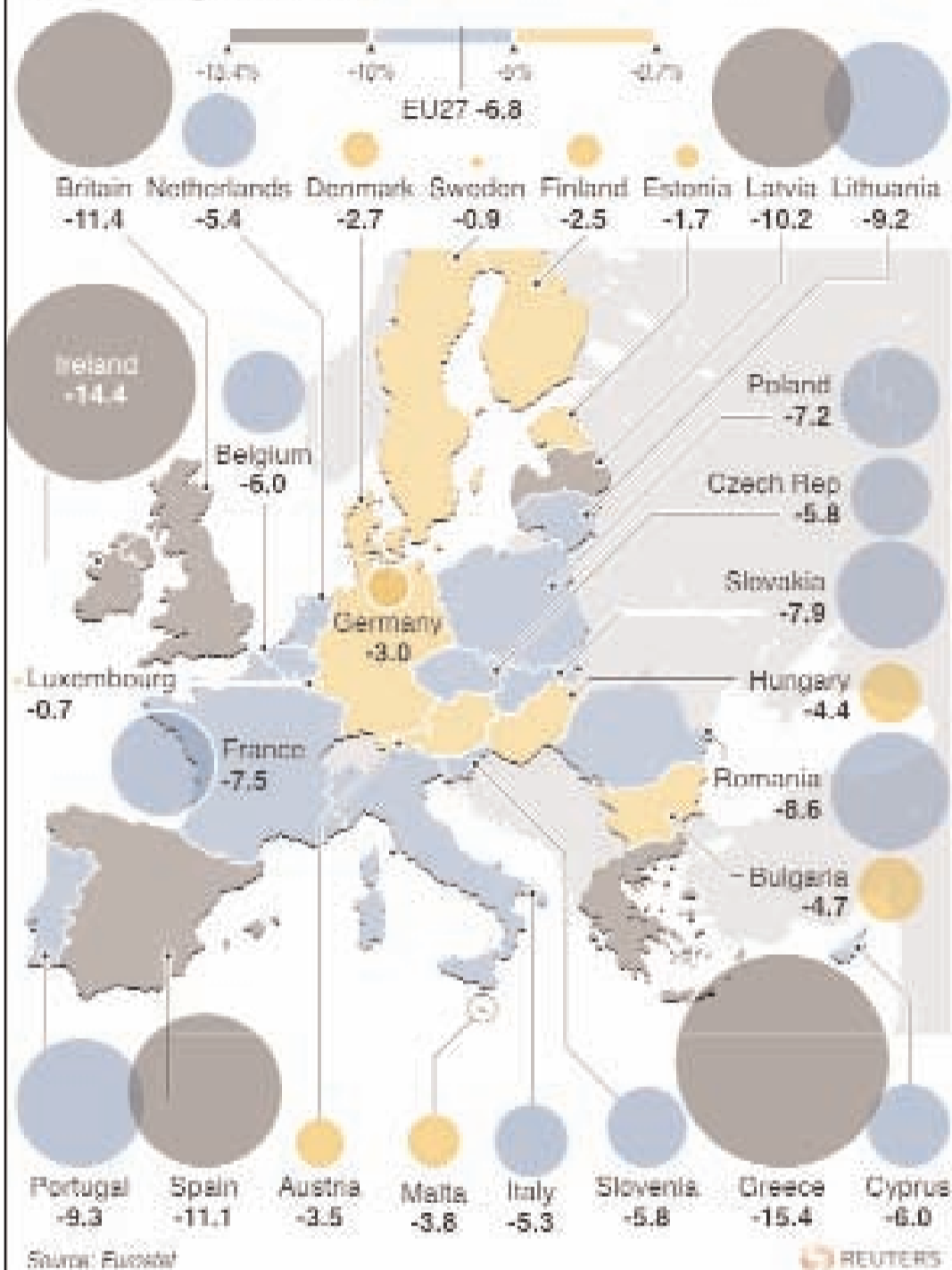
But Bank of Italy governor and ECB Governing Council member Mario Draghi told the *Financial Times* that responsibility for dealing with the crisis ultimately lay with euro governments and the ECB could go only so far in helping weaker members by buying their bonds.

"I'm only too aware that we could easily cross the line and lose everything we have, lose independence, and basically violate the (EU) treaty," said Draghi, a leading candidate to replace Jean-Claude Trichet as ECB president.

GERMANY, FRANCE REJECT TALKS

EUROZONE GOVERNMENT DEBT

As a percentage of GDP, 2009



IMF postpones aid

DUBLIN: The International Monetary Fund postponed approving a multi-billion euro loan for Ireland over the weekend after Prime Minister Brian Cowen said he would seek parliamentary approval for the bailout.

Cowen is expected to get the €85 billion joint IMF/EU rescue package through the lower chamber this week, but his politically charged decision to put it to a vote creates uncertainty and delays that investors will not appreciate.

Highlighting the depth of Ireland's crisis, data on Friday showed the country's banks' growing dependence on funding from the European Central Bank and its own central bank with estimated borrowings of some €140 billion representing €30 million for every person living in the country.

The bailout is meant to wean Irish banks off such assistance halting an outflow of corporate deposits and allowing them to return to term funding markets again.

But analysts said banks' addiction to such funding would continue until they laid out plans to shrink their assets, a requirement of the emergency aid, and started selling off loans next year.

"Given all the noise that was taking place I think until the restructuring plans become clearer and implementation commences... I think realistically it's not

going to happen until then," said Jim Ryan of Dublin-based Glas Securities.

"The best one can hope for in 2010 is to stop deposit outflows and then in 2011, when matters become clearer, we should start to see some inflows again."

The IMF's board will consider its €22.5 billion portion of the bailout on Thursday assuming Ireland's Parliament passes the package in a vote on Wednesday.

Finance minister Brian Lenihan told Parliament he expected Ireland to start accessing external funding early next year.

The premium investors demand to hold Irish debt over benchmark German paper rose 9 basis points to around 540 bps on Friday amid a slowdown in ECB bond buying.

Emboldened by the ease at which a record austerity budget is passing through Parliament, Cowen is clearly confident the bailout will get the thumbs up from the chamber despite his razor-thin majority and plunging popularity.

Lawmakers passed legislation by 79 votes to 74 on Friday to lower the minimum wage and cut ministers' salaries and public sector pensions, the latest stage in passing the 2011 budget, which is a crucial plank of the IMF/EU deal.

Major relief for oil consumer nations

SAUDI ARABIA STILL FAVOURS A \$70-\$80 PRICE RANGE

By Amena Bakr & Hugh Bronstein
QUITO

Leading OPEC producer Saudi Arabia said over the weekend it still favoured a \$70-\$80 price range for oil, a restatement of a two-year-old policy that will be welcomed by consumer nations worried that rising oil prices may get out of control and hamper global economic recovery.

Saudi Oil minister Ali al-Naimi told reporters at an OPEC meeting in Quito: "\$70-\$80 is a good price. The comments came as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed, as expected, to keep production restraints unchanged, despite a recent surge in crude prices to \$90 a barrel.

With OPEC's next meeting not scheduled until June 2, markets are likely to test Saudi Arabia's resolve to keep prices below \$80. "The real issue here is whether additional supplies will be added," said Lawrence Eagles, global head of oil research at JP Morgan in New York. "Minister Naimi said \$80 was the top end

Saudi, OPEC's most influential producer, is likely to face opposition to any change in policy from other members who argue that demand is not strong enough to warrant more oil and that speculators are to blame for driving prices up.

of the range; let's see if he follows up with higher supplies." U.S. crude closed at \$87.79 a barrel on Friday having touched a two-year high of \$90.76 earlier in the week.

Saudi, OPEC's most influential producer, is likely to face opposition to any change in policy from other members who argue that demand is not strong enough to warrant more oil and that speculators are to blame for driving prices up. Price hawk Venezuela called for \$100 oil and said OPEC should not lift output again through the end of 2011.

"We believe that the market should compensate high production costs. \$100 appears to be an adequate price," said Venezuelan Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez.

Iranian Oil minister Massoud Mirkazemi said global oil demand was

"not good" and that "nominal prices are good, real prices are not".

Riyadh may decide the best way to stop prices rising further is to quietly lift supplies to buyers through its monthly sales process rather than via OPEC policy.

"When you have Venezuela saying \$100 is adequate and Iran saying demand is weak even as it skyrockets, I think if they (the Saudis) don't want a confrontation they will quietly supply more to the market," said Edward Morse, managing director at Credit Suisse in New York.

OPEC agreed its biggest ever supply curbs at the end of 2008 after a price collapse from \$147 to just over \$33 caused by a recessionary drop in fuel demand. It has not changed policy since.

Many OPEC ministers say supplies are

sufficient and that they will only open the taps to meet extra demand. "Once there is a shortage in the market, or once we feel there is a shortage in the market, we, of course, will increase production but it is not just a function of the price," Libya's head of delegation Shokri Ghanem said.

"If prices go high because of speculation, we can do nothing about it," said secretary general Abdullah al-Badri.

"When you go to buy oil and you cannot find it, that's when OPEC will interfere and solve it."

Inventories held among the industrialized nations of the OECD are high at 60 days of forward demand. But the International Energy Agency, adviser to consumer nations, said on Friday that world demand, bolstered by an early winter cold snap, is rising more quickly than expected.

Extra demand has flattened the oil futures price curve and reduced the discount for prompt crude, cutting the incentive for traders to store oil, likely meaning inventories will start dropping.

Eagles at JP Morgan said: "Really these (OPEC) comments underscore that OPEC wants lower inventories, and if it thinks the market will allow that to happen without higher prices it is mistaken."

China inflation at 28-month high

BEIJING: Chinese inflation soared past forecasts to a 28-month high in November and showed signs of spreading beyond food prices putting pressure on the government to ratchet up its monetary tightening.

China's central bank last week raised lenders' reserve requirements for the third time in a month to sop up some of the excess cash in the economy that is driving prices higher. With inflation on the march, analysts said that more resolute action was needed.

"At least one interest rate rise is needed for this year; otherwise, authorities will give the public quite a surprising message because if you see inflation but no rate hike, people will doubt the determination to fight inflation," said Shen Jianguang, economist with Mizuho Securities in Hong Kong. The data published on Saturday should give the Chinese government the confidence to intensify its tightening because all signs pointed to impressive growth momentum in the world's second largest-economy.

Industrial output rose 13.3% year-on-year in November rebounding from a mild dip in October and outpacing market expectations. Capital spending also topped forecasts rising 24.9% in the first 11 months of 2010 from the same period a year earlier. In an indication that China is slowly continuing its shift to a more consumption-powered economy, retail sales increased 18.7% in November from a year earlier.

The data on Saturday, which had been widely leaked in the Chinese market beforehand, followed hefty increases in exports and bank lending that were report-

ed on Friday. [ID:nTOE6B901S]

"The numbers show that the economy is relatively hot. Exports were strong beating expectations, and investment remained high," Liu Yuhui, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. "The strength of economic tightening so far has not been as strong as people thought."

For all the signs of strength, worries will centre on whether inflation is beginning to slip from Beijing's grasp.

"Current administrative measures to control inflation can depress prices for a while, but rebounds will take place once the measures are relaxed," said Lin Songli, an economist with Guosen Securities in Beijing. Several Chinese cities have implemented direct controls to limit food price increases while the central government has also vowed strong action to eliminate speculation in the country's commodity markets and punish anyone found to be manipulating food prices.

Food once again was the primary driver of inflation. The cost of food rose 11.7% in the year to November while

non-food prices were up just 1.9%. But within the non-food category, consumer goods and housing costs registered clear jumps. "My worry for inflation is that we are seeing a very clear trend of non-food prices increasing. This is consistent with very strong wage increases this year, global commodity prices increasing and very strong money and credit expansion," Shen said.

The National Development and Reform Commission, a powerful central planning agency, was more confident in its outlook.

In a statement after the data, it said that November's consumer inflation represented a peak and that the annual pace would fall below 5% this month. However, it cautioned that prices would remain elevated in the first quarter next year.

“Current administrative measures to control inflation can depress prices for a while, but rebounds will take place once the measures are relaxed.”



●Housewives select vegetables at a market in Beijing.

BOTTOM LINE**Pfizer recalls drug after deaths**

NEW YORK/BOSTON: Pfizer Inc is voluntarily recalling its drug to treat a life-threatening lung condition and will end studies of the pill after it was linked to potentially deadly liver toxicity.

The European Medicines Agency said the modest-selling drug, used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension, was withdrawn due to "new information on two cases of fatal liver injury". Pfizer spokesman Curtis Allen said the drug, Thelin, was being recalled in Europe, Canada and Australia after being linked to a new liver problem "that occurs rarely and unpredictably in patients". "The decision was based on a review of emerging safety information and post-marketing reporting," said Allen.

iPad with cameras next year

HONG KONG/TAIPEI: Component suppliers for Apple Inc's iPad are gearing up for a new round of production in the first quarter, sources have said, with one saying the product will be a revamp of the popular tablet computer including front- and back-mounted cameras.

Touchscreen chip designer Wintek Corp, battery maker Simplo Technology Co Ltd and AVY Precision, an unlisted maker of covers for electronic products, are among suppliers for the next batch of iPads, four people familiar with the situation said.

Two could only confirm they were ramping up for a new round of production in the first quarter for components previously supplied for the original iPad, while two said the ramp-up was for a new iPad.

Portugal PM says no need for aid

LISBON: Portugal's economic problems can be resolved without seeking help from the International Monetary Fund, Prime Minister Jose Socrates has been quoted as saying by the daily *Diario de Noticias*.

"We don't have any problem that requires that we turn to the International Monetary Fund," Socrates told the paper.

Socrates, whose country many economists see as the next likely euro zone candidate to need a bailout after Greece and Ireland, said, "Our problem is just a budget problem that has to be corrected as in other countries," Socrates said.

"Whoever doesn't understand that what we are seeing is a systemic question, regarding the euro, hasn't understood anything about this crisis," he added.

AUTO GIANT DELIVERS FIRST ELECTRIC CAR**Nissan turns over new Leaf**

●Nissan Motors Co CEO Toshiyuki Shiga (left) and guests wave beside the company's first electric car Leaf during its launch at their global headquarters in Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

By Braden Reddall
SAN FRANCISCO

Japan's Nissan Motor Co delivered the first mass-market all-electric car to a technology entrepreneur in California over the weekend as the company tries to get a jump in the nascent green vehicle race.

The first customer, Olivier Chalouhi, has been riding an electric bicycle to work, and he plugged his new car in for the cameras outside San Francisco City Hall. The charge point, one of 400 in the region, had a green official city sign near it that said,

"Green Vehicle Showcase: Cars that make a difference".

The Leaf is one of a handful of mass-market fully electric or extended range plug-in vehicles slated to reach consumers in the next year. The battery-powered Leaf, with an EPA-certified battery-only range of 120 km is due to hit showrooms this month in a limited rollout – along with Chevy Volts by General Motors Co. Ford Motor Co expects to deliver its first electric Focus compact cars late next year.

Carlos Taveras, the North American head of Nissan, said his company would focus on satisfying the first 20,000 Leaf customers before opening up for more orders next year.

"We are not in a rush," he told reporters, reasserting Nissan's plan to go straight to zero-emission cars as opposed to the Volt with its gasoline engine that can recharge the battery to give it more range.

Work at Nissan's Tennessee plant was under way to have production capacity for 100,000 battery packs by early 2013, Taveras said though he told Reuters that was not an indication of expected demand for the car. The Leaf and Volt are seen as the spearheads of the greening of automobiles. But gasoline and diesel-powered cars with better fuel economy are seen as having more immediate impact on lowering greenhouse gas mainly because of their greater numbers.

US Treasury debt sinks; stocks, dollar up

NEW YORK: A rise in U.S. consumer sentiment in December prompted investors to sell off benchmark U.S. debt over the weekend on expectations the economy will continue to grow, but U.S. stocks rose modestly on the news.

U.S. data showed consumer sentiment rose more than expected in early December to the highest level in six months, according to the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan survey while the government said the country's trade deficit shrank much more than expected in October.

The benchmark U.S. 10-year Treasury note fell 31/32 of a point in price driving the yield up to 3.327%. The yield is up 31.5 basis points for the week. Equity

markets scraped their way higher pushing the S&P 500 to its highest level since the week that Lehman Brothers collapsed in September 2008. The Nasdaq Composite closed at nearly a three-year high.

While significant levels were reached, the moves on the day were muted by a stronger greenback squeezing the operating margins for U.S. exporters. That fed into the recent inverse correlation between the currency and U.S. stocks.

European shares edged up to a fresh 26-month closing high. Peripheral European sovereign credit deteriorated on Friday as prices wax and wane while uncertainty remains over whether policymakers can put to rest the concerns the debt crisis is under control.

The euro fell 0.12% to \$1.3226. The U.S. Dollar Index gave up early gains to trade flat, up just 0.04% at 80.104. Against the yen, the greenback rose 0.29 percent to 83.92 yen. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index rose 7.40 points, or 0.60 %, to end at 1,240.40 – its highest close since mid-September 2008.

The Dow Jones industrial average gained 40.26 points, or 0.35%, to finish at 11,410.32. The Nasdaq Composite Index climbed 20.87 points, or 0.80%, to close at 2,637.54, its best finish since December 31, 2007.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei stock index fell 0.7% to close on Friday at 10,211.95 due to profit-taking. But the Nikkei was up 0.3% for the week.

Quit? Not me says Ricky

SYDNEY

Ricky Ponting may be just one test defeat away from becoming the first Australian captain in 120 years to lose three Ashes series but he is not entertaining any retirement thoughts.

Ponting, who turns 36 on December 19, has not been at the top of his form with the bat while his team trail England 1-0 in the five-match series with three tests remaining.

"My absolute focus is on all the things within my control, preparing the team and myself to perform at our very best in Perth, Melbourne and then Sydney over the next three tests," Ponting wrote in the *Australian* newspaper on Saturday.

"I have not stopped for one moment to consider retirement. The question of my future as captain is ultimately a decision for Cricket Australia and categorically the future of Australian cricket must come first.

"I have every confidence in my ability to score runs and be the experienced batsman and leader that my teammates can rely on.

"As captain, I am accountable for the performance of my team and I accept that our most recent results mean that I am being assessed more critically than at other times in my career as captain.

"The team is my priority, not my own ego or the status that comes with being the captain of the Australian cricket team."

Ponting conceded England had dominated the series so far.

"We've been ordinary, we've played poorly. I haven't played the way I would like to have played, especially in Adelaide, but I don't think I'm that far away. I've got to keep trusting the way I prepare and play and keep working hard. If anything I might have worked a bit too hard on my batting."



Strange brew from the selectors

Shock call-up Michael Beer is simply unqualified to play for Australia in the third Ashes test this week, according to former test spinner Stuart MacGill.

Despite having played just five first class matches, left-arm spinner Beer was included in the 12-strong squad for the Perth test as Australia overhauled their squad in the wake of an innings and 71-run defeat to England in Adelaide.

"I am gobsmacked, shocked, I honestly cannot believe it," MacGill told Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*. "The team will have to change again after the next test.

"Good on Michael Beer, good bloke and good play-

er, but look at this as a job interview and show me his qualifications to get this job.

"He doesn't have any. He is not qualified for the job they have given him. Sending him out there next week, what are they trying to do?"

MacGill's opportunities to play test cricket were severely limited by playing at the same time as Shane Warne but he did manage 208 wickets in 44 tests from 1998 to 2008.

The leg spinner said the selectors were reeling from one bad decision to another having replaced Nathan Hauritz, who has 63 wickets from 17 tests, with ineffective debutant Xavier Doherty for the first two tests.

"Xavier Doherty was out there, too, to be honest," MacGill said.

"They are clearly telling Nathan Hauritz, 'you are never playing test cricket again'. I don't understand that. Xavier Doherty should never have played the first two tests. Michael Beer shouldn't be playing this one."

The fact Beer has taken only 16 first class wickets at an average of just under 40 since he moved from Victoria to Western Australia indicated that chief selector Andrew Hilditch was out of touch, MacGill said.

The third test begins at the WACA on Thursday.

FORMULA ONE

Team orders gets the green light from FIA

LONDON: Formula One has lifted a ban on the so-called "team orders" which caused a huge controversy at the German Grand Prix this year when Ferrari used them to allow Fernando Alonso to win.

The decision, announced by the International Automobile Federation (FIA), will dismay some fans while others will feel such tactics have always been part of the sport and should be recognised.

The FIA did warn, however, that blatant action early in the season could still be punished.

"Teams will be reminded that any actions liable to bring the sport into disrepute are dealt with under Article 151c of the International Sporting Code and any other relevant provisions," the body said in a statement.

FIA also announced that Formula One will switch to "greener" 1.6 litre turbocharged engines from 2013 while in a major revamp of the technical and sporting rules drivers will also be allowed to use a moveable rear wing next season.

The widely anticipated new engine rules were the most far-reaching development in line with the FIA's determination to make the sport more environmentally friendly.

The current cars are powered by 2.4 litre V8 engines, themselves down from the fuel-guzzling 3.0 litre V10s and V12s of previous generations.



●Alonso – team orders victory

The FIA, whose World Motor Sport Council met in Monaco, said that the new specification engine would underline a "commitment to improving sustainability and addressing the needs of the automotive industry. "Following dialogue with the engine manufacturers and experts in this field, the power units will be four cylinders, 1.6 litre with high pressure gasoline injection up to 500 bar with a maximum of 12,000 rpm," it added.

The FIA said the new engines would deliver a 35% reduction in fuel consumption as well as featuring extensive energy management and energy recovery systems. Current engines are rev-limited to 18,000 rpm.

At the same time, they would maintain current levels of performance.

Each driver will be allowed five engines in 2013, but that allocation will be reduced to four from 2014. This year, with 19 races, they were allowed a maximum of eight with a penalty of 10 places on the starting grid for any additional units.

In other changes, bodywork regulations were tightened and stewards handed new penalties to apply to drivers. Gearboxes will have to last for five consecutive races, instead of four, or incur a penalty.

From 2012, team communications during the race will be made available to broadcasters.

Khan retains world crown

MAJORITY DECISION AFTER SLUGFEST

LAS VEGAS



Britain's Amir Khan withstood a furious challenge from Argentina's Marcos Maidana to retain his WBA light welterweight title in Las Vegas early yesterday.

Maidana landed a right hand early in the first round that appeared to hurt the champion. But Khan (24-1, 17 KOs), responded in dominant fashion, dropping the challenger to the canvas with a fierce body shot at the end of the round.

Maidana recovered, however, and began to stalk Khan and in the third round, he landed some strong right hands which he followed in the fourth with a series of uppercuts.

Composure

Maidana hurt Khan again with right hands in the sixth, but in the eighth and ninth rounds the champion appeared to be in control, circling his opponent, unleashing fast combinations and then moving out of harm's way.

Maidana (29-2, 27 KOs) landed a huge right hand that hurt Khan badly in the 10th round, and a series of punches had Khan in trouble but he stayed on his feet and survived the round.

The champion then regained his composure in the final two rounds to win a unanimous decision with two of the three judges scoring the fight 114-111 while the third scored it 113-112.

"He's a great fighter and he hits hard, but my chin was tested," Khan said. "I proved today I have a chin. You can tell by his record he's a hard puncher, and I took everything he gave me."

Maidana was disappointed with the result. "I thought I won. I thought I did enough in the final rounds to win the fight."

Tevez wants out



●Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini (left) pushes away Carlos Tevez after substituting him during the English Premier League soccer match against Bolton Wanderers on December 4.

LONDON: Manchester City captain Carlos Tevez has shocked the club by handing in a transfer request, according to reports in Britain's Sunday newspapers.

The Argentine, who joined City after a spell at Manchester United, is reported to have handed in the request this week. Manchester City declined to comment when approached by Reuters.

Tevez, who missed City's 3-1 Premier League victory on Saturday at former club West Ham United through suspension, has enjoyed some of the best form of his career at City, scoring 33 goals in 50 league appearances.

However the 26-year-old has often spoken of his desire to return to South America and in August he

hinted that he could even consider retiring from the game, such as his dismay at Argentina's defeat by Germany in the World Cup quarter-finals.

Tevez, who cost City around 26 million pounds, would attract interest from across Europe's biggest clubs in the approaching transfer window and City would have little trouble recouping their outlay should he decide to leave.

The Argentina striker made his name with Brazil club Corinthians before joining West Ham United along with Javier Mascherano – a controversial deal that later cost West Ham a 5.5 million pounds fine because his economic rights were part-owned by businessman Kia Joorabchian's MSI company.

SOCCER ROUNDUP

Man City lead Xmas charge

DREAM START FOR NEWCASTLE'S PARDEW

By Martyn Herman
LONDON

Manchester City fired the opening shots at the start of a pivotal period in the Premier League title race with a 3-1 victory at bottom club West Ham United on Saturday despite the absence of suspended talisman Carlos Tevez.

Midfield powerhouse Yaya Toure showed City are a potent team even without the dynamic Argentine, scoring the opener and forcing an own goal from 'keeper Robert Green before substitute Adam Johnson completed a routine victory.

City, who have an easier-looking fixture list over the coming weeks than their main rivals, joined leaders Arsenal on 32 points and are one ahead of Manchester United.

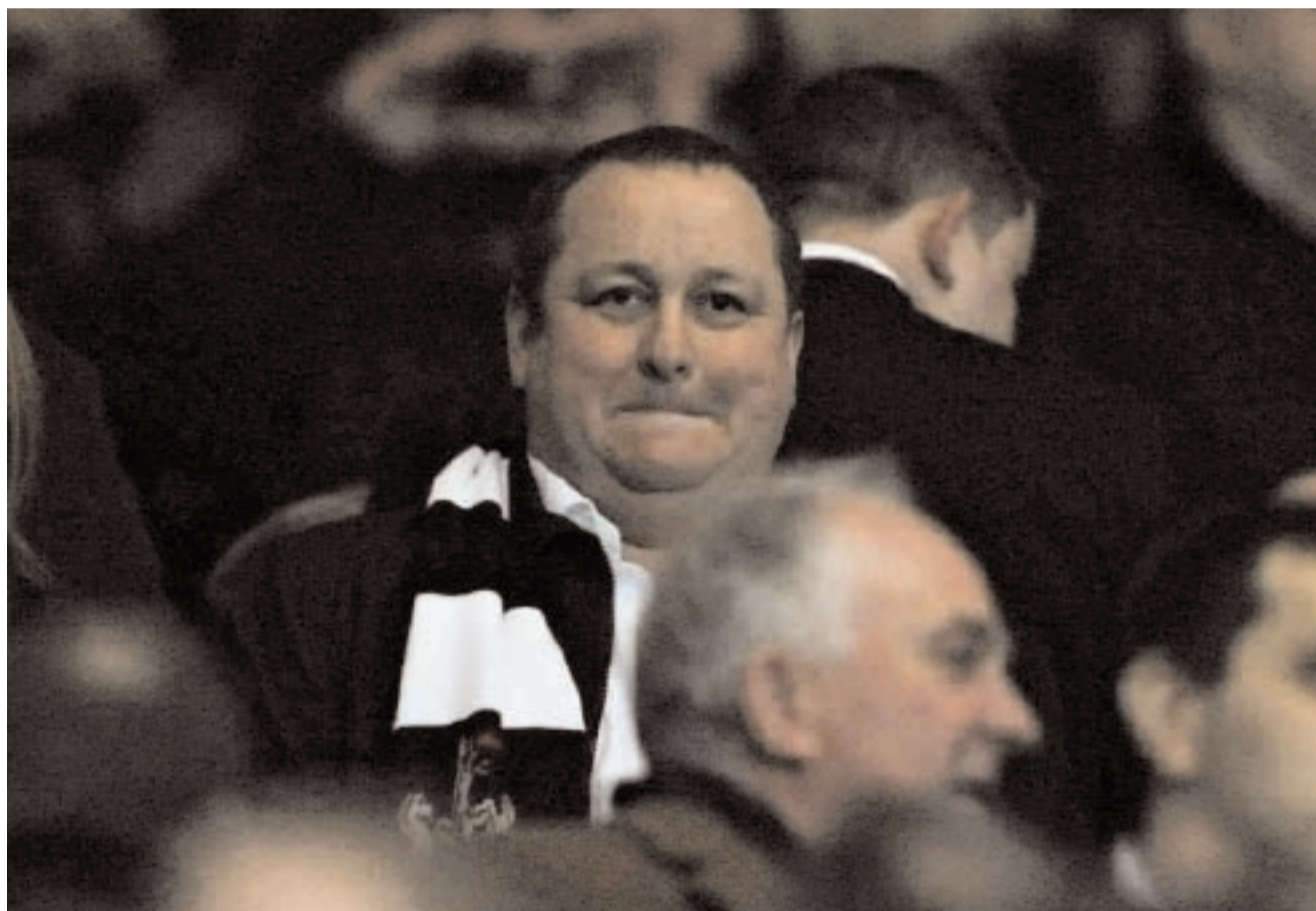
United, though, have played 15 games while Arsenal have featured in 16 and City 17.

Alan Pardew enjoyed a dream start as manager of Newcastle United with a 3-1 home win over Liverpool which went some way to pacifying fans angry at this week's sacking of Chris Hughton.

Late goals by Joey Barton and Andy Carroll, a venomous left-footer from 25 metres, sealed victory for Newcastle after Kevin Nolan's opener was cancelled out by Dirk Kuyt.

Aston Villa beat West Bromwich Albion 2-1, Blackpool continued their impressive return to the top flight with a 1-0 win at Stoke City and there were no goals in the games between Fulham and Sunderland and Everton and Wigan Athletic.

With the title contenders playing each other over the next two weeks, City's victory at West Ham left the club ideally



●Reasons to be cheerful: Newcastle United owner Mike Ashley enjoys their Premier League match against Liverpool.

positioned with almost half the season gone.

Manager Roberto Mancini's expensively assembled side have over relied on Tevez, scorer of nearly half their league goals this season, but at Upton Park they were in cruise control from the moment Toure thumped a shot past Green after 30 minutes.

The only blip for City was tights-wear-

ing Mario Balotelli's reaction to being substituted in the second half. The volatile Italian, who missed an early chance, stormed straight down the tunnel without acknowledging the coaching staff.

After his exit Toure made sure the visitors would go home with all the points. The former Barcelona player galloped past a static West Ham defence and his

shot rebounded off the post and into the net via the back of Green in the 73rd minute.

Johnson then added a third before James Tomkins scored a consolation for West Ham who are in danger of being bottom of the table at Christmas – a position that usually proves fatal for a club's hopes of staying in the top flight.

No kidding, Mancini's the man

Having cut his coaching teeth across town at Old Trafford under one of Britain's best managers, Brian Kidd is well qualified to judge Roberto Mancini's title-winning credentials at Manchester City.

After a 3-1 victory at West Ham United, Mancini's right-hand man said the Italian shared many similarities with Manchester United's Alex Ferguson.

"I see the same desire, ambition and passion in Roberto that I did when I worked alongside Alex Ferguson," said Kidd who won a host of trophies as number two to the Scot from 1991-98.

"I am privileged to work alongside him on the training ground and the hard work he puts in tactically and technically is immense. It's good to see it coming to fruition for him," Kidd told the BBC.

Mancini has been in charge at Eastlands for almost a year, since replacing Mark Hughes, and after finishing fifth and missing out on qualifying for the Champions League, Kidd says the former Inter Milan coach will not stop until he has achieved success.

Seven matches undefeated in the league has put them right in the thick of the title race as the halfway point looms and the boos of a few weeks ago when they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Birmingham City have vanished.



"I see all the vital ingredients for success in Roberto. He has all the traits of a winner," Kidd said. "He is a stickler for detail with a wonderful work ethic who will not accept second best."

"It hurts him when he sees mistakes and he is a fantastic coach. Manchester City should be pleased they have him as the manager."

●LEFT – Man City's Brian Kidd.

SPAIN

Villarreal lose late goal against ten

MADRID: Villarreal squandered the chance to move within two points of second-placed Real Madrid when they leaked a late goal to lose 1-0 at Getafe in La Liga on Saturday despite having an extra man for more than half the match.

Without suspended Italy striker Giuseppe Rossi, Villarreal lacked their usual bite in attack and substitute Juan Albin snatched the winner for Getafe in the 89th minute after their defender, Daniel Diaz, had been sent off just before halftime.

Uruguayan midfielder Albin, whose low shot squirmed just inside the post, was also dismissed as he celebrated the goal by removing his shirt and was shown a second yellow card.

Atletico Madrid ended a run of three defeats in all competitions when a Sergio Agüero double gave them a 2-0 win at home to Deportivo Coruna in the late kickoff.

Depor goalkeeper Daniel Aranzubia saved Diego Forlan's fifth-minute penalty before Agüero, whom local media reported on Saturday had agreed a contract extension, struck twice before half-time to lift Atletico to sixth spot.

Sevilla striker Frederic Kanoute had a first-half penalty saved as the Andalusians' poor run continued when they lost 3-1 at home to lowly Almeria in the regional derby.

The Mali international pulled a goal back to make it 2-1 in the 83rd before Almeria's Pablo Piatti scored his second of the night to condemn Sevilla to a fourth straight defeat, prompting disgruntled whistling at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium.

Napoli in second thanks to Hamsik

MILAN: Marek Hamsik's superb first-half header gave Napoli a 1-0 win at Genoa on Saturday which sent Walter Mazzarri's side up to joint second in Serie A.

The Slovakia midfielder converted Walter Gargano's freekick after 25 minutes to put his team level on points with Lazio.

Fifth-placed Palermo, who lost 1-0 to Napoli on Monday after a goal deep in stoppage time, picked themselves up with a 3-1 comeback home win over Parma as coach Delio Rossi's bold decision to haul off playmaker Javier Pastore paid dividends.

Udinese's Pablo Armero and Antonio Di Natale struck in the second half as their side came from behind to earn a 2-1 home win over Fiorentina.

The visitors had gone ahead after 31 minutes when Mario Santana embarrassed goalkeeper Samir Handanovic from distance.

This weekend's matches were due to be hit by a players' strike after a row over a collective contract with the league but a deal was struck on Thursday to avert industrial action.

Injury-time winner gives Lille boost

PARIS: Substitute Tulio de Melo struck deep into injury time to earn Ligue 1 leaders Lille a last-gasp 1-0 win at bottom club Arles-Avignon on Saturday.

De Melo scored three minutes into added time as Lille, on 31 points from 17 games, stayed one point ahead of Paris St Germain who triumphed 2-1 at Valenciennes thanks to a Nene double.

Elsewhere, Lorient thrashed struggling RC Lens 3-0 and Nancy eased away from the relegation zone by beating Sochaux 1-0.

Champions Olympique Marseille, third on 27 points, lost ground when they drew 1-1 at Auxerre after playing 52 minutes with 10 men following the dismissal of Stephane Mbia.

Dortmund stretch lead

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund notched their seventh straight league win on Saturday, overcoming Werder Bremen 2-0 to extend their lead at the top to 11 points with their 14th win in 16 Bundesliga games.

The win lifted Dortmund, who have only conceded nine goals so far, to 43 points and another victory in their last match before the winter break later this week would see them break the Bundesliga points record at the halfway mark.

Bayern Munich hold the record with 44 points from the 2005/6 season.

Bayer Leverkusen crushed hosts Hamburg SV 4-2 to move into second place while Bayern Munich recovered their domestic form with a 3-0 victory over St Pauli to move up to fifth.

PREMIER LEAGUE PREVIEW

Ferdinand back for title fight

MANCHESTER, England

Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand has shaken off a tight hamstring and will be fit for tonight's top-of-the-table meeting with Arsenal, says manager Alex Ferguson.

United will also be boosted by the return of left back Patrice Evra and midfielder Paul Scholes for the visit of Premier League leaders Arsenal.

"We're quite confident that everyone will be fit and it's good to have everyone available for such a massive game," Ferguson was quoted as saying on the club website (www.manutd.com).

Ferdinand left the field just after halftime in Tuesday's 1-1 draw with Valencia in the Champions League with the hamstring problem, while Evra and Scholes did not feature at all in that match.

United are second in the table with 31 points from 15 games, a point behind Arsenal who have played a game more.

Meanwhile, the returning Evra has taunted Arsenal before the game by saying the Premier League leaders may be nice to watch but they are not proper title contenders.

Frenchman Evra said champions Chelsea were his club's biggest title rivals despite their recent shaky form.

"For me, (Arsenal) is a football training centre. I watch their match, I enjoy it, but are you going to win a title afterwards?" Evra said on French television channel Canal Plus. "Our real enemy is Chelsea. They can win the title. We are more attentive to Chelsea's results than Arsenal's."

Since winning the FA Cup in 2005, Arsene

Wenger's men have failed to win another trophy although they have played an attractive brand of football.

"I hear them being compared to Barcelona. Barca play beautiful football but they win," said Evra.

"In 20 years, people are not going to remember Arsenal's football. People remember trophies. We can lose against them on the 13th (Monday) but at the end of the day, there is nothing, no trophy, nothing.

"Arsenal is a big club that has not won anything in five years: that is a crisis."

Wenger refused to get drawn into a war of words, saying his policy was always to respect opponents.

"We are guided by the way we want to play football and not by the statements of anybody who plays against us," the Frenchman told a news conference.

"Personally, I believe you always respect your opponent and that is what we try to do. We don't want to go into any unneeded talking before the game and we want to focus on the way we want to perform and play and ignore any provocation before a game."

It is not the first time Evra has mocked the Londoners. In 2009, the Frenchman described a Champions League tie as "11 men against 11 children" when United beat Arsenal 3-1 at the Emirates stadium and knocked them out of Europe.

Not everyone at United agrees with Evra, though, with Portugal winger Nani saying Arsenal pose a bigger threat than Chelsea.

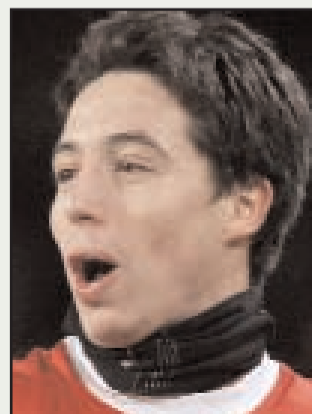
"Chelsea have lost a few games and drawn some and their confidence looks a bit low," British media quoted Nani as saying. "But Arsenal have been winning and being top of the league gives you great confidence."

'Real men don't wear things like that'

An already strange Premier League season ploughed new depths of the bizarre when Manchester United and Arsenal geared up for their top-of-the-table match by swapping thoughts on fashion.

Unpredictable results have made this one of the tightest and unusual title contests in years, while the unseasonably cold weather has brought with it the phenomenon of the snood – a cosy neckwarmer favoured by several players this season.

The woolly accessory has divided opinion as much as any controversial penalty might and when Arsenal visit



● Arsenal's Samir Nasri wearing the 'snood'.

Old Trafford, only one team's players will consider donning

the garment.

United boss Alex Ferguson has banned his players from wearing them, according to local media, saying: "Real men don't wear things like that", while Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger reckons the snoods help to prevent injury.

"I get advice from the medical team," Wenger said on the club website

(www.arsenal.com). "We had some players with neck problems before the Aston Villa game, (Samir) Nasri and (Marouane) Chamakh. That's why we decided to let them wear them because they had some medical issues."

Chelsea leak point

DROGBA MISSES PENALTY, SPURS HOLD CHAMPIONS

LONDON: Chelsea's poor run continued as Didier Drogba missed a stoppage-time penalty in a 1-1 Premier League draw at London rivals Tottenham Hotspur last night.

Roman Pavlyuchenko put Spurs ahead after 15 minutes but Drogba, dropped to the bench after a series of flat displays, levelled with a shot that Heurelho Gomes

should have saved.

Chelsea had plenty of possession and Drogba had the chance to seal victory when Ramires was felled by Gomes but the Brazilian 'keeper saved the striker's weak spot kick. The ailing champions have now taken only six points from the last 21.

Remarkably, with 31 points, they are still only one

behind Arsenal and Manchester City and level with Manchester United, who host Arsenal tonight in one of two games in hand they have on Chelsea. Spurs are fifth on 27.

The scores in the other matches yesterday: Wolverhampton Wanderers 1 Birmingham City 0; Bolton Wanderers 2 Blackburn Rovers 1.

Tevez told: You're not going

MANCHESTER: Manchester City have been left with an unsettled captain after turning down Carlos Tevez's transfer request on Sunday and a player whose track record suggests the issue will not go away quietly.

The Argentine is only 18 months into a five-year deal and for now he will stay at City, who are riding high in the top slots of the Premier League thanks in no small part to Tevez's excellent form this season.

But for all the talent and hard work that the striker displays on the pitch, there has been a large amount of controversy that he also seems to bring with him.

After City added to it with a "Welcome to Manchester" billboard following his defection from the red side of the city to the blue when he moved from United in 2009, it was only to be expected that more might follow.

The debate over what Tevez's motives are for wanting to leave will rage on and if he fails to put it behind him, the club may have no choice but to sell if his heart is not in it.

Tevez, 26, has spoken of his homesickness for his family who are living in South America, while newspaper reports of a rift with manager Roberto Mancini have been rife. Fans have also wondered whether the move could be a ploy to get a better deal (read Wayne Rooney!).

City's statement on the matter said they had continued to show sensitivity to

Tevez's personal circumstances and rather than criticise the player, pointed the finger at his advisor.

"The club remains disappointed by this situation and particularly with the actions of Carlos' representative," the statement said.

Tevez is represented by Kia Joorabchian, a familiar name in the previous sagas that have followed the player around three English clubs over the last four years.

West Ham United were fined for breaking rules on third-party agreements regarding player transfers when signing him from Brazilian club Corinthians in 2006 when he was part-owned by Joorabchian's MSI company.

There followed a protracted legal battle with Sheffield United who sued West Ham for the cost of their relegation saying the Londoners should have faced the drop instead because they should have been given a points deduction as well as the fine.

After two years, the clubs settled out of court. In the meantime, Tevez had joined Manchester United in another controversial deal involving more player ownership issues. He then upset United fans by moving down the road to City.

That move provided Tevez with a platform he never had at United to be the



●About that transfer boss? There's more soccer news on Pages 21, 22 and 23.

team's main goalscorer and it looked like the flow of controversy around him might have been stemmed.

His 33 goals in 50 league appearances since joining from United in 2009 have made him a firm favourite with the Eastlands crowd but Internet fan forums were awash with reminders on Sunday that no player was bigger than the club.

Only last week Tevez had spoken of his desire to help City win their first English league title since 1968.

"I know it is hard for people to go to matches week in, week out. It can be expensive and it is not the main priority in life, but they make it their main priority," he said. "That motivates me and we all want to do the same thing – to make history and win trophies at City."

Some fans have questioned whether Tevez is attempting to get himself a better pay package – like United striker Wayne

Rooney did with a similar statement of desire to leave the club two months ago which ended with him signing a new five-year deal.

That seems unlikely though since the club pointed out that Tevez was already their highest paid player, which came as something of a surprise since midfielder Yaya Toure had widely been reported to hold that honour on 200,000 pounds (\$316,000) a week.

Both Tevez and Mancini have denied falling out but the tension between them was visible last week when Tevez reacted angrily to being substituted against Bolton Wanderers. Mancini also said this week that City could win matches without Tevez.

But whether they could win the title without him is something fans may not want to test.