

**Date and Time:** Monday 9 September 2024 18:37:00 CEST

**Job Number:** 233042441

**Documents (18)**

1. [*United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "CityGro" to Stockbridge Technology Centre for Multiple Goods and Services*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BTJ-P6G1-F12F-F1FX-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None-

**Search Terms:** feed and veterinary or feed and medicines or feed and manufacture or feed and animal or veterinary and medicines or veterinary and manufacture or veterinary and animal or medicines and manufacture or medicines and animal or manufacture and animal

**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

**Narrowed by:**

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Timeline: 09 okt 2013 tot 09 okt 2014; Locatie: International; Plaats van publicatie: Europe; Taal: English |

2. [*United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "Mail Marketplace" to DMG Media for Various Goods and Services*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5D6K-BXJ1-JDKC-R3M8-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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3. [*The 100 best things about Yorkshire - Le Countdown*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BW9-8391-F0JC-M1MP-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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4. [*United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "SMALLFIX Small jobs are important too!" to Martin Kellner for Various Services*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5CCJ-H3P1-JDKC-R0GT-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Timeline: 09 okt 2013 tot 09 okt 2014; Locatie: International; Plaats van publicatie: Europe; Taal: English |

5. [*AECI LTD - Reviewed condensed consolidated financial results*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BKY-FRC1-DXKS-J0RT-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Timeline: 09 okt 2013 tot 09 okt 2014; Locatie: International; Plaats van publicatie: Europe; Taal: English |

6. [*BLEDISLOE MEMORIAL LECTURE 2013 ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:59VN-CC01-JDKC-R2FK-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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7. [*Effect of knife sanitation on the surface microbial load of beef carcasses during the removal of the hide*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5D4V-K7K1-DYG1-P3W5-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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8. [*Sport scores for Team GB exporters Britain 's private companies with the fastest-growing overseas sales show what can be done when you deliver the goods, says Richard Tyler*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5CN6-5YN1-JBVM-Y4Y6-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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9. [*Journal: The long read: The battle for the soul of British milk: The supermarket price wars that let you buy a four-pint carton of milk for one pound are driving farmers out of business. Are American -style mega-dairies the only way for them to survive? Jon Henley reports from the front lines*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5D8H-B061-JC8W-62H4-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None-

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10. [*Big changes for 2014*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BJ8-1GM1-JD39-X3N4-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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11. [*North Korean agency publishes full text of rights report*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5D4D-Y061-JC8S-C4FS-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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12. [*Deloitte: Corporate world's cream of the crop*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BPB-YT81-JCW9-23Y1-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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13. [*Saint or sinner?*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:59K7-2531-JCF1-207T-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None-

**Search Terms:** feed and veterinary or feed and medicines or feed and manufacture or feed and animal or veterinary and medicines or veterinary and manufacture or veterinary and animal or medicines and manufacture or medicines and animal or manufacture and animal

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14. [*No Headline In Original*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5CR5-M7R1-DYY4-3029-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None-

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15. [*No Headline In Original*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5B0B-DP11-DYX2-R2M4-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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16. [*Red alert! Met Office warns of urgent risk to life as flood-hit Britain is battered by 100mph storm closing major rail line on Wild Wednesday*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BH3-1RM1-DXDT-60NX-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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17. [*Apple fades in race to conquer TV*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BYN-P0H1-JCM7-G1MS-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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18. [*this week's people moves*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5BNG-MP31-DYKD-J4S3-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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# [***United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "CityGro" to Stockbridge Technology Centre for Multiple Goods and Services***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5BTJ-P6G1-F12F-F1FX-00000-00&context=1516831)

UK Government News

March 24, 2014 Monday 5:45 PM EST

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**Length:** 3589 words

**Dateline:** South Wales, United Kingdom

**Body**

South Wales, United Kingdom, March 24 -- Stockbridge Technology Centre Ltd., Selby, has filed the trademark "CityGro" on Feb. 13 for multiple goods and services.

The trademark application (journal number: 2014/012) was published on March 21. The description of the mark registered is: "Photovoltaic solar modules;Photovoltaic inverters;Photovoltaic cells. ***Agricultural*** irrigation units;Air conditioned rooms [other than structures or buildings];Air conditioners;Air conditioning;Air conditioning apparatus;Air conditioning apparatus for commercial use;Air conditioning apparatus for industrial use;Air conditioning installations;Air conditioning installations for ***agricultural*** use;Air conditioning installations for commercial use;Air filter installations;Air filtering apparatus;Air filtering installations;Air filters;Air filters for air conditioning units;Air filters for use as dust arrestants in industrial processes;Air filters for use as dust extractors in industrial processes;Air filtration apparatus;Air filtration installations;Air heating apparatus;Air heating installations;Air humidifiers;Air humidifiers [water containers for central heating radiators];Air humidifying apparatus;Air humidifying installations;Air inductor apparatus [air conditioning];Air inductor apparatus [ventilation];Air or water (Ionization apparatus for the treatment of -);Air purgers for use with water distribution installations;Air purgers for use with water supply installations;Air purification apparatus;Air purification installations;Air purification machines;Air purifiers;Air purifying apparatus;Air purifying apparatus and machines;Air purifying machines;Air recirculating apparatus;Air recirculating installations;Air reheaters;Air separation apparatus;Air sterilisers;Air sterilising apparatus;Air sterilizers;Air-purifying apparatus;Air-purifying machines;Airstream generating apparatus;Apparatus for clarifying air;Apparatus for cleaning air;Apparatus for controlling water supply;Apparatus for lighting;Apparatus for producing steam;Apparatus for purifying air;Apparatus for purifying water;Apparatus for ventilating;Appliances for heating;Automatic watering installations;Automatic watering installations for plants;Automatic watering installations for use in ***agriculture***;Automatic watering installations for use in gardening;Cold cabinets;Cold rooms;Cold storage rooms;Combined lighting and ultraviolet apparatus;Computer controlled lighting apparatus;Computer controlled lighting instruments;Control devices [thermostatic valves] for heating installations;Control units [thermostatic valves] for heating installations;Cooling appliances and installations;Cooling installations for fluids;Cooling installations for liquids;Cooling installations for water;Drip irrigation emitters [irrigation fittings];Electric apparatus for lighting;Electric heating apparatus;Electric heating installations;Electric indoor lighting apparatus;Electric indoor lighting installations;Electric lamp bulbs;Electric lamps;Electric light bulbs;Electric light fittings;Electric lighting;Electric lighting apparatus;Electric lighting installations;Electric lights;Electrical lamps;Electrical lamps for indoor lighting;Electrical light bulbs;Electrical lighting fixtures;Electrically powered air blowers for air-conditioning purposes;Electrically powered air blowers for ventilation purposes;Fans for air conditioning apparatus;Fans for ventilating;Filters for lighting apparatus;Filters for lighting appliances;Filters for use with lamps;Filters for use with lighting apparatus;Full spectrum light sources;Heating apparatus and installations;Heating installations for industrial use;LED landscape lights;LED light bulbs;LED light machines;LED luminaires;LED underwater lights;Light bulbs, electric;Light diffusers;Light discharge tubes;Light installations;Light sources of electro luminescence;Light sources [other than for photographic or ***medical*** use];Lightbulbs;Light-emitting diodes [LED] lighting apparatus;Lighting;Lighting apparatus;Lighting apparatus and installations;Lighting fittings;Lighting fixtures;Lighting fixtures for commercial use;Lighting installations;Lighting panels;Lighting tracks [lighting apparatus];Lighting transformers;Lighting tubes;Lighting units;Radiators [for industrial air-conditioning purposes];Sprinklers [automatic installations] for watering flowers and plants;Sunlight collecting apparatus for heating purposes;Water filtering apparatus for industrial use;Water filtering installations;Water filtering units;Water filters for industrial purposes;Water filters [installations] for ***agricultural*** purposes;Water filters [machines] for ***agricultural*** purposes;Water filtration installations;Watering apparatus [automatic] for garden use;Watering installations, automatic;Watering machines for ***agricultural*** purposes.

Bulbs for ***agricultural*** purposes;Bulbs for horticultural purposes;Bulbs (plant-) for ***agricultural*** use;Bulbs (plant-) for horticultural use;Fresh plants;Horticultural produce;***Agricultural*** grains for planting;***Agricultural*** produce (unprocessed-);***Agricultural*** seeds;Algae for human or ***animal*** consumption;Aloe vera plants;***Animal*** ***feed***;Apple tree seeds;Apple trees;Asparagus (fresh-);Asparagus plant material (fresh-);Asparagus (unprocessed-);Bamboo shoots;Barley ;Barley (unprocessed-);Beans, fresh;Beans (Locust -);Beet;Berries, fresh fruits;Berries (raw-);Berries (unprocessed-);Biodegradable mulching plates made of wood fibres;Bulbs;Bulbs (flower-);Bulbs for ***agricultural*** purposes;Bulbs for horticultural purposes;Bulbs (plant-);Bulbs (plant-) for ***agricultural*** use;Bulbs (plant-) for horticultural use;Bushes;Bushes [shrubs];Capsicums;Carrots (fresh-);Cereal grains (unprocessed-);Cereal seeds, unprocessed;Cereals (unprocessed-);Chicory roots;Chicory [salad];Chillies;Chillies (fresh-);Chillies (unprocessed-);Climbing plants;Cocoa beans, raw;Cocoa beans (unprocessed-);Coconut fibre mulches;Courgettes (fresh-);Cucumbers, fresh;Culinary herbs (fresh-);Cut flowers;Cuttings (plant-);Edible seeds [unprocessed;Eggplants;Ferns;Fir trees for grafting purposes;Fir trees for propagation purposes;Flax [linseed] plant seeds;Flax [linseed] plants;Flower bulbs;Flower seeds;Flowering plants;Flowers;Flowers [natural];Flowers, natural;Foliage plants;Fresh artichokes;Fresh asparagus;Fresh beans;Fresh beets;Fresh berries;Fresh blueberries;Fresh cabbage;Fresh chilies;Fresh citrus fruits;Fresh corn;Fresh culinary herbs;Fresh dates;Fresh flowers;Fresh fruit;Fresh fruits;Fresh fruits and vegetables;Fresh funghi;Fresh garden herbs;Fresh garlic;Fresh ginger;Fresh herbs;Fresh legumes;Fresh lemons;Fresh lentils;Fresh mandarins;Fresh mushrooms;Fresh nuts;Fresh olives;Fresh onions;Fresh oranges;Fresh peaches;Fresh peas;Fresh peppers;Fresh plants;Fresh potatoes;Fresh pulses;Fresh quince;Fresh seaweed;Fresh soya beans;Fresh tomatoes;Fresh truffles;Fresh vegetables;Fresh wheat;Fresh zucchini;Fruit bushes;Fruit shrubs;Fruit trees;Garden herbs, fresh;Garden salads;Garlic [fresh];Grape vine trees;Grapefruits;Grapes, fresh;Grass;Grass seed;Grass seeds;Herbs (fresh-);Herbs, fresh (garden-);Herbs, fresh (Garden -);Hops;Horticultural mulches;Horticultural mulches made from cocoa shell waste;Horticultural produce;House plants;Hybrid wheat seeds;Juniper berries;Kumquats;Lawn/turf;Leeks, fresh;Legumes;Leguminous plants;Lemons, fresh;Lentils, fresh;Lettuce, fresh;Live bushes;Live coral;Live flower arrangements;Live flower wreaths;Live flowering plants;Live flowers;Live plants;Live plants and flowers;Live plants used as aquarium landscapes;Live plants with symbiotic microorganisms;Live roses;Live topiaries;Live trees;Living flowers;Living fruit plants;Living natural flowers;Living plants;Maize;Melons;Mushroom spawn for propagation;Mushrooms, fresh;Natural edible plants [unprocessed];Natural flowers;Natural plants;Natural plants and flowers;Natural plants [live];Natural seeds;Natural turf;Nettles;Non-artificial turf;Nursery plants;Nuts being fresh;Nuts [fruits];Oats;Olives, fresh;Onions;Onions, fresh vegetables;Oranges;Oranges [fresh];Peanuts, fresh;Pearl barley [in the husk];Pears, fresh;Peas, fresh;Pennyroyal [plants];Peppers [plants];Pineapples [fresh];Plant seeds;Plants;Plants for aquaria [live];Plants for ponds [live];Plants (live-);Potatoes, fresh;Potted dwarfed trees (bonsai);Potted fresh herbs;Potted plants;Pre-cut vegetable salad;Propagation material [seeds];Pyrethrum [plants];Raw apples;Raw apricots;Raw artichokes;Raw asparagus;Raw avocados;Raw bark;Raw barks;Raw beans;Raw beets;Raw blueberries;Raw cabbage;Raw cereals [unprocessed];Raw cocoa beans;Raw coconuts;Raw corn;Raw dates;Raw fruits;Raw garlic;Raw ginger;Raw grain;Raw herbs;Raw horseradish root;Raw lemons;Raw mushrooms;Raw nut kernels;Raw nuts;Raw oats;Raw olives;Raw onions;Raw oranges;Raw peaches;Raw peppers;Raw potatoes;Raw quince;Raw tomatoes;Raw vegetables;Raw wheat;Raw zucchini;Reinforced turf;Rhizomes;Rhubarb;Rice, unprocessed;Root vegetables [fresh];Roots for food;Rose bushes;Roses;Roses [plants];Rye;Rye seed;Salad crops;Salad vegetables [fresh];Saplings;Seed (mats containing-) for laying lawns;Seed potatoes;Seedlings;Seeds;Seeds coated with a fertilizer;Seeds coated with an anti-parasitic preparation;Seeds for ***agricultural*** purposes;Seeds for flowers;Seeds for fruit;Seeds for horticultural purposes;Seeds for horticultural use;Seeds for planting;Seeds for sowing;Seeds in pellet form;Seeds (plant-);Seeds (Plant -);Seeds pre-sown in a propagation media for grassing between plants;Seeds pre-sown in a propagation media for grassing between trees;Seeds pre-sown in a propagation media for grassing drainage channels;Seeds pre-sown in fibrous propagation media for grassing banks;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing banks;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing fields;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing golf courses;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing lawns;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing paths;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing sports fields;Seeds pre-sown in matted fibrous propagation media for grassing tracks;Shrubs;Shrubs (live-);Sod;Sowing seeds;Spinach, fresh;Spinach [fresh];Spores and spawn [for ***agricultural*** purposes];Squashes;Squashes [plants, fresh];Strawberries [fresh];Sunflower seeds;Sweetcorn [fresh];Tomatoes;Tomatoes [fresh];Trees;Truffles, fresh;Tubers for plant propagation;Turf [natural];Turf, natural;Unprocessed algae for human consumption;Unprocessed apples;Unprocessed apricots;Unprocessed artichokes;Unprocessed asparagus;Unprocessed avocados;Unprocessed beans;Unprocessed beets;Unprocessed blueberries;Unprocessed cabbage;Unprocessed cereal seeds;Unprocessed cereals;Unprocessed coconuts;Unprocessed corn;Unprocessed dates;Unprocessed fruits;Unprocessed garlic;Unprocessed ginger;Unprocessed grain;Unprocessed grains for eating;Unprocessed herbs;Unprocessed lemons;Unprocessed mushrooms;Unprocessed nuts;Unprocessed oats;Unprocessed olives;Unprocessed onions;Unprocessed oranges;Unprocessed peaches;Unprocessed peppers;Unprocessed potatoes;Unprocessed quince;Unprocessed rice;Unprocessed seeds for ***agricultural*** use;Unprocessed tomatoes;Unprocessed vegetables;Unprocessed wheat;Unprocessed zucchini;Vegetable seeds;Vegetables, fresh;Vine plants;Watermelon, fresh;Watermelons;Weeds for human or ***animal*** consumption;Wildlife seed mixtures. Advisory services relating to building; Advisory services relating to building construction; Advisory services relating to building refurbishment; Advisory services relating to construction; Advisory services relating to the alteration of buildings; Air conditioning apparatus installation and repair; Air-conditioning system installation and repair; Assembling [installation] of building framework; Assembling [installation] of machine plant; Building consultancy services; Building of commercial properties; Building of factories; Building of industrial properties; Computer hardware (installation, maintenance and repair of);Computer hardware (Installation, maintenance and repair of -);Computer installation and maintenance services; Computer installation and repair; Computer installation services; Computer maintenance services; Computer repair services; Construction advisory services; Construction consultancy; Construction consultation; Construction engineering; Construction engineering consultancy services; Construction information; Construction management services; Construction management [supervision];Construction of steel structures for buildings; Construction project management services; Construction supervision; Construction supervision of buildings; Consultancy services relating to installation of computers; Consultancy services relating to the construction of buildings; Consultancy services relating to the repair of buildings; Custom building construction; Custom construction of buildings; Custom construction of factories; Erecting ***manufacturing*** plants; Erection of pre-fabricated buildings; Heating equipment installation; Heating equipment installation and repair; Heating equipment repair; Installation of fully automated multi tiered growing systems with LED lights, installation and maintenance of photovoltaic installations; installation lighting systems; Lighting consultancy [installation];Machinery installation; Machinery installation, maintenance and repair; Machinery installation services; Machinery maintenance and repair; Machinery maintenance services; Maintenance of commercial electrical systems; Maintenance services for industrial plants; Maintenance services relating to computer hardware; On site project management relating to the construction of buildings; Repair, maintenance and installation services of fully automated multi tiered growing systems with LED lights; Repair or maintenance of ***agricultural*** machines and implements; Repair or maintenance of electric lighting apparatus; Replacement of lights; Supervision of building repair; Supervision of building work; Supervision of construction; Supervision of the engineering of buildings; Supervision of the engineering of structures; Installation and maintenance of photovoltaic installations. Arranging and conducting of educational seminars;Arranging and conducting of seminars;Computer assisted education services;Computer assisted training services;Computer based educational services;Computer based training;Computer education training;Computer training;Computer training services;Computerised training;Conducting of educational courses in science;Conducting of instructional seminars;Courses (training-) relating to science;Education;Education services relating to food technology;Education services relating to the ***agricultural*** industry;Education services relating to the horticultural industry;Educational instruction;Educational services;Providing courses of instruction;Teaching;Training;Training (Practical -) [demonstration];Training services relating to computer-aided ***manufacturing***;Training services relating to the installation of computer controlled test systems;Workshops for educational purposes. Advice and consultancy in relation to computer networking applications;Advice relating to the development of computer systems;Advisory and consultancy services relating to computer hardware;Advisory services in the field of product development and quality improvement of software;Advisory services relating to computer based information systems;Advisory services relating to computer programming;Advisory services relating to computer software;Advisory services relating to computer software design;Advisory services relating to computer software used for graphics;Advisory services relating to computer software used for printing;Advisory services relating to computer systems analysis;Advisory services relating to computer systems design;Advisory services relating to design engineering;Advisory services relating to energy efficiency;Advisory services relating to man-machine interfaces for computer software;Advisory services relating to science;Advisory services relating to scientific instruments;Advisory services relating to scientific research;Advisory services relating to technological research;Advisory services relating to the safety of the environment;Advisory services relating to the use of computer software;Advisory services relating to the use of energy;***Agricultural*** research;***Agricultural*** research services;Agrochemical research services;Analytic laboratory services;Analytic services relating to computers;Analytical laboratory services;Biotechnological research relating to ***agriculture***;Biotechnological research relating to horticulture;Computer advisory services;Computer aided analytical services;Computer aided design for ***manufacturing*** operations;Computer aided design services;Computer aided design services relating to building projects;Computer aided diagnostic testing services;Computer aided engineering design and drawing services;Computer analysis;Computer and information technology consultancy services;Computer and software consultancy services;Computer assisted engineering design services;Computer consultancy;Computer consultancy and advisory services;Computer consultancy services;Computer design;Computer design and programming services;Computer design research;Computer design services;Computer diagnostic services;Computer engineering;Computer engineering consultancy services;Computer hardware (Consultancy in the design and development of -);Computer hardware (consultancy in the field of-);Computer hardware (design of -);Computer hardware development;Computer network configuration services;Computer network design for others;Computer network services;Computer program advisory services;Computer program maintenance services;Computer program updating services;Computer programming;Computer programming and maintenance of computer programs;Computer programming and software design;Computer programming consultancy;Computer programming for others;Computer programming services;Computer software (design of -);Computer software (installation of-);Computer software (Installation of -);Computer software (maintenance of-);Computer software (Maintenance of -);Computer system analysis;Computer system design;Computer system integration services;Computer system monitoring services;Computer systems analysis;Computer systems design;Computer systems development;Computer systems integration services;Consultancy relating to biotechnology;Consultancy services relating to technological research;Design and development of computer hardware and software;Design and development of computer software;Design of buildings;Design of business premises;Design of computer software;Design of engineered building systems;Design of industrial buildings;Design of industrial machinery;Design of industrial plant;Design of industrial products;Design of lighting systems;Designing computer codes;Designing of computer hardware;Designing of computer programs;Designing of data processing programmes;Developing of integrated energy concepts;Development of new technology for others;Industrial analysis and research services;Laboratory services for ***agricultural*** research;Monitoring of activities which influence the environment within buildings;Monitoring of activities which influence the environment within civil engineering structures;Off site building project management;Preparation of reports relating to scientific research;Preparation of scientific reports;Professional consultancy relating to energy efficiency in buildings;Providing science technology information;Provision of information relating to scientific research;Provision of research services;Provision of scientific information;Research and consultancy services relating to computer hardware;Research and consultancy services relating to computer software;Research and development services;Research of ***agriculture***;Research of foodstuffs;Research on food;Research relating to cultivation in ***agriculture***;Research relating to cultivation in horticulture;Research (scientific-);Scientific and industrial research;Scientific and technological services;Scientific and technological services and research and design relating thereto;Scientific computer programming services;Scientific research;Scientific research services;Soil analysing services;Soil testing services;Technical consultancy in relation to the development of technologies and technical components for food;Technical consultancy in relation to the technical research in the field of food and beverages;Drafting and development of photovoltaic systems. Advisory services relating to horticulture;***Agricultural*** advice;***Agricultural*** advisory services;***Agricultural*** consultancy;***Agricultural***, horticulture and forestry services;***Agricultural*** information services;***Agricultural*** services;***Agricultural*** services relating to environmental conservation;***Agriculture***, horticulture and forestry services;***Agriculture*** services;Consultancy services relating to ***agriculture***;Cultivation advisory services relating to ***agriculture***;Cultivation advisory services relating to horticulture;Horticulture;Horticulture services;Plant care services [horticultural services];Plant trials relating to crop growing." The original document can be viewed at: [*http://www.ipo.gov.uk/tmcase/Results/1/UK00003042353*](http://www.ipo.gov.uk/tmcase/Results/1/UK00003042353) For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [*htsyndication@hindustantimes.com*](mailto:htsyndication@hindustantimes.com)

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[***United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "Mail Marketplace" to DMG Media for Various Goods and Services***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5D6K-BXJ1-JDKC-R3M8-00000-00&context=1516831)

UK Government News

September 23, 2014 Tuesday 6:01 PM EST

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**Length:** 5808 words

**Dateline:** South Wales

**Body**

South Wales, Sept. 23 -- DMG Media Ltd., London, has filed the trademark "Mail Marketplace" on June 23, for various goods and services.

The trademark application (journal number: 2014/039) was published on Sept. 19. Class(es): 9 [On-line electronic publications; electronic publications (downloadable);electronic publications; electronic newspapers; electronic newspapers, magazines, sections, columns and articles; publications available on-line through a global computer network; computer hardware; computer firmware; computer software; computer software platforms; computer programs; computer databases; software applications; software; games software; downloadablegames; software for broadcasting,transmission and reproduction of sound, data, images and video; applications development tool programs for personal and handheld computers and communicationsdevices; software for the placement of online advertisements;computer hardware and software for providing integrated communication with computerized global information networks; computer software and hardwareto enable searching of data and connection to databases and the Internet; handheld digital electronic devices and software related thereto; hand held computers, personal digital assistants, electronic organizers, electronic notepads; mobile digital electronic devices, telephones;handheldand mobile digital electronicdevicesfor the sending and receivingof telephone calls, faxes, electronic mail, and other digital data; data storage media; digital audio and video devices; discs; compactdiscs, tapes; digital music (downloadable)providedfrom the Internet;digital music (downloadable) provided from MP3 Internet web sites; CDs; optical and magnetic discs and other recordable media; CD Roms; DVDs; MP3 and other digital format audio players; media storage devices; digital imaging devices and digital signal processors; data-processingequipment and computers; computer accessories, screen savers, mouse pads, keyboards, bank cards and debit cards (encoded or maqnetic): apparatus for recording, transmission and reproduction of sound and images; magnetic data carriers; recording discs; parts and fittings for all the aforesaid services], 16 [Paper, cardboard and goods made from these materials; printed matter; printed publications, including sections, columns, features and articles; catalogues; periodical publications; newspapers, magazines, supplements, posters, periodicals, books, notebooks, reference books; brochures, leaflets; coupons, vouchers, gift and trading vouchers, vouchers of value; printed advertising matter; advertising publications; printed reviews; discount cards (other than coded or magnetic); user guides and training manuals; document files; folders; conference folders; instructional and teaching materials (other than apparatus); tickets and folders; bank cards and debit cards (other than encoded or magnetic); maps, holiday and travel guides, calendars, diaries and stationery; address books; autograph books; manuals; catalogues; newsletters; bookbinding materials; artists' materials; photographs; photograph albums; pictures;drawings;decalcomanias;stickers; parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods], 35 [Advertising, marketing,public relations, publicity and promotionalservices; online and electronic advertising; rental of advertising space; rental of advertising time; provision of advertising space on a website; promotional advertising services; compilation of advertisementsfor use as web pages on the Internet; advertising and promotionalservices for the goods and services of others; classified advertising; promotional advertising of travel, events, concerts, exhibitions and shows; dissemination of advertising matter; dissemination of advertising matter for others via electronic means; services for providing an automated system for advertising placement; advertisement placing; advertising research; advertisement targeting, development and analysis; advertising by mail order; direct mail advertising; provision of advertisement programmes; online advertising on the Internet and other global computer and communications systems; television, radio and satellite commercials; promoting the sale of goods and services of others; promoting goods and services of others via a website offering vouchers and rebates; database subscriptions;newspapersubscriptions;electronic newspapersubscriptions;telecommunications service subscriptions; organisation, operation and supervision of loyalty, reward and incentive schemes; opinion polling; market surveys; market studies and analysis; market research;analysis of market research data and statistics; business and market research, surveys and reports; conducting business and pricing surveys; compilationof statistics;collection of businessand commercialstatistics;conducting businessand pricing surveys; informationservices relating to economic commerce;on-line trading services; provision of an electronic marketplace for advertising transactions; compilation and provision of product and service descriptions and comparative information; market information about products and services; price comparison services; providing pricinq information; internet consumer comparison shopping services; providing informationon product availability, discounts and promotions;provision of information relating to special offers, discounts and promotions, including special offers, discounts and promotions offered by others; product reviews offered via a website with links to the websites of others; provision of ratings, reviewsand commercialinformationregardingretailers,businessesand service providers;provisionof retail shoppingand consumergoods and services information;analysis of consumerpreferencesand provisionof product recommendations; advertising services, namely the provision of retailer location for products; comparison services enabling consumers to conveniently view and compare the goods and services of others; presentation of goods on communicationsmedia, for retail purposes; consumer advice services; provision of impartial price information relating to the supply of consumer products and services including telecommunications,Internet services, utilities, energy supply, electricity, gas, water, automotive,financial, travel, investment,monetary,mortgageand insuranceservices,travel, transport and accommodation; price analysis services; provisionof ratings, reviewsand information regarding businesses and service providers;on-line ordering services; e-commerce services; retail services, including retail department store and online retail department store services and retail services provided through a television shopping channel, internet website, mail order catalogue, magazine or newspaper publication in connection with the sale of plants and flowers, trees, shrubs, bulbs and climbers, plant foods and fertilizers, ***agricultural***, horticultural and forestry products, grains, seeds, composts and potting compositions, preparations for destroying vermin, fungicides, herbicides, foodstuffs for ***animals***, supplements for ***animal*** foodstuffs, ***animal*** litter, birdseed, malt, bird baths, bird tables and bird ***feeders***, ***animal*** scratching posts, gardening equipment and accessories, garden furniture and tools, garden ornaments, lawn mowers, electric trimming machines, machines for use in the garden, compacting machines, greenhouses, huts, cloches, outdoor lighting, parasols and walking sticks, awnings, tents, tarpaulins, nets, screens, hammocks, umbrellas, camping gear, barbecues and barbecue accessories, picnic baskets and accessories, weather vanes, outdoor games, vehicles, bicycles, car and bicycle accessories, children's safety equipment for vehicles, car cleaning accessories, machines for washing and cleaning vehicles, de-icing preparations, anti-freeze, motor oils, lubricants, oils and fuels, greases, charcoal, fireworks, fire-lighters, cleaning and polishing products and preparations, dyes and stains, paints, painting and decorating equipment, preservatives, building materials, machines for use in building and construction, common metals and their alloys, machine tools, power tools, hand tools and implements, carpentry machines, painting and decorating machines, DIY tools, tool boxes, small items of metal hardware, workbenches, ladders, wheelchairs and walking aids, buggies, children's riding vehicles, toys, games and playthings, electronic toys, electronic games, remote control toys and games, optical storage media, recording discs, CD-Roms, discs, optical and magnetic discs and other recordable media, compact discs, tapes, cartridges, wires, cards and filaments, data storage media, pre recorded video tapes and cassettes, fonts, typefaces, type designs and symbols in the form of recorded data, digital music (downloadable) provided from the Internet, digital music (downloadable) provided from MP3 Internet web sites, screen savers, mouse pads, keyboards, bank cards and debit cards (encoded or magnetic), apparatus for recording, transmission and reproduction of sound and images, electronic images, on-line electronic publications, electronic publications (downloadable), electronic newspapers, sections, columns and articles, games software, downloadable games, computers, laptops, notepads, hand held computers, personal digital assistants, electronic organizers, computer equipment and accessories, computer hardware, computer software and computer firmware, computer programs, pre-recorded computer programs, modems, data-processing equipment, magnetic data carriers, mobile phones and fax machines, pagers, telephones, portable communications devices, portable music players, CDs, DVDs, video tapes, games and cassettes, video recorders, DVD players and writers, communications equipment and devices, audiovisual equipment and devices, portable electronic devices, mobile digital electronic devices, handheld and mobile digital electronic devices for the sending and receiving of telephone calls, faxes, electronic mail and other digital data, handheld digital electronic devices and software related thereto, MP3 and other digital format audio players, digital imaging devices and digital signal processors, digital audio and video devices, video cameras and photographic equipment, cameras, weather stations, programmable electronic apparatus, robots [machines], communications apparatus, paging apparatus, automatic answering apparatus for communications apparatus, electronic mail apparatus, electronic television satellite apparatus, electronic audio apparatus, electronic radio apparatus, music recording apparatus, electronic noise cancellation apparatus, scanning apparatus, electronic remote data transfer apparatus, electronic text processing apparatus, electronic data collection apparatus, information storage apparatus, electronic timing apparatus, electronic security and theft prevention apparatus, surveillance apparatus, navigating and locating apparatus, domestic white goods, electronic security systems and software, anti-theft alarms, protective clothing, eyewear and footwear, smoke alarms and detectors, fire safety equipment, batteries, adaptors, light bulbs, torches, nightlights, lanterns, optical goods, scientific, nautical, surveying, photographic, Cinematographic, optical, weighing, measuring, signalling, checking (supervision), life-saving and teaching apparatus and instruments, apparatus and instruments for conducting, switching, transforming, accumulating, regulating or controlling electricity, apparatus for recording, transmission or reproduction of sound or images, magnetic data carriers, recording discs, automatic vending machines and mechanisms for coin-operated apparatus, calculating equipment, apparatus for lighting, heating, steam generating, cooking, refrigerating, drying, ventilating, water supply and sanitary purposes, machines for chilling, cooling and heating, domestic electric kitchen machines and tools, stoves, heaters, boilers, cookers and coolers, fans, hair dryers, hair styling appliances, travelling hair dryers, compasses, magnets, tracking devices, remote control apparatus, scanners, battery chargers, projectors, telescopes, hands-free kits for phones, domestic electrical appliances, barometers, binoculars, slide viewing apparatus and equipment, word processing equipment, printed matter, paper, cardboard and goods made of these materials, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, publications, instructional and teaching material, calendars, diaries, greeting cards, photo and picture frames, photographic albums, photographs, posters, pictures, maps, guides, concert and event tickets, stationery, artists' materials, artist's stands, paint boxes, children's painting sets, slates, stamps, stickers, crafts machines, printing and labelling machines, wrapping, sealing and packaging machines, shredding machines, staplers and staples, office requisites, office furniture, wrapping and packaging materials, plastic materials for packaging, adhesives, paper and foil dispensers, machines for household use, food and beverage preparation machines, kitchen machines, food blending machines, food mixers, juice extractors, kitchen equipment and accessories, kitchen utensils, domestic non-electric kitchen apparatus, carving equipment, glassware, porcelain and earthenware,goods made of ceramics and porcelain, cookware, bake ware, dinnerware, cutlery, bar ware and accessories,householdor kitchen utensils and containers,trolleys, storage furniture and accessories, coat hangers,shoe horns, protectivebags and covers, briefcases,laptop cases, handbags,purses, wallets, luggage, key rings, clothing,footwear, headgear,beachwear,beach accessories,babies' clothing, children's clothing, knitwear, outerwear, bridal wear, evening and formal wear, nightwear, lingerie, scarves, handkerchiefs,fashion accessories, spectacles and sunglasses, sports, fitness and exercise equipment, sports bags, sports clothing, gymnastic and sporting articles, fitness aids, water filters, humidifiers, de humidifiers, air purifying apparatus and preparations, air purifying machines, anti-allergy devices and equipment, filtering machines, steaming, cleaning, washing and polishing machines, waste disposal machines, washing, drying and pressing and ironing machines, detergents, fabric softeners and conditioners, laundry soap, bleaching preparationsand stain removers, dryer balls, laundry bags, clothes pegs, clothes lines, ironing boards, ironing board covers, laundry sprays, drying racks, irons, clothes dryers, laundry bags and baskets, knitting and sewing machines, haberdashery,yarns and threads, zip fasteners, adjustable fasteners, pins and needles, buttons, hooks and eyes, lace and embroidery, ribbons and braid, shoe laces, goods made of leather and imitation leather, textiles and textile goods, bed linen, mattresses, pillows, linen, towels and bathmats, table linen, table wear, wall hangings, soft furnishings, cushions, curtains, carpets, rugs, mats and matting, linoleum and other materials for covering floors, furniture, bathroom furniture and accessories, mirrors, lamps, lampshades, artificial flowers, decorations and household articles for decorative purposes, ornaments, candles, candle holders, wicks for lighting, room sprays and scented goods for the home, table decorations,festive decorations,Christmastree ornaments, clocks, timers, stopwatches,watches, jewellery, precious and semi-preciousstones, precious metals and their alloys and goods made of precious metals or coated therewith, jewellery boxes, costume jewellery, healthcare and beauty care products, scales, baby care products, food for babies, dietetic substances . adapted for ***medical*** use, pharmaceutical and ***veterinary*** preparations, supplements for food, vitamins, minerals and supplements,sanitary preparationsfor ***medical*** purposes,first aid kits, ***medicines***, pain relief preparations, pain relief devices, ***medical*** and orthopaedic supports, orthopaedic articles, postural aids, hearing aids, thermometers,healthcare equipment and devices, safety clothing and equipment, scissors, clippers and nail clippers,tweezers, nail files, razors and razor blades, shaver and razor blade sharpeners, shavers, hair clippers, epilators, personal grooming equipment and products, shaving preparations, hair care products, shampoo, conditioner, hair ornaments, manicure and pedicure equipment, toiletries, bath and shower preparations,bath oil, bubble bath, cleansers,toners, moisturisers,wash bags, cosmetic bags, eye care products and accessories, perfumery,tanning oils and preparations,cosmetics, colour make up, dentifrices, babies' bottle warmers, combs and sponges, hot water bottles, air filters, air fresheners, cleaning equipment, cleaning utensils, steel wool, vacuum cleaners, pet grooming and pet care products, collars, leads, harnesses for pets, musical instruments,cases for musical instruments, music stands, gift vouchers, foodstuffs and drinks, food and drink products, food extracts, dried and preserved foods, cake decorations, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, smokers' articles, cigarettes, matches, cigarette lighters, burners, parts, fittings and accessories for all the aforementioned; online retail of music and video; auctioneering services; import and export agencies; comparison services enabling consumers to convenientlyview and compare the goods and services of others; assistance with purchasing goods and services for others; assistance with the procurement of goods and services for others; computerized processing of on-line purchase orders; invoicing services; compilation and systemisation of data into computer databases; sorting and editing of informationin computer databases; searching and retrieval of data in computer files and computer databases; providing an on-line commercial information directory; advice and assistance relating to the establishmentof online retail stores; conducting business and pricing surveys; recruitmentadvertising,recruitmentservices; placementservices; employmentcounselling;career counselling; business counselling; recruitment consultancy; employment consultancy; career information and advice; personnel management;personnel selection, consultancy, counselling and advisory services; job agency services; assistance relating to recruitmentand placement of staff; job applicant management services; monitoring (business) services; job applicant monitoring and tracking services; recruitment, relocationand placementof staff; negotiationand organisationof transactionsfor third parties; services for the taking of sales orders; ordering services for customers; distribution of samples; commercial administrationof the licensing of the goods and services of others; information,advisory and consultancy services relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also provided on-line from a computerdatabase,on-line directory or from the Internet], 36 [Financial services; insurance services; analysis, evaluation, information and advice relating to insuranceand financial services; analysis, evaluation,informationand advice relating to money, insurance, financial and investment services, financial planning, financial affairs, monetary affairs, foreign currency, bank accounts, current accounts, bonds, savings, trusts, stocks and shares, contracts, options, securities, futures, commodities,brokerage services, mortgages and loans, assets, tax, credit agreements, pensions and annuities, real estate and property services; provision of informationrelating to insurance and financial services; financial managementservices; financial advisory services; banking services; cash disbursement services; electronic cash transactions; electronic payment services; financial transactions; quotation of prices; on-line cash account services; electronic commerce payment services, namely establishing funded accounts used to purchasegoods and services on the Internet;providingcash and other rebates as part of a customer loyalty program; cash-back services; cash-back account services; issuing of tokens of value in relation to incentive schemes; loyalty coupon processing services; loyalty program payment processing services; arrangingfor the paymentof goods and services;the provisionof financial advice and information relating to the supply of consumer goods and services including telecommunications,telephony, Internet service provision, energy supply, electricity, gas, water and insurance services; brokerage services; brokerage services relating to the procurement of the change of suppliers to consumers of goods and services, includingthe suppliersof consumergoods and services includingtelecommunications,telephony, Internet service provision, energy supply, electricity, gas, water and insurance services; advice and consultancy relating to property (real estate); advice and consultancy relating to property (real estate); estate agency and property services; propertysurveying and valuation; investmentschemes and accounts; investment brokerage; bank card, debit card and credit card services; financial services relating to credit, debit and bank card services; debit, credit and cash account services; cheque verification and cheque cashing; issuing and redemptionof traveller's cheques and travel vouchers and advisory services relating thereto; sponsorshipservices and activities;financial sponsorship;charitablefund raising services;financial research; credit card services; on-line financial, banking, savings, payment and credit facilities; home bankingand Internetbanking;financial services relatingto travel; travel insurance;prize draws; information, advisory and consultancy services relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also providedon-line from a computerdatabase,on-line directory, the Internet or other electronic media], 38 [Communicationand telecommunicationservices; wireless communications;providing access to an interactivedatabase; providingaccess to search engines; providingaccess to websites and web pages; electronic transmission of news, information, data, text, documents, images, sound and video; providing access to an e-commerce platform on the Internet; providing access to databases and directories; telecommunicationof information(includingweb pages), computer programsand any other data; electronic transmissionof productand service reviewsand consumergoods and services information;broadcastingby radio, television and satellite; broadcasting and transmission of programmes; broadcasting of news; webcasting; electronicnews and informationservices; news agency services; press agencies; broadcasting services; television, cable television, and radio broadcasting services; audio broadcasting; video broadcasting;web casting services; broadcastingand transmissionof programmes;transmission of news; transmissionof publications;electronictransmissionof audio, data and images;transmissionof information; transmission of digital media; transmission of podcasts; transmission of webcasts; providing electronic communicationof blogs; electronic transmission of informationand data; electronic transmission of audio and video files via communicationsnetworks; transmission of video films; electronic sending of data and documentationvia the Internet or other databases; supply of data and news by electronic transmission; streaming of audio and video content via a global computer network; streaming of video material on the internet; transmission and broadcasting of data and information by electronic means, computer, cable, radio, teleprinter, teleletter, electronic mail, telecopier, television, microwave, laser beam, communications satellite or electronic communicationmeans; transmissionof data by audio-visualapparatus controlled by data processing apparatus or computers; telecommunications, computer-assisted transmission and broadcasting of data, sounds and images, transmission of information accessible by access code to computerisedor data transmissiondatabases and database servers; delivery of digital audio and/or video by telecommunications; electronic distribution of information; telecommunication services provided in relation to the Internet; computer intercommunicationservices; dissemination of information by electronic means, in particular via global communicationsnetworks (including the Internet); Internet portal services; providing access to search engine services; providing an online network; providing access to an on-line portal network site; provision of electronic data links; providing access to web sites and web pages on the Internet; providing an on-line directory; providing access to websites; providing access to online directories and databases; providing access to electronic news services online allowing the download of information and data; providing access to and leasing access time to databases; providing online videos, not downloadable; message sending services; message boards; providing on-line electronic bulletin board services and chat rooms; operating chat rooms; bulletin board and forum services via computer networks, global information networks and wireless networks; providing online interactive electronic bulletin boards; communicationservices provided by electronic, computer, cable, teleprinter, teleletter and electronic mail means; communicationservices provided on the Internet; interactivecommunicationsservices provided by means of a computer; communication by computers and computer terminals; delivery of messages by electronic transmission; text messaging services; provision of text message and e-mail alerts; communicationservices provided on the Internet; providing on-line facilities for real time interaction with other computer users concerning topics of general interest and playing games; providing access to digital music web sites on the Internet;providingaccess to MP3 web sites on the Internet;delivery of digital music and video by telecommunications;providing users with access time to electronic communications networks with means of identifying, locating, grouping, distributing, and managing data and links to third-party computer servers, computer processorsand computer users; providing access to online informationand/or communicationservices; provision of information about communicationand/or broadcasting by electronic media; distribution of information over computer networks, global information networks and wireless networks; provision of access to financial information and data online; provision of telecommunications access, connections and links to and from computer databases, computer networks, wireless and global information networks and the Internet; telecommunicationsservices provided in relation to the Internet; providingwireless telecommunications via electroniccommunications networks;wireless digital messaging, paging services, and electronic mail services, including services that enable a user to send and/or receive messages through a wireless data network; network services; online portals; providing access to online portals; providing user access to the Internet; provision of connectivity services and access to electronic communicationsnetworks, for transmission or reception of audio, video or multimedia content; providing video on-demand; Internet service providers (ISP); operation of broadcastingfacilities; telecommunication access services; telegraph services; wire services; information and advisory services relating to telecommunication services; operation of broadcasting facilities; information, advisory and consultancy services relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also provided on-line from a computerdatabase,on-line directory, the Internet,or other electronicor mobile communications media], 39 [Transport; packaging and storage of goods; home delivery services; wrapping and packaging services; storage of information;arranging transportationof goods; delivery of goods; arranging delivery of goods; travel arrangement; travel information; promotion of travel; travel agency services; information, advisory and consultancy services relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also provided on-line from a computer database, on-line directory, the Internet, or other electronic or mobile communications media], 41 [Education and training services; entertainment services; betting services; gaming services; gambling services; electronic games services provided by means of the Internet or telecommunications; game services provided on-line; Internet games (non downloadable);provision of games by means of a computer based system; telephone games; amusementservices; publishingservices; publishingthrough a website or other mediumaccessibleby means of a telecommunicationsdevice, includingthe publishingof a news publicationthrough a website or other mediumaccessibleby means of a telecommunicationsdevice; publication of information, including publishing of informationon news, education, sports, politics, current events, cultural activities, film, theatre, cinema, television, show business, fashion, radio, shows, music and entertainment,food, travel, science, weather, technology, the arts, health, finance, monetary issues, economics, propertyand motoring;publicationof printed matter and printed publications;publishing and publication services; electronic publishing services; providing on-line electronic publications (not downloadable);publication of newspapers,newsletters;publicationof printed matter and printed material; publication of material which can be accessed from databases or from the internet; publication online of information in a variety of fields, including news, education, sporting, political, current events, cultural activities, film, theatre, cinema, television, show business, fashion, radio, shows, music and entertainment,food, travel, science, technology,the arts, health, finance, propertyand motoring;publication of electronic books and journals on-line; online electronicpublications(not downloadable);online electronic publications (not downloadable)in the nature of newslettersand articles in the field of online advertising; organisation of events, exhibitionsand shows; organisationof music events; organisationof entertainment events; provision of information relating to news, education, sporting, political, current events, cultural activities, film, theatre, cinema, television, show business,fashion, radio, shows, music and entertainment, food, travel, SCiencet,echnology,the arts, health, finance, propertyand motoring;provision of an electronic data archive; provisionof information,including provisionof informationrelating to news, education,sports, politics, current events, cultural activities, film, theatre, cinema, television, show business, fashion, radio, shows, music and entertainment, food, travel, science, weather, technology, the arts, health, finance, monetaryissues, economics,propertyand motoring;film rental;journalism services;video editing; news services; provision of news online; provision of news; news reporters services; news programme servicesfor radio or television;commissionedwriting; editing services; editing of written text; syndication of cuttings (digital and non-digital); syndication of previously published content for re-use or re purposing;syndicationof previouslypublishedcontentfor re-publicationin other media or sale to the public; syndication of visual works for re-publication in other media or sale to the public; sports information services; organisationof competitions,quizzes, games and recreationaland cultural activities and facilities; ticket reservation services; booking services; booking, reservation and sale of tickets for entertainment, events, shows and exhibitions; booking of seats for shows and sporting events; arranging of tickets for sporting, cultural and entertainment,events, concerts and shows; ticket information services; concert and theatre booking services; booking of health, leisure and exercise facilities; electronic game services provided by means of the Internet; production of shows and radio and television programmes; cable television, television and radio entertainmentservices; providing digital music from the Internet; providing digital music (not downloadable) from the Internet; providing digital music (not downloadable) from MP3Internet web sites; information,advisory and consultancyservices relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also provided on-line from a computer database, on-line directory, the Internet, or other electronicor mobile communications media] and 42 [Design and development of computer hardware and software; hosting websites; hosting databases; search engine services; hosting an e-commercewebsite for the advertisementand sale and ordering of goods; hosting interactivewebsites; hosting an online service for analysingcustomer purchases and product searches; hosting online facilities for others; rental or leasing of non-downloadablesoftware online for others; providing search engines for the Internet; downloading of information from a database; storage of information; computerised business information storage; providing temporary use of non downloadable computer software for use in the creation and publication of on-line journals and blogs; hosting of digital content, namely, on-line journals and blogs; creating and maintaining blogs for others; applicationservice provider IASP, namely, hosting computer software applicationsof others; creating and maintainingweb sites; hostingthe websites of others; computerservices, namely hosting websites enabling the use of on-line directories; design, drawing and commissionedwriting, all for the compilation of web pages on the Internet; desiqn and developmentof computer software and software applications;design of computerdatabases;design of games; creationof computerprogrammes,includingprogrammesfor games and gambling; technical consultancy and advice in the establishmentof an on-line retail store; rental and leasing of computersoftware; providingcomputersoftwarethat may be downloadedfrom a global computer network; advisory services relating to computer software used for publishing; information, advisory and consultancy services relating to all the aforesaid services; all the aforesaid services also provided on-line from a computer database, on-line directory, the Internet, or other electronic or mobile communications media; storing data and information] The original document can be viewed at:

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Bradford Telegraph and Argus

March 31, 2014 Monday

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**Length:** 5047 words

**Byline:** [*Telegraph & Argus*](http://Telegraph & Argus)

**Body**

1. National Media Museum, Bradford: In the heart of Bradford, this truly is one of the crown jewels of not only the city but the whole district - and beyond. It draws in huge numbers of tourists and visitors for its permanent galleries and exhibitions which cover the history of photography, film and television and the latest technological advances in media now and in the future.

2. Bolton Abbey: In the heart of the Yorkshire Dales and on the banks of the River Wharfe, the 30,000 acres of beautiful countryside, 80 miles of footpaths and ruins of the old priory form the basis for an excellent day out. There are local restaurants, tea rooms, gift shops and more to enjoy after you've explored the miles of woodland and riverside strolls.

3. Alhambra Theatre and St George's Hall, Bradford: Two historic theatres in the centre of Bradford form a complementary pair of venues which attract some of the biggest names in entertainment from all over the world. St George's Hall is the regular haunt of major pop bands and comedians, while the Alhambra hosts some stunning touring plays, musicals and more.

4. Skipton Castle: Skipton Castle (above), at more than 900 years old, is one of the most complete and best-preserved medieval castles in the country. It withstood a three-year-long seige during the English Civil War but remains remarkably intact, and visitors can explore the interior of this castle, from the depths of the dungeons to the top of the Watch Tower.

5. Harewood House, near Leeds: A wonderful Georgian mansion with vast landscaped gardens by Capability Brown, Harewood is the family seat of the Earl and Countess of Harewood. It is a fascinating place to visit for the huge collection of 20th century art, as well as the walks through the grounds and the well-stocked aviaries, including Harewood's famous penguins.

6. Hardcastle Crags, near Hebden Bridge: More than 400 acres of unspoiled woodland surround this National Trust beauty spot, complete with streams, waterfalls and stacks of millstone grit. Visitors can weave their way around 15 miles of footpaths, and at the heart of the area is the Gibson Mill visitor centre.

7. East Riddlesden Hall, Keighley: Originally the home of 17th century cloth merchant James Murgatroyd, the estate was a working farm for many generations which produced milk, cheese and bread. Today it's a visitor attraction and museum, recreating the 17th century lifestyle and with embroideries, furniture and pewter work on display.

8. Shipley Glen Tramway, Shipley: The tramway is the oldest working cable tramway in Great Britain (cliff lifts excepted). Dating from 1895, the line was built to serve the local beauty spot of Shipley Glen, near Saltaire. At nearly a quarter of a mile in length, the woodland ride provides a pleasant alternative to the steep path.

9. Salts Mill & Saltaire: Built by philanthropic textile magnate Sir Titus Salt, Salts Mill (above) is today a vibrant centre for the arts and artists, housing high-end retail establishments and hosting a permanent exhibition of the works of David Hockney. Sir Titus built a fine example of the model industrial village in Saltaire for his workers.

10. Cow and Calf, Ilkley: High on Ilkley Moor, the Cow and Calf Rocks are a large rock formation consisting of an outcrop and boulder, also known as Hangingstone Rocks. The rocks are made of millstone grit, a variety of sandstone, and are so named because one is large, with the smaller one sitting close to it, like a cow and calf.

11. Great beer: One thing you can be guaranteed of in Yorkshire is a great pint, and our home-grown breweries provide the finest ales money can buy, whether it's the famous Timothy Taylors' range from Keighley, or the connoisseur's favourite Black Sheep, produced at their Masham brewery, plus smaller breweries in towns such as Saltaire and Ilkley.

12. Embsay Steam Railway: A volunteer-run, preserved heritage railway which runs over part of the former Skipton-Ilkley line which was closed in 1965 and has steadily been rebuilt by the volunteers. Trains travel between Embsay station, built in 1888, and the award-winning station at Bolton Abbey, through picturesque Yorkshire Dales scenery.

13. Fountains Abbey (above), near Ripon: A World Heritage Site, set in 323 hectares (800 acres) of beautiful countryside, the magnificent 12th-century abbey ruins also boasts the only surviving Cistercian corn mill. No visit is complete without visiting the landscaped Georgian water garden of Studley Royal, which has neo-classical statues, follies and amazing views.

14. St Ives Estate, Bingley: A wonderful country park with woodlands, open moor, and a wildflower meadow, and paths throughout. The adventure playground is a fantastic feature for the children, and Coppice Pond offers both fishing opportunities and a chance to ***feed*** the ducks. Throughout the woodland walks there are amazing wooden sculptures.

15. Cartwright Hall, Bradford: Bradford's civic art gallery offers a programme of contemporary exhibitions, with four permanent galleries displaying works from the Council's art collections. The collections consist mainly of 19th and 20th century British art, with strong collections of international contemporary prints and contemporary South Asian art and crafts.

16. Mother Shipton's Cave, Knaresborough: Billed as England's oldest tourest attraction, this cave and nearby "petrifying well" has indeed been welcoming curious visitors since the 17th century. Mother Shipton herself was a Yorkshire witch who was said to prophesy the future.

17. Harlow Carr Gardens, (above) Harrogate: The gardens stand on what was once part of the Forest of Knaresborough, an ancient royal hunting ground. Today, the famous gardens are dominated by water, stone and woodland and the venue is very much part of the surrounding Yorkshire landscape. An award-winning learning centre was completed in 2010, and there is a rolling programme of special features.

18. Haworth and Bronte Country: Historic Haworth appears very much as it was when its most famous residents, the Bronte sisters, lived there in the 19th century. The cobbled Main Street still winds its way through the village where admittedly more modern shops, cafes and pubs welcome the throngs of visitors who soak up the history throughout the year.

19. Curry!: One thing Yorkshire in general - and Bradford specifically - is famous for is curry. You can get fantastic dishes to suit all palates and pockets across the district. Bradford late last year claimed an unprecedented hat-trick by becoming the first city to win the Curry Capital of Britain title three times in a row.

20. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield: Yorkshire Sculpture Park is an international centre for modern and contemporary art (above), experienced and enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year. Explore open-air displays by some of the world's finest artists, enjoy fascinating exhibitions throughout four stunning galleries, be inspired by the natural beauty of an historic estate.

21. City of Film, Bradford: Bradford is the world's first UNESCO City of Film. This permanent title bestows international recognition on Bradford as a world centre for film because of the city's rich film heritage, its inspirational movie locations and its many celebrations of the moving image through the city's annual film festivals.

22. National Coalmining Museum, Wakefield: The National Coal Mining Museum for England provides a great day out with a unique opportunity to travel 140 metres underground down one of Britain's oldest working mines. Situated in a rural setting, it offers an unusual combination of exciting experiences, whilst providing a genuine insight into the hard-working lives of miners.

23. Malham Cove, North Yorkshire: Malham Cove (above) is a huge curving amphitheatre-shaped cliff formation of limestone rock, around 260ft high at the summit of its vertical face. The top of the cove is a large area of deeply eroded limestone pavement, of a strange pattern not often seen in England.

24. Brimham Rocks, North Yorkshire: This amazing collection of weird and wonderful rock formations makes a great day out for families, climbers and those wanting to enjoy the views over Nidderdale. Part of the fun is letting your imagination run riot as you try to spot shapes in the unique landscape - see the Dancing Bear, The Eagle and The Gorilla.

25. Aysgarth Falls: Aysgarth in Wensleydale has three magnificent flights of waterfalls on the River Ure, and visiting can be combined with a wonderful woodland walk. The falls are spectacular all year round, especially if there has been 0heavy rain and the water cascades spectacularly over the broad limestone steps.

26. Shibden Hall, Halifax: Shibden Hall, set in 37 hectares of the Shibden valley, is a medieval timber-framed manor house. This Grade II\*-listed house is one of England's oldest and was built in 1420, five years after the Battle of Agincourt. Shibden Park,has a cafe and visitor facilities, miniature railway and boating lake.

27. Royal Armouries, Leeds: Royal Armouries is the National Museum of Arms and Armour, including artillery. The collection consists of some 70,000 examples of arms, armour and artillery dating from antiquity to the present day. It includes royal armours of the Tudor and Stuart kings and arms and armour of the English Civil Wars.

28. White Scar Cave, Ingleton: White Scar Cave in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is the longest show cave in the UK. It was first explored in 1923 by two amateur geologists, and further caves have been discovered since then, including one of the largest known cave chambers in Great Britain.

29. Five Rise Locks, Bingley: The lock staircase is the most spectacular feature of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The locks open directly from one to another, with the top gate of one forming the bottom gate of the next.

30. Nostell Priory: Built on the site of a medieval priory, Nostell has been the home of the Winn family for 300 years. Commissioned by Sir Rowland Winn in 1733, James Paine built the house. Later additions by Robert Adam created exceptional interiors. Visitors can explore 300 acres of parkland with a range of walks and views.

31. Manor House Museum and Art Gallery, Ilkley: Situated within the beautiful surroundings of the Wharfe Valley, one of Ilkley's oldest buildings, the Manor House, has been converted into an attractive museum and art gallery. On the ground floor, visitors are given a glimpse into Ilkley's past, while the first floor galleries provide the venue for a regularly changing programme.

32. Oakwell Hall Country Park, Batley: Oakwell Hall is furnished as a family home in the 1690s and offers visitors a real insight into a post-English Civil War household. The site also includes a visitor centre, gift shop, nature trail, picnic sites, playgound and countryside centre, plus a country park formed from a mix of old woodland, farmland and a reclaimed colliery.

33. Ribblehead Viaduct: One of the most prominent and striking man-made landmarks in North Yorkshire, Ribblehead Viaduct (above) is on the Settle-Carlisle Railway line. Hundreds of workers lost their lives building the line, so many that the railway paid for an expansion of the local graveyard. Memorials along the line commemorate their lives.

34. Keighley and Worth Valley Railway: The KWVR is a standard gauge branch line which joins the national railway network, and steam trains run five miles up the Worth Valley to Oxenhope. Other stations on the Line are at Ingrow, Damems, Oakworth and Haworth. The railway is famous for its role in the 1970 film version of The Railway Children.

35. Holmfirth: This quirky Pennine town should cope well with the arrival of the Tour because it is accustomed to welcoming large numbers of visitors thanks to its reputation as the filming location of the comedy Last Of The Summer Wine. The town is characterised by stone-built cottages nestled in picturesque streets.

36. Bradford Industrial Museum: Bradford's Industrial Museum has permanent displays of textile machinery, steam power, engineering, printing machinery and motor vehicles, along with an exciting exhibitions programme. You can enjoy the splendour of Moorside House where the mill manager lived, or visit the millworkers' terraced houses.

37. Bolling Hall: Bolling Hall (above) was for many years the seat of two important land-owning families, the Bollings and the Tempests. Bolling Hall is a rambling mixture of styles with every nook and cranny packed with history. During the Civil War the Royalist household was a stronghold during the 'siege of Bradford'.

38. Gaping Gill, Clapham: Gaping Gill is a pothole on the limestone moors near the village of Clapham in the Yorkshire Dales. Fell Beck flows into the huge main chamber in what is thought to be the highest unbroken waterfall that empties into the earth. There is a huge network of tunnels which connect with other potholes in the area.

39. Michelin-starred restaurants: Yorkshire now boasts the largest number of Michelin-starred restaurants than any other county in England outside London. Among them are the Box Tree, Ilkley which recently retained its Michelin Star for the sixth year running, and the Yorke Arms, near Harrogate.

40. Eureka!, Halifax: Eureka! is a family museum aimed at children aged up to 11, who are inspired to learn all about themselves and the world around them by playing, imagining, experimenting and having fun.

41: Kilnsey Park, near Kettlewell: With fishing, children's activities, friendly farm ***animals*** and the best of local food, Kilnsey Park (above), in the shadow of the famous crag, is a great Yorkshire Dales experience with walking, pony trekking and cycling added to the mix.

42. Baildon Moor: To the north of Bradford, Baildon Moor commands a high vantage point and offers amazing views across the countryside. It is bordered by Ilkley Moor and Rombalds Moor and there is evidence - in the shape of "cup and ring" stones - of Bronze Age settlement of the area.

43. Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley: Originally the mansion of the Victorian millionaire and textile ***manufacturer***, Henry Isaac Butterfield, Cliffe Castle stands in attractive hillside grounds with greenhouses, aviaries and a children's play area. The house is now a large museum.

44. Yeadon Tarn: Between Leeds and Bradford, Yeadon Tarn is a public park built around a large pond, very popular with younger visitors due to the playground and BMX track.

45. Ilkley Lido: Open from May to September, the lido is one of a handful of such open-air pools in the country. It was opened in May 1935 as part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations for King George V and these days can attract up to 150,000 people per year.

46. Hardraw Force (above), Hawes: In North Yorkshire, the force is England's largest single-drop waterfall with a reputed 100ft drop, set within the grounds of the historic Green Dragon Inn.

47. Otley Chevin: Managed by volunteers, the Chevin is a great place for walking, orienteering or learning about trees and plants. There is an extensive bridleway network on the eastern parts of the Chevin that caters for a range of abilities and a variety of rocks suitable for climbing or bouldering.

48. Bradford Cathedral: This historic building is right in the heart of Bradford, and evidence suggests that Christian worship was carried out on the site as early as the seventh century. In 1919, a new diocese of Bradford was created from that of Ripon, and the ancient Parish Church became Bradford Cathedral.

49. Leeds-Bradford Airport: Earlier this year Leeds-Bradford Airport was named Best UK Airport at the annual Globe Travel Awards. More than three million people pass through its halls each year.

50. Little Germany: A historic quarter of central Bradford which takes its name from the numbers of predominantly Jewish European merchants who constructed large warehouses for the wool trade there in the 19th century.

51. Whitby Abbey: These brooding ruins high on the headland over the coastal town provided much inspiration for Dracula author Bram Stoker. You can discover the long history of the Abbey in the interactive visitor centre with its digital reconstructions.

52. Emmerdale: Once Emmerdale Farm, now just Emmerdale, this is the quintessential Yorkshire soap opera of rural life. From its country beginnings in 1972 it is now a hotbed of intrigue and drama.

53. The Textile Industry: West Yorkshire in particular was the hub of the world's textile industry in the post-Industrial Revolution years of the 19th century, but the wool industry first began to grow in the 16th century.

54. Yorkshire Puddings: The first recorded recipe was apparently in 1737, and it only consists of three ingredients: eggs, flour, and milk. But this is a staple of the great British Sunday lunch and goes very nicely with roast beef and gravy.

55. Bradfield: About six miles north west of Sheffield, this is the quintessentially English village. With its bowling green, cricket ground, river, well-used village shop and two popular pubs, the village is busily preparing for a deluge of visitors when the Tour arrives this summer.

56. Ilkley Toy Museum: The museum displays dolls, dolls houses, teddy bears, tin plate toys, lead figures and a selection of games, together with wooden and paper toys. Dating from 350BC to the present day the exhibits also include a 1940s English working model fairground.

57. Sporting excellence - Olympians: It was said during the 2012 London Olympics that if Yorkshire was a country it would have beaten many other nations in the medal table. Our sporting heroes included heptathlere Jessica Ennis (above) boxer Nicola Adams, triathlete Alistair Brownlee, cyclist Ed Clancy, rower Andy Triggs-Hodge and cyclist Lizzie Armitstead.

58. Roberts Park, Shipley: Recently restored with money from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Roberts Park promptly won the prestigious Green Flag Award. There's a new play area and skate park, as well as a beautiful bandstand.

59. Bingley Music Live: The annual indie/pop music festival is set in the picturesque grounds of Myrtle Park, and it is growing in popularity every year. For the 2014 event on the last weekend in August, the organisers have scooped the legendary Pet Shop Boys.

60. Bradford City Park and Mirror Pool: The award-winning City Park in Centenary Square, Bradford, has transformed the city centre and now draws in many visitors. It boasts a new high-tech water feature, the largest of its kind in the UK, in the Mirror Pool.

61. Bradford International Film Festival: The festival has taken place at Bradford's National Media Museum since 1995, and over the decades has grown into one of the country's most respected and eclectic celebrations of cinema.

62. Leeds and Liverpool Canal: The Leeds and Liverpool Canal is the longest canal in Northern England at 127 miles. It passes through 91 locks with a summit level of 487ft.

63. Highest motorway in Britain: The M62 traverses the Pennines and its foothills, rising to 1,221ft above sea level east of junction 22 in Calderdale, not far from the boundary between Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

64. Yorkshire Three Peaks: Every year, thousands of people tackle Yorkshire's Three Peaks, often for charity. Pen-y-ghent (above), Whernside and Ingleborough are usually climbed in that order, and in under 12 hours.

65. Award-winning farm shops: Given the rolling countryside and vast amount of home-grown produce such as meat, dairy and vegetables made here in Yorkshire, it's unsurprising that we have some fantastic farm shops where you can buy the freshest, tastiest Yorkshire born-and-bred items.

66. Holme Moss: A popular destination for hardy hikers, the view from the top of this 1,719ft moor is stunning. The peak is home to a transmitting station.

67. The Great Northern Trail cycle route: Of special interest to anyone with a love of cycling, the Great Northern Railway Trail is a work in progress by the charity Sustrans.

68. Bronte Parsonage, Haworth: The Parsonage, built in 1778-9, was the lifelong home of the Bronte family. It was opened as a museum in 1928. Now it is one of the major focuses of the brisk tourist trade to Haworth.

69. York Minster: York Minster (above) is one of the largest Gothic cathedrals of its kind in Northern Europe. The minster is the seat of the Archbishop of York, the second-highest office of the Church of England, and is the cathedral for the Diocese of York.

70. Newby Hall, near Ripon: Designed by Sir Christopher Wren, with some of Britain's finest Robert Adam interiors, Newby Hall is home to a wonderful collection of Chippendale furniture and classical statuary. With 25 acres of award-winning gardens, including one of Europe's largest double herbaceous borders, an enchanting woodland walk and a miniature railway.

71. Hebden Bridge: Seen as something of a liberal paradise, Hebden Bridge takes its name from the packhorse bridge over Hebden Water. The town developed in late medieval times as a river-crossing and meeting point. It is a lovely little town of cafes, independent shops and "double-decker" housing built up the valley sides.

72. North Yorkshire Moors: The North York Moors National Park is a beautiful landscape of stunning moorland, spectacular coast, ancient woodland and historic sites. It is one of the largest expanses of heather moorland in the United Kingdom and comprises more than 1,400 miles of natural beauty.

73. Forbidden Corner, near Leyburn: A labyrinth of tunnels, paths, passageways, chambers, follies and surprises, with odd statues at every turn, created within a four-acre garden in the heart of Tupgill Park and the Yorkshire Dales.

74. Kettlewell: A beautiful, quiet village not far from Grassington, Kettlewell is characterised by its limestone terraced houses and welcoming tea-shops, with some of the best walking in the Yorkshire Dales within easy reach. Its annual Mayfest event is a haven for local artists and musicians.

75. York Castle Museum: From recreated Jacobean dining rooms to infamous Victorian criminals, and all the way to the Space Age and the Swinging Sixties, York Castle Museum takes in 400 years of York's history, with a special First World War exhibition lined up for June to commemorate 100 years since the start of the Great War.

76. Kirkstall Abbey and Abbey Museum, Leeds: One of the most complete examples of a medieval Cistercian abbey in Britain, Kirkstall Abbey is set in wonderful parkland along the banks of the River Aire. It boasts historic architecture amid a haven of wildlife and greenery. Just a short distance away is the lively, interactive Abbey Museum.

77. Ripon Workhouse: The Workhouse Museum (above) contains the Guardians' Room, Vagrants Cells and Receiving Ward for inmates. It features a recreation of the original workhouse kitchen garden, located to the rear of the workhouse site which would have been tended by the inmates and been used to ***feed*** them.

78. Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, near York: The Yorkshire Air Museum is the largest independent air museum in Britain and is also the location of The Allied Air Forces Memorial. Situated in a 20-acre parkland site on the former Second World War RAF Bomber Command Station, it the largest and most original wartime station open to the public.

79. York Maze: Created from more than one million living, growing maize plants, York Maze is the largest in the UK as well as being an award-winning family attraction with more than 20 different rides, attractions and shows to enjoy. It opens for the summer season from July 12 and then throughout the school holidays.

80. Stockeld Park, near Wetherby: Stockeld Park (above) is privately owned, and is the centre of a 2,000-acre ***agricultural*** estate, which is made up of farming land and Yorkshire's finest and largest Christmas tree plantation. Enter the magical woodland of the historic Stockeld Park estate and discover a world of adventure and fun.

81. Thackray Museum, Leeds: The Thackray ***Medical*** Museum is one of the UK's largest ***medical*** museums. It has more than 47,000 fascinating ***medical*** objects and 23,000 books and catalogues relating to the history of ***medicine*** and healthcare.

82. Penistone Hill Country Park, near Haworth: Set among the rolling hills and undulating moorland above Haworth. You can take a gentle walk along the footpaths and take in some marvellous views of Bronte Country as well as learning a little about the area's industrial past - the area was widely quarried for stone and you can still see evidence of the old workings.

83. Grassington Festival: Taking place every June, the festival was founded in 1981 to celebrate life in Yorkshire, music and literature. The varied line-up this year includes Only Men Aloud, the Boomtown Rats and Heather Small of M People, alongside a wealth of smaller events and workshops.

84. Ilkley Literature Festival: This is one of the major book festivals in the country, and last year celebrated its 40th anniversary. It regularly attracts the biggest names in literature, with thousands of people heading for Ilkley to see novelists and non-fiction authors talk about their latest work.

85. Top Withens: Top Withens Farm (above) was the supposed location for Wuthering Heights in Emily Bronte's famous novel, and you can visit the ruins of the old place but only on foot, although you can park at the West End car park a little way out of Haworth. A real taste of literary history come to life.

86. Saltaire Festival: An annual arts festival taking place in the model village of Saltaire, the festival covers a wide range of interests and covers art, food and music with venues ranging from halls and public spaces to individual houses which throw open their doors for an arts trail throughout the fortnight.

87. Haworth 1940s weekend: A regular fixture every May, visitors enjoy the sights and sounds of the 1940s at this well-loved event. Spivs and street vendors ply their wares among military and period vehicles, while street entertainers recapture the music and performances of the time. Dressing up not compulsory, but advised!

88. Oakworth: Overlooking the Worth Valley and sitting between Haworth and Keighley, Oakworth is a station on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway and welcomes visitors disembarking from the regular steam train rides through Bronte country to its pretty streets and ornamential park.

89. York Dungeon: Take a trip into more than 2,000 years of York's sometimes horrible history. The Dungeon brings together a cast of theatrical actors, special effects, stages and scenes in a truly unique and exciting walkthrough experience that you see, hear, touch, smell and feel. It's hilarious fun and it's sometimes a bit scary.

90. Eden Camp, Malton: Eden Camp is a multi-award winning modern history theme museum housed within the grounds of a Second World War prisoner-of-war camp. It was developed into a museum by local businessman Stan Johnson to stand as a tribute to all people, civilian and military, who endured hardship throughout the war.

91. Robin Hood's Bay: A beautiful and charming fishing village built around a stunning a bay located within the North York Moors National Park, five miles south of Whitby and 15 miles north of Scarborough on the coast of North Yorkshire. There's a wonderful beach which is great for fossil hunting and you can lose yourself around the narrow alleyways.

92. Dean Clough: Dean Clough (above) is a thriving, privately-owned business community of more than 4,000 people in Halifax. The 20-acre site was once the world's largest carpet factory. The high calibre of its regeneration and its arts programme is widely celebrated. There are shops and regular events.

93. Bingley Show: Bingley Show is one of the biggest one-day ***agricultural***, horticultural, craft and horse shows in Europe. The Airedale ***Agricultural*** Society can trace its origins back to 1862. Over the last 100 years the show has been held at Myrtle Meadows, Bradford & Bingley Sports Club and, most recently, at Myrtle Park.

94. The Bradford Classic: Every August the centre of Bradford plays host to a wonderful collection of vintage, classic and downright quirky cars and motorbikes. Owners bring their pride-and-joy vehicles to the city and display them in Centenary Square.

95. Darwin Gardens, Ilkley: West View Park, rechristened Darwin Gardens at the turn of the century, is a unique community gardens, with some beautiful features linked exclusively to Ilkley. With stunning views of Ilkley Moor, and heritage connections to Charles Darwin's stay in the town, the Gardens are a fantastic place to explore.

96. Roundhay Park, Leeds: Roundhay Park is one of the most popular parks in Leeds. The park covers more than 700 acres of rolling parkland, lakes, woodlands and formal gardens, and contains several cafes and two playgrounds. The park is also home to Tropical World, where visitors can meet crocodiles, lemurs, butterflies, bats, snakes and even meerkats.

97. Temple Newsam, Leeds: One of the most celebrated historic houses in the country, this Tudor-Jacobean mansion has more than 40 restored rooms open to view. It is steeped in a rich history from its royal links to the lives of the ordinary people who lived and worked on the estate.

98. Standedge Tunnel, Marsden: Billed as one of the "Seven Wonders of the Waterways", Standedge Tunnel, at 3¼ miles, is Britain's longest canal tunnel. Visitors can explore deep into this attraction on one of the family-friendly guided boat trips, stop for a bite to eat in the newly-refurbished Watersedge cafe, and let children jump, climb and explore the playground.

99. Diggerland, Castleford: Ever wanted to get in the driving seat of some seriously heavy plant? That's what you can do at Diggerland, one of the most unusual attractions in the country. With thrillrides modelled around industrial vehicles as well as rides on the real thing, this is perfect for children and big kids as well.

100. Ogden Water Country Park and Nature Reserve, Denholme: More than 300,000 people visit Ogden Water every year for picnics, walking, family outings and nature activities. Owned by Yorkshire Water, the country park is managed by Calderdale Council, who provide the access and woodlands for the benefit of conservation and quiet informal recreation.

What are your favourite things about Yorkshire? Tell us below...

**Load-Date:** April 1, 2014

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[***United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office Publishes Application for Trademark "SMALLFIX Small jobs are important too!" to Martin Kellner for Various Services***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5CCJ-H3P1-JDKC-R0GT-00000-00&context=1516831)

UK Government News

June 7, 2014 Saturday 5:50 PM EST

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**Body**

South Wales, June 7 -- Martin Kellner, London, has filed the trademark "SMALLFIX Small jobs are important too!" on April 29, for various services.

The trademark application (journal number: 2014/024) was published on June 6. Class(es): 37 [Abrasive cleaning of metallic surfaces;Abrasive cleaning of non-metallic surfaces;Acoustic ceiling cleaning;Advice relating to preventing blockages in drains;Advice relating to preventing blockages in grease traps;Advice relating to preventing blockages in plumbing lines;Advice relating to preventing blockages in septic tanks;Advisory services for cleaning;Advisory services for maintenance;Advisory services relating to asphalting;Advisory services relating to building;Advisory services relating to building construction;Advisory services relating to building decoration;Advisory services relating to building refurbishment;Advisory services relating to construction;Advisory services relating to development of property;Advisory services relating to excavating;Advisory services relating to flooring;Advisory services relating to pipe laying;Advisory services relating to property development;Advisory services relating to surfacing projects;Advisory services relating to the 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maintenance;Aeroplane repair;Air compressors (rental of-);Air conditioning apparatus installation and repair;Air conditioning contractor services;Air duct cleaning services;Air-conditioning system installation and repair;Aircraft maintenance;Aircraft maintenance and repair services;Aircraft maintenance or repair;Aircraft repair;Aircraft repair and maintenance;Airplane de-icing services;Airplane maintenance and repair;Alarms (installation of-);Alarms (repair of -);Antenna installation and repair;Anti-corrosion treatment;Anti-rust treatment;Anti-rust treatment for motor vehicles;Anti-rust treatment for vehicles;Anti-rust treatment of motor vehicles;Apartment refurbishment services;Application of bridge expansion joints;Application of coatings for the repair of surfaces of buildings;Application of coatings for the repair of walls;Application of coatings to buildings;Application of coatings to swimming pools;Application of coatings to tunnels;Application of protective coatings for buildings;Application of protective coatings to building surfaces;Application of protective coatings to cavity surfaces;Application of protective coatings to tank surfaces;Application of protective paint to buildings;Application of protective paint to wood;Application of rendering to buildings;Application of rendering to swimming pools;Application of rendering to tunnels;Application of screeds;Application of security films to glazing;Application of sheathing to cables;Application of sheathing to optical fibres;Application of slip-resistant safety floor sealers;Application of surface coatings;Application of underlayments;Application of waterproof coatings for roofs;Application of waterproof linings;Arranging for the fitting of replacement vehicle windows;Arranging for the fitting of replacement vehicle windscreens;Arranging for the maintenance of motor land vehicles;Arranging for the repair of motor land vehicles;Arranging for the replacement vehicle windows;Arranging for the replacement vehicle windscreens;Arranging of vehicle repairs;Artificial snow-making services;Asbestos extraction;Asbestos removal;Asphalting;Assembling [installation] of building framework;Assembling [installation] of machine plant;Assembling [installation] of shelving;Assembling [installation] of storage systems;Assembling of scaffolding;Assembly [installation] of accessories for vehicles;Assembly [installation] of parts for vehicles;Automobile body repair and finishing for others;Automobile cleaning;Automobile cleaning and car washing;Automobile detailing;Automobile greasing;Automobile lubrication;Automobile painting;Automobile pinstriping;Automobile polishing;Automobile reconditioning services;Automobile repair and maintenance;Automobile service station services;Automobile undercoating services;Automobile washing;Automotive refinishing;Basement waterproofing;Beneath ground construction work relating to cabling;Beneath ground construction work relating to drain laying;Beneath ground construction work relating to foundation laying;Beneath ground construction work relating to gas supply mains;Beneath ground construction work relating to gas supply pipes;Beneath ground construction work relating to pipework;Beneath ground construction work relating to plumbing;Beneath ground construction work relating to sewers;Beneath ground construction work relating to water supply mains;Beneath ground construction work relating to water supply pipes;Beneath ground construction work relating to wiring;Boiler cleaning and repair;Boiler cleaning services;Boiler repair services;Book repair and restoration;Boot repair;Boring of wells;Bricklaying;Building and construction services;Building caulking services;Building cleaning;Building construction;Building construction and repair;Building construction services;Building construction supervision;Building consultancy services;Building damp-proofing;Building demolition;Building equipment (rental of -);Building inspection [in the course of building construction];Building insulating;Building insulation;Building maintenance;Building maintenance and repair;Building of apartment buildings;Building of bridges;Building of canal locks;Building of commercial properties;Building of factories;Building of fair stalls and shops;Building of foundations;Building of hospitals;Building of houses;Building of industrial properties;Building of motorway networks;Building of multi-storey car parks;Building of naval vessels;Building of offices;Building of railways;Building of roads;Building of schools;Building of shops;Building of underground structures;Building refurbishment services;Building reinforcing;Building repair;Building repair and renovation;Building repairs;Building restoration;Building sealing;Building services;Building services relating to building for habitation;Building services relating to building for industry purposes;Buildings (Cleaning of -) [exterior surface];Buildings (Cleaning of -) [interior];Buildings (construction of -);Buildings (damp-proofing of -) during construction;Buildings (fire-proofing of -) during construction;Buildings (insulation of -) during construction;Buildings (insulation to existing -);Buildings (renovation of -);Buildings (restoration of -);Buildings (sealing of -) during construction;Buildings (supervision during construction of -);Buildings (waterproofing of -) during construction;Bulldozers (Rental of -);Burglar alarm installation;Burglar alarm installation and repair;Burglar alarm repair;Burner maintenance and repair;Burner maintenance or repair;Cabinet making [repair];Cabinet refacing;Cabinet repair;Cabinet-making [repair];Cabinets (repair of-);Cable laying;Cable-laying;Camera repair;Car cleaning;Car cleaning services;Car maintenance;Car valet services;Car wash;Car wash services;Car washing;Care and repair of skis;Care of fur (services for the-);Care of leather (services for the-);Caretaking services;Carpentry;Carpentry contractor services;Carpentry services;Carpet and rug cleaning;Carpet cleaning;Carpet shears (rental of -);Carpet stretchers (rental of -);Carpet-fitting;Carpet-laying;Car-wash services;Ceiling cleaning services;Ceiling installation;Ceiling lining installation;Ceiling lining repair;Ceiling repair;Ceiling texturing;Central heating installation;Charitable services, namely construction;Chimney sweeping;Civil construction services;Civil engineering;Civil engineering construction;Civil engineering [construction] consultancy;Civil engineering demolition;Civil engineering maintainance involving the use of hydromechanical cutting equipment;Civil engineering maintenance involving the use of pressurised jets of abrasive-containing water;Civil engineering maintenance involving the use of water-jet cutting equipment;Civil engineering relating to ***agricultural*** land;Civil engineering relating to rural land;Civil engineering relating to the prevention of inundation of buildings by flood water;Civil engineering relating to the prevention of inundation of land by flood water;Civil engineering relating to water irrigation;Civil engineering services;Civil engineering underwater construction services;Cleaning and polishing of motor vehicles;Cleaning by means of sanding (services for-);Cleaning by means of scouring (services for-);Cleaning by water jetting (services for-);Cleaning (diaper-);Cleaning (Diaper -);Cleaning (dry-);Cleaning (Dry -);Cleaning equipment hire;Cleaning equipment (rental of -);Cleaning machines (Rental of -);Cleaning of ballast lines;Cleaning of blinds;Cleaning of boilers;Cleaning of building exterior surfaces;Cleaning of building exteriors;Cleaning of building facades;Cleaning of building interiors;Cleaning of building sites;Cleaning of buildings;Cleaning of buildings [exterior surface];Cleaning of buildings [interior];Cleaning of buildings soiled by birds;Cleaning of cargo holds;Cleaning of ceiling surfaces;Cleaning of clothes;Cleaning of clothing;Cleaning of commercial premises;Cleaning of culverts;Cleaning of domestic premises;Cleaning of domestic utensils;Cleaning of drains;Cleaning of drains by high pressure water jetting;Cleaning of electrical motors;Cleaning of exterior airport runways;Cleaning of exterior ships' decks;Cleaning of exterior wall surfaces;Cleaning of external surfaces of buildings;Cleaning of fabrics;Cleaning of facades;Cleaning of factories;Cleaning of floor coverings;Cleaning of floor surfaces;Cleaning of footwear;Cleaning of furnishings;Cleaning of furniture;Cleaning of gullies;Cleaning of hospitals;Cleaning of hotels;Cleaning of industrial boilers;Cleaning of industrial plant;Cleaning of industrial premises;Cleaning of leather;Cleaning of machines;Cleaning of mats;Cleaning of mobile sanitary facilities;Cleaning of monuments;Cleaning of motor vehicles;Cleaning of nuclear plant;Cleaning of offices;Cleaning of property;Cleaning of public buildings;Cleaning of residential houses;Cleaning of schools;Cleaning of shoes;Cleaning of shops;Cleaning of site roads;Cleaning of stone work;Cleaning of storage containers;Cleaning of storage tanks;Cleaning of streets;Cleaning of structures;Cleaning of textiles;Cleaning of the exterior surfaces of buildings;Cleaning of the interior surfaces of buildings;Cleaning of upholstery;Cleaning of vehicles;Cleaning of wall surfaces;Cleaning of water cylinders;Cleaning of water supply pipework;Cleaning of water supply plumbing;Cleaning of water tanks;Cleaning of windows;Cleaning services;Cleaning soft furnishings;Cleaning (vehicle-);Cleaning (Vehicle -);Cleansing of baths;Cleansing of buildings;Cleansing of mobile structures;Cleansing of pools;Cleansing of public conveniences;Cleansing of tanks;Cleansing of vehicles;Clearing of pipework systems used in the ***manufacturing*** industries;Clearing of pipework systems used in the refining industries;Clearing of tree-roots;Clock and watch mending;Clock and watch repair;Clock repair;Cloth ironing;Cloth laundering;Cloth laundry;Cloth pressing;Cloth washing;Clothing (cleaning of-);Clothing (Cleaning of -);Clothing ironing;Clothing laundering;Clothing laundry;Clothing pressing;Clothing repair;Clothing repair [mending clothing];Clothing (repair of -);Clothing washing;Coating of brickwork;Coating of concrete;Coating of conduits;Coating of drains;Coating of passageways;Coating of pipes;Coating of sewers;Coating [painting] services;Coating services for the maintenance of industrial engineering plant;Coating services for the maintenance of marine engineering plant;Coating services for the maintenance of ships;Coating services for the repair of industrial engineering plant;Coating services for the repair of marine engineering plant;Coating services for the repair of ships;Cobbler services;Cobbler's services [repair];Computer and telephone battery recharge services;Computer hardware (installation, maintenance and repair of);Computer hardware (Installation, maintenance and repair of -);Computer installation and maintenance services;Computer installation and repair;Computer installation services;Computer maintenance services;Computer repair services;Concrete crushing;Concrete polishing;Concrete pumping;Concrete renovation;Concrete repairs;Concrete sealing;Concrete-mixing apparatus (rental of -);Concreting;Conservation and preservation services for works of art;Constructing decks;Constructing [erecting and glazing] conservatories;Constructing [erecting and glazing] garden buildings;Constructing porches;Constructing sunrooms;Construction ;Construction advisory services;Construction consultancy;Construction (consultancy services relating to-);Construction consultation;Construction engineering;Construction engineering consultancy services;Construction equipment (rental of-);Construction equipment (Rental of -);Construction information;Construction (information relating to-);Construction land developing;Construction management services;Construction management [supervision];Construction of airports;Construction of barrettes;Construction of bridges;Construction of buildings;Construction of carriageways;Construction of ceilings;Construction of chimneys;Construction of civil engineering structures by forming concrete;Construction of civil engineering structures by laying concrete;Construction of civil engineering structures by pouring concrete;Construction of civil engineering works;Construction of complexes for business;Construction of complexes for recreational purposes;Construction of complexes for sports purposes;Construction of cubicles;Construction of curtain walls;Construction of dams;Construction of diaphragm walls;Construction of drainage systems;Construction of exhibition stands;Construction of exploitation pipelines;Construction of exploitation platforms;Construction of factories;Construction of floors;Construction of foundations for bridges;Construction of foundations for buildings;Construction of foundations for civil engineering structures;Construction of foundations for dams;Construction of foundations for roads;Construction of galleries;Construction of greenhouses;Construction of harbours;Construction of hard-standing areas;Construction of holiday accommodation;Construction of house extensions;Construction of houses;Construction of industrial furnaces;Construction of interior accommodation;Construction of kitchens;Construction of leisure complexes;Construction of ***medical*** establishments;Construction of models;Construction of motorways;Construction of nuclear boilers;Construction of nuclear power plants;Construction of nuclear reactors;Construction of partition walls for interiors;Construction of partitioning;Construction of partitions;Construction of parts of buildings;Construction of paths;Construction of piles;Construction of pipelines;Construction of ports;Construction of power plants;Construction of pre-fabricated houses for hippopotami;Construction of property;Construction of prospecting pipelines;Construction of prospecting platforms;Construction of public facilities;Construction of public works;Construction of railway roadbeds;Construction of railways;Construction of ramparts;Construction of residential properties;Construction of roads;Construction of rural works;Construction of saunas;Construction of screens;Construction of sewerage systems;Construction of sports fields;Construction of sports grounds;Construction of staircases of wood;Construction of steel fabrications;Construction of steel structures for buildings;Construction of structures for the production of crude oil;Construction of structures for the production of natural gas;Construction of structures for the storage of crude oil;Construction of structures for the storage of natural gas;Construction of structures for the transportation crude oil;Construction of structures for the transportation of natural gas;Construction of swimming-pool complexes;Construction of telecommunication towers;Construction of tunnels;Construction of underground galleries;Construction of underground shafts;Construction of underground transport networks;Construction of uranium enrichment plants;Construction of ventilation shafts;Construction of walls;Construction project management services;Construction supervision;Construction supervision of buildings;Construction supervision of civil engineering projects;Consultancy services relating to installation of computers;Consultancy services relating to the construction of buildings;Consultancy services relating to the repair of buildings;Consultation in building construction supervision;Contract cleaning of clubs;Contract cleaning of factories;Contract cleaning of leisure centres;Contract cleaning of offices;Control of pests;Control of vermin;Conversion of business premises;Conversion of engines from petrol to diesel;Conversion of shop premises;Countersinking;Crane hire;Cranes (rental of -);Crime scene clean-up services;Curtain fitting services;Curtain hanging;Curtain upholstery;Custom building construction;Custom construction of bridges;Custom construction of buildings;Custom construction of factories;Custom construction of homes;Custom construction of houses;Custom construction of motorways;Custom construction of roads;Custom construction of ships;Custom installation of automobile interiors;Custom shipbuilding;Damp proofing services;Damp-proofing [building];Damp-proofing during construction;Decorating of buildings;Decorating (painting and -);Decorative painting services;Demolition of bridges;Demolition of buildings;Demolition of chimneys;Demolition of piers;Demolition of structures;Demolition services;Deodorising services;Detection of draughts in buildings;Detection of leaks within buildings;Development of buildings;Development of land [construction];Development of ports;Development of properties;Development of property;Development (property -);Diagnostic maintenance services for computer printers;Diagnostic maintenance services for computers;Diagnostic maintenance services for photocopiers;Diaper cleaning;Diaper cleaning services;Disinfecting;Disinfecting of telephone hand-sets;Disinfection;Disinfection of buildings against bacterial infestation;Disinfection of premises;Disinfection of premises against bacterial infestation;Disinfection services;Dismantling of buildings;Dismantling of industrial equipment;Dismantling of industrial machinery;Dismantling of industrial plant;Dismantling of machinery;Dismantling of power lines;Dismantling of roofs;Dismantling of structures;Dismantling services;Domestic cleaning;Doors and windows (Installation of -);Double glazing installation;Drain cleaning services;Drainage (land -);Drainage services;Draught proofing;Dredging;Dredging of river channels;Drill bit sharpening;Drilling;Drilling and pumping of oil;Drilling for crude oil;Drilling of deep oil or gas-wells;Drilling of oil wells;Drilling of wells;Drills (rental of -);Driving of piles;Dry cleaning;Dry cleaning of clothing;Drying of carpets);Drying of clothes;Drywall contractor services;Earthmoving;Earthmoving machines (rental of -);Electric appliance installation;Electric appliance installation and repair;Electric appliance repair;Electrical contracting;Electrical contractor services;Electrical installation services;Electrical wiring services;Elevator installation;Elevator installation and repair;Elevator repair;Emergency vehicle repair services;Emptying [cleaning] services;Engine conversions from petrol to diesel;Engine lubrication;Engineering (civil -);Engineering construction;Engineering (construction -);Erecting ***manufacturing*** plants;Erecting of commercial centres;Erecting of housing areas;Erection of climbing formworks;Erection of crowd control barriers;Erection of curtain walling;Erection of display boards;Erection of grandstands;Erection of pre-fabricated buildings;Erection of reinforced concrete structures utilising sliding and climbing formworks;Erection of scaffolding;Erection of signboards;Erection of signs;Erection of sliding formworks;Erection of temporary constructions for outdoor events;Erection of temporary seating;Excavating;Excavating machines (rental of -);Excavating services for verifying the location of utility lines;Excavation of underground tanks;Excavation services;Excavators (Rental of -);Exploitation [extraction] of oil from oil-fields;Explosive civil engineering;Exterminating (Vermin -), other than for ***agriculture***;Exterminating (vermin-) other than for ***agriculture***;Extermination of fungus infestation in wood;Extermination of insects;Extermination of pests;Extermination of rats;Extermination of rodents;Extraction (Mining -);Extraction of oil;Fabric ironing;Fabric laundering;Fabric laundry;Facade cleaning;Factory construction;Fence erection services;Film projector repair and maintenance;Fire alarm installation;Fire alarm installation and repair;Fire alarm repair;Fire alarms (installation of-);Fire alarms (repair of-);Fire extinguisher recharging services;Fireproofing during construction;Fitting of armour plating to vehicles;Fitting of carpets;Fitting of floor coverings;Fitting of replacement vehicle parts;Fitting of windows in motor vehicles;Fitting of windscreens in motor vehicles;Fitting services;Fitting services for tyres;Floor coating services;Floor layering;Floor maintenance services;Floor polishing;Floor sanding;Fluid pumping services;Footwear repair services;Freezers (installation of-);Freezers (repair of-);Freezing equipment installation and repair;Fuel filling services for land vehicles;Fuelling services for aircraft;Fumigating;Fumigation;Fumigation of buildings against pests;Fumigation of buildings against vermin activity;Fumigation of commodities against pests;Fumigation of commodities against vermin activity;Fur care, cleaning and repair;Fur cleaning, care and repair;Furnace installation and repair;Furnace installation and repairs;Furniture maintenance;Furniture renovation;Furniture repair;Furniture restoration;Furniture upholstering;Furniture varnishing;Garage services for motor vehicle repair;Garage services for vehicle maintenance;Garage services for vehicle repair;Gas drilling;General building contractor services;Germ elimination services;Germ reduction services;Glazier services;Glaziers services for ***agricultural*** vehicles;Glaziers services for construction vehicles;Glazing [glasswork];Glazing services;Glazing services for buildings;Gravel extraction;Greasing of vehicles;Greasing of vehicles);Greasing (vehicle-);Greasing (Vehicle -);Ground consolidation;Ground stabilization;Grout reinforcement for bridges;Grout reinforcement for dams;Grout reinforcement for foundations;Grout reinforcement for gas platforms;Grout reinforcement for mines;Grout reinforcement for oil platforms;Grout reinforcement for tunnels;Grouting services;Hammers (rental of -);Harbour construction;Hat repair;Hat restoration;Heat insulation of windows;Heating contractor services;Heating equipment installation;Heating equipment installation and repair;Heating equipment repair;Highway maintenance;Hire of aerial work platforms;Hire of aluminium towers;Hire of building tools;Hire of chutes;Hire of construction apparatus;Hire of demolition plant vehicles;Hire of earth moving machines;Hire of ladders;Hire of lifting apparatus;Hire of roadworking machinery;Hire of scaffolding;Hire of scaffolding boards;Hire of stagings;Hire of steel towers;Hire of steps;Hire of tools;Hire of trestles;Hiring of building machinery;Hiring of bulldozers;Hiring of construction equipment;Hiring of construction machinery;Hiring of tree pullers;House building;House painting;House painting services;Hydraulic construction services;Hydro-electric factory construction;Hygienic cleaning [buildings];Hygienic cleaning [mobile structures];Hygienic cleaning [vehicles];Hygienic cleansing [baths];Hygienic cleansing [pools];Industrial cleaning of buildings;Industrial cleaning services;Industrial deep cleaning for commercial catering establishments;Infestations (control of-), fleas;Information concerning rental of equipment for constructions and buildings;Information (construction-);Information (Construction -);Information on the maintenance of measuring and test equipment;Information relating to repair services;Information services relating to installation of security systems;Information services relating to maintenance of security systems;Information services relating to repairs;Information services relating to the construction, maintenanceand repair of aircraft;Information services relating to the construction of buildings;Information services relating to the refurbishment of buildings;Insecticide spraying;Inspection of premises to detect woodworm;Inspection of structures to detect woodworm;Inspection of vehicles prior to maintenance;Inspection of vehicles prior to repair;Installation access control systems;Installation and maintenance of irrigation systems;Installation and maintenance of photovoltaic installations;Installation and maintenance of solar thermal installations;Installation and repair of air conditioning apparatus;Installation and repair of computer hardware;Installation and repair of telecommunications networks;Installation, changing, replacement and repair of locks;Installation closed circuit television systems;Installation fire detection systems;Installation lighting systems;Installation, maintenance and repair of computer hardware;Installation of aeronautical engines;Installation of apparatus for air-conditioning;Installation of apparatus for heating;Installation of apparatus for sanitation;Installation of apparatus for ventilating;Installation of automobile accessories;Installation of basement waterproofing products;Installation of blinds;Installation of boilers;Installation of bolts;Installation of building insulation;Installation of building scaffolds, working and building platforms;Installation of burglar alarms;Installation of cable television systems;Installation of catering equipment;Installation of cellular communications systems;Installation of cellular paging systems;Installation of central heating;Installation of central heating apparatus;Installation of central vacuum cleaning systems;Installation of coatings;Installation of coloured panels in building facias;Installation of communications network instruments;Installation of computer networks;Installation of computer systems;Installation of computer systems employing solid-state electronic circuitry;Installation of computerised information systems;Installation of computers;Installation of conveyors;Installation of data network apparatus;Installation of door fittings;Installation of doors;Installation of doors and windows;Installation of draught proofing for sash windows;Installation of earth anchors;Installation of electrical and generating machinery;Installation of electricity generators;Installation of electronic and digital connection to a call centre;Installation of elevators;Installation of environmental engineering systems;Installation of fabricated construction units;Installation of false floors;Installation of felt roofs;Installation of fire performance coatings;Installation of fitted furniture;Installation of fittings for buildings;Installation of fixtures and fittings for domestic premises;Installation of flood warning systems;Installation of foundry products;Installation of glass;Installation of glass and glazing units;Installation of glazed building structures;Installation of grills;Installation of ground anchors;Installation of heating apparatus;Installation of industrial plant;Installation of instrumentation systems;Installation of insulating materials;Installation of integrated radio networks;Installation of interior partitions for buildings;Installation of internal partitioning;Installation of kitchen cabinets;Installation of kitchen equipment;Installation of lock fittings;Installation of locks;Installation of mezzanine floors;Installation of oil exploration instruments;Installation of oil production apparatus;Installation of oil refineries;Installation of parts for vehicles;Installation of pipe systems for conducting of gases;Installation of pipe systems for conducting of liquids;Installation of pipe systems for conducting of steam;Installation of pipelines;Installation of pipework systems;Installation of plant;Installation of pneumatic bulk material handling systems;Installation of racks;Installation of radio frequency communications systems;Installation of radio telephone equipment;Installation of radios;Installation of residential security apparatus;Installation of roof timbering;Installation of roofing;Installation of safes;Installation of sanitary apparatus;Installation of secondary glazing;Installation of security system;Installation of security systems;Installation of sewer liners;Installation of shelving;Installation of smelting furnaces;Installation of solar powered systems;Installation of stands for conferences;Installation of stands for exhibitions;Installation of stands for trade fairs;Installation of storage facilities;Installation of street furniture;Installation of street information placards;Installation of sun roofs;Installation of surface coverings;Installation of telephone lines;Installation of temporary barriers;Installation of temporary fences;Installation of temporary structures for business exhibitions;Installation of temporary structures for trade exhibitions;Installation of temporary structures for trade fairs;Installation of tents;Installation of traffic management systems;Installation of transmission lines;Installation of tubular linings in passageways;Installation of tubular linings in pipelines;Installation of vehicle security devices;Installation of vehicle simulator units;Installation of washroom apparatus;Installation of water softeners;Installation of window coatings;Installation of window films;Installation of window fittings;Installation of window frames;Installation of windows;Installation of windscreens;Installation of wireless telecommunications equipment and wireless local area networks;Installation, repair and maintenance of air reheaters;Installation, repair and maintenance of boiler tubes;Installation, repair and maintenance of computers and computer peripherals;Installation, repair and maintenance of condensing apparatus;Installation, repair and maintenance of steam condensers;Installation, repair and maintenance radiators for motors and engines;Installation services of elevators and lifts;Installing drywall panels;Installing fencing;Installing of electronic communications networks;Installing of telecommunications networks;Installing pet containment systems;Installing satellite dishes;Installing septic fields;Installing septic tanks;Installing siding;Installing sod;Installing wallboard;Installing wood flooring;Insulating (building-);Insulating (Building -);Insulating of buildings;Insulation construction;Insulation of buildings during construction;Insulation of pipelines;Insulation of pipes;Insulation of roofing;Insulation services;Interference suppression in electrical apparatus;Interference suppression services for electrical apparatus;Interior decoration;Interior fitting-out of company premises;Interior fitting-out of offices;Interior refurbishment of buildings;Interior renovation of commercial premises;Interior sealing and caulking services;Ironing (linen-);Ironing (Linen -);Ironing machines (rental of-);Ironing of clothing;Irrigation devices installation and repair;Irrigation (land-);Janitorial cleaning services;Janitorial services;Jewellery remounting;Jewelry remounting;Joinery;Joinery [repair];Kitchen equipment installation;Knife sharpening;Ladders (rental of -);Lagging of pipework;Land drainage;Land excavating;Land irrigation;Land reclamation;Land vehicle maintenance;Land vehicle repair;Launderette facilities (provision of-);Laundering;Laundering of babies' diapers;Laundering of garments;Laundering of textiles;Laundry equipment (rental of-);Laundry facilities (provision of-);Laundry services;Lawn mower blade sharpening;Laying and burial of cable;Laying and construction of pipelines;Laying floor tile;Laying of cable;Laying of cables;Laying of carpet;Laying of land cables;Laying of pipelines;Laying of sea cables;Lease of carpet cleaning machines;Leasing of air compressors;Leasing of building machinery;Leasing of cleaning machines;Leasing of construction equipment;Leasing of machines for cleaning rugs;Leasing of machines for cleaning upholstered furniture;Leather care, cleaning and repair;Leather cleaning and repair;Lift installation;Lift installation and repair;Lift maintenance;Lift repair;Lifting apparatus (rental of-);Lifts (installation of-);Lighting consultancy [installation];Linen ironing;Linen ironing services;Lock repair services;Locks (Repair of security -);Locksmithing [repair];Loft cleaning;Lubricating services;Lubricating services for vehicles;Lubrication of road vehicles;Lubrication of vehicles;Lubrication services;Lubrication (vehicle-);Lubrication (Vehicle -);Luggage repair;Machinery for use in construction (rental of-);Machinery installation;Machinery installation, maintenance and repair;Machinery installation services;Machinery maintenance and repair;Machinery maintenance services;Mains laying;Maintaining and repair of drain pipes;Maintaining and repair of rain channels;Maintaining and repair of roof guttering;Maintaining septic systems;Maintenance and repair of aircraft;Maintenance and repair of aircraft weapons;Maintenance and repair of ballast lines;Maintenance and repair of building contents;Maintenance and repair of buildings;Maintenance and repair of burners;Maintenance and repair of cargo holds;Maintenance and repair of clothing;Maintenance and repair of communications systems;Maintenance and repair of computer hardware;Maintenance and repair of computer networks;Maintenance and repair of computers;Maintenance and repair of computers [hardware];Maintenance and repair of data communications networks;Maintenance and repair of engines;Maintenance and repair of flooring;Maintenance and repair of gas turbines;Maintenance and repair of hardware;Maintenance and repair of heating;Maintenance and repair of heating installations;Maintenance and repair of instruments;Maintenance and repair of land vehicles;Maintenance and repair of lifts;Maintenance and repair of motor land vehicles;Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles;Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles for transportation of passengers;Maintenance and repair of parts and fittings for boats;Maintenance and repair of parts and fittings for buildings;Maintenance and repair of pipeline systems;Maintenance and repair of pipelines;Maintenance and repair of pipes used in industrial equipment;Maintenance and repair of safes;Maintenance and repair of ships' hulls;Maintenance and repair of solid fuel boilers;Maintenance and repair of spacecraft;Maintenance and repair of sporting equipment;Maintenance and repair of storage tanks;Maintenance and repair of strongrooms;Maintenance and repair of systems incorporating hoses which convey fluid;Maintenance and repair of utilities in buildings;Maintenance and repair of vehicles;Maintenance and repair of watches;Maintenance and repair of water purifying plants;Maintenance and repair services relating to automatic barriers;Maintenance and repair services relating to automatic door equipment;Maintenance and repair services relating to door closers;Maintenance and repair services relating to the air transport industry;Maintenance and servicing of fire alarm systems;Maintenance and servicing of security alarms;Maintenance and servicing of security cards;Maintenance of aircraft;Maintenance of automata;Maintenance of beverage processing apparatus;Maintenance of buildings;Maintenance of catering equipment;Maintenance of cleaning machines;Maintenance of commercial electrical systems;Maintenance of computer hardware;Maintenance of computers;Maintenance of data communication networks;Maintenance of data processing apparatus;Maintenance of data-processing terminals;Maintenance of dictation equipment;Maintenance of domestic refrigeration;Maintenance of electronic or air conditioning systems;Maintenance of internal combustion engines;Maintenance of locomotives;Maintenance of ***medical*** apparatus and instruments;Maintenance of ***medical*** equipment;Maintenance of parts and fittings for commercial motor land vehicles;Maintenance of plumbing;Maintenance of pneumatic hand tools;Maintenance of property;Maintenance of railway track;Maintenance of roads;Maintenance of typewriters;Maintenance or repair of automotive vehicles;Maintenance services;Maintenance services for industrial plants;Maintenance services relating to computer hardware;Maintenance (vehicle);Maintenance (Vehicle -);Marine construction;Marine dry docking services;Marine fitting out;Marine launching services;Marine lifting services;Marking of roads;Masonry;Masonry services;Matching services for fabrics;Matching services for floor coverings;Matching services for paints;Matching services for wallcoverings;Mechanic services;Mechanical cleaning of waterways;Mechanical contractor services;Mechanical lifting services for the construction industry;Mending clothing;Mending of clothing;Metal drilling and perforation;Mildew proofing;Mining extraction;Mining extraction services;Mining services;Mobile vehicle tuning services;Motor land vehicle cleaning services;Motor vehicle cleaning and polishing;Motor vehicle greasing;Motor vehicle lubrication;Motor vehicle maintenance;Motor vehicle maintenance and repair;Motor vehicle maintenance and repair services;Motor vehicle repair;Motor vehicle repair and maintenance services;Motor vehicle rustproofing;Motor vehicle trim repair;Motor vehicle wash;Motor-vehicle cleaning and polishing;Motor-vehicle washing;Musical instruments (Restoration of -);Naval shipbuilding;Needlework [Repair];Office cleaning services;Office equipment installation;Office equipment maintenance;Office machine and equipment installation, maintenance and repair;Office machine installation;Office machine maintenance;Office machine repair;Office machines and equipment installation, maintenance and repair;Oil burner regulation and repair;Oil drilling;Oil pipeline construction;Oil pipeline laying;Oil pumping;Oil pumping and extraction;Oil well drilling;Oil-field exploitation for the extraction of oil;On site building project management;On site project management relating to the construction of aerodrome facilities;On site project management relating to the construction of airport facilities;On site project management relating to the construction of buildings;On site project management relating to the refurbishment of aerodrome facilities;On site project management relating to the refurbishment of airport facilities;On-site construction supervision;On-site construction supervision of civil engineering works;Outer and inner cleaning of aircraft;Overhaul of engines;Overhaul of machines;Overhaul of vehicles;Paint spraying;Paint work;Painting;Painting and decorating;Painting and decorating of buildings;Painting and interior decorating services;Painting and varnishing;Painting contractor services;Painting, interior and exterior;Painting of aircraft;Painting of buildings;Painting of furniture;Painting of motor vehicles;Painting of signs;Painting of vehicles;Painting of window frames;Panel beating;Paper hanging;Parasol repair;Parquet floor laying;Pavement marking services;Pavement sealing;Pavement striping;Pavement stripping;Paving and tiling;Paving contractor services;Paving (Road -);Pest control;Pest control relating to birds;Pest control relating to buildings;Photographic apparatus repair;Photographic equipment repair;Piano-tuning;Pier breakwater building;Pier construction;Pile driving services;Pipe installation services;Pipe laying;Pipe laying services;Pipe-fitting;Pipeline construction and maintenance;Pipeline installation and repair;Pipeline insulation;Pipeline laying;Pipeline maintenance;Plant installation;Plant maintenance;Plant refurbishment;Plant repair;Plastering;Plastering contractor services;Plate glass installation and repair services;Platform rental;Plumbing;Plumbing and gas and water installation;Plumbing and glazing services;Plumbing apparatus (rental of-);Polishing (cleaning);Polishing [cleaning] of vehicles;Polishing of jewellery;Polishing (vehicle);Polishing (Vehicle -);Positioning and consolidating building land;Preparation of a site for the installation of computer equipment;Preparation of floor surfaces for lining and covering;Preparation of stair surfaces for lining and covering;Preservation of buildings;Pressing linen;Pressing of cloth;Pressing of clothing;Pressing of fabric;Pressing of textiles;Pressure grouting services;Pressure washing services;Prevention and correction of building settlement;Prevention and correction of building subsidence;Prevention of dust ingress to buildings;Project preparation relating to building renovation;Project preparation relating to civil engineering;Project preparation relating to construction engineering;Project preparation relating to demolition;Project preparation relating to dredging;Proofing of buildings against pest and vermin access;Proofing of land against pest and vermin access;Proofing of premises against pest and vermin access;Proofing of structures against pest and vermin access;Property development;Property maintenance;Protective coatings (application of-);Providing information on repair services in the aviation sector;Providing washing and drying laundry facilities;Provision of cleaning services;Provision of computerised information relating to the maintenance of carpets;Provision of construction advice;Provision of construction information;Provision of information relating to repair or installation provided on-line from a computer database or the internet;Provision of information relating to the building industries;Provision of information relating to the construction industries;Provision of information relating to the maintenance of vehicles;Provision of information relating to the repair of vehicles;Provision of launderette services;Provision of laundry facilities;Provision of laundry services;Provision of maintenance services for sports establishments;Public works;Pumicing;Pump repair;Pump repair or maintenance;Pump repairing;Pumping crude oil;Pumping of oil-wells;Pumping septic tanks;Pumps for drainage purposes (rental of-);Quarry services;Quarrying services;Radio repair;Rat exterminating;Rat extermination;Re-barrelling;Re-blacking of guns;Re-blacking of rifles;Rebuilding engines;Rebuilding engines that have been worn or partially destroyed;Rebuilding machines that have been worn or partially destroyed;Rebuilding of clutches;Re-calibration of data processing apparatus;Reclamation (land-);Reclamation of land;Reconditioning of vehicle engines;Reconstruction of vehicle radiators;Redressing facades;Refilling of empty toner cartridges;Refilling of toner cartridges;Refinishing silver;Refrigerator repair;Refuelling of land vehicles;Refurbishment of air conditioning plant;Refurbishment of brakes for hydraulic trucks;Refurbishment of brakes for pneumatic trucks;Refurbishment of buildings;Refurbishment of clutches for hydraulic trucks;Refurbishment of clutches for pneumatic trucks;Refurbishment of railway diesel engines;Refurbishment of railway freight wagons;Refurbishment of railway rolling stock;Refurbishment of vehicles;Regrooving of tyres;Regulation of oil burners;Re-inking of printer cartridges;Re-inking of printer cassettes;Re-inking of printer ribbons;Re-inking of printer tapes;Re-inking of typewriter cartridges;Re-inking of typewriter cassettes;Re-inking of typewriter ribbons;Re-inking of typewriter tapes;Re-inking services;Remedial services for floor coverings;Remedial services for stair coverings;Remedial services for wall coverings;Remounting of jewellery;Removal of graffiti;Removal of marine growths from ship's hulls;Renovating services relating to conduits for water supply;Renovating services relating to discharge conduits;Renovation and repair of buildings;Renovation and restoration of buildings;Renovation of buildings;Renovation of clothing;Renovation of electrical wiring;Renovation of furniture;Renovation of glazing;Renovation of industrial boilers;Renovation of kitchens;Renovation of machinery;Renovation of nuclear plant;Renovation of plumbing;Renovation of property;Renovation of underground pipes;Rental and maintenance of work platforms;Rental of abrasive cleaning apparatus;Rental of abrasive cleaning equipment;Rental of air compressors;Rental of apparatus for use in the construction of buildings;Rental of articulated loaders;Rental of automotive machinery for use in excavating;Rental of automotive machinery for use in mining;Rental of backhoes;Rental of building apparatus;Rental of building construction machinery;Rental of building equipment;Rental of building machines;Rental of building scaffolds, working and building platforms;Rental of building tools;Rental of bulldozers;Rental of carpet shears;Rental of carpet stretchers;Rental of car-washing apparatus;Rental of cleaning apparatus;Rental of cleaning equipment;Rental of cleaning machines;Rental of concrete pumping machines;Rental of concrete-mixing apparatus;Rental of construction and building equipment;Rental of construction apparatus;Rental of construction equipment;Rental of construction machinery;Rental of construction machines and apparatus;Rental of construction plant;Rental of cranes [construction equipment];Rental of dishwashing machines;Rental of drilling platforms;Rental of drills;Rental of earth moving equipment and excavators;Rental of earth-moving and excavating machines;Rental of electric washing machines;Rental of excavators;Rental of floor cleaning machines;Rental of gantries;Rental of gas or air compressors;Rental of hammers;Rental of hand and power tools;Rental of industrial cleaning machines;Rental of ladders;Rental of laundry dryers;Rental of laundry equipment;Rental of laundry washing machines;Rental of lifting apparatus;Rental of lifting apparatus for persons;Rental of machine tools;Rental of machinery [construction];Rental of mini-excavators;Rental of mops;Rental of oil well drilling tools;Rental of plant for construction;Rental of plant for repair;Rental of platforms and scaffolding;Rental of plumbing apparatus;Rental of pumps (drainage -);Rental of riding drive trenchers;Rental of road sweeping machines;Rental of scaffolding;Rental of self-propelled lifting platforms;Rental of skid steer loaders;Rental of spin dryers for clothes;Rental of staple-guns;Rental of tools;Rental of tractors;Rental of trestles;Rental of underwater abrasive cleaning apparatus;Rental of vehicle maintenance equipment;Rental of walk behind trenchers;Rental of washing machines;Rental of welding apparatus;Repair and maintenance of aircraft;Repair and maintenance of building scaffolds, working and building platforms;Repair and maintenance of buildings in case of demolition;Repair and maintenance of ***feed*** or booster pumps;Repair and maintenance of vehicles;Repair, maintenance and installation services;Repair of accident damage to vehicles;Repair of aircraft heat exchangers;Repair of aircraft oil coolers;Repair of alarms;Repair of automobiles;Repair of bags;Repair of bags or pouches;Repair of bicycles;Repair of billiard equipment;Repair of binoculars;Repair of buildings;Repair of buildings damaged by birds;Repair of canalization systems;Repair of carpets;Repair of clothing;Repair of computer hardware;Repair of computers;Repair of concrete;Repair of curtains;Repair of damaged computers;Repair of electronic apparatus;Repair of elevators;Repair of facsimile machines;Repair of ***feeding*** troughs;Repair of fences;Repair of fire damage;Repair of fishing tackle;Repair of footwear;Repair of furniture;Repair of game machines and apparatus;Repair of gas cylinders;Repair of gas supply systems;Repair of goggles;Repair of hollowware;Repair of industrial furnaces;Repair of industrial ovens;Repair of ironmongery;Repair of kitchen furniture;Repair of land vehicles;Repair of locks;Repair of mats;Repair of ***medical*** machines and apparatus;Repair of metalworking machines and apparatus;Repair of motor vehicles;Repair of musical instruments;Repair of office machinery;Repair of office machines;Repair of office machines and apparatus;Repair of optical instruments;Repair of parts of engines;Repair of photocopiers;Repair of pipelines by means of encapsulation kits;Repair of power lines;Repair of pressurised containers;Repair of radio or television sets;Repair of roofs;Repair of sails;Repair of security locks;Repair of shoes;Repair of shopfitments;Repair of spectacles;Repair of sports equipment;Repair of structures for use in high temperature conditions;Repair of sunglasses;Repair of surgical apparatus;Repair of tatami mats;Repair of telecommunication machines and apparatus;Repair of telephone apparatus;Repair of tools;Repair of toys or dolls;Repair of transport containers;Repair of turbines;Repair of tyres;Repair of umbrellas;Repair of vehicles;Repair of watches;Repair or maintenance of ***agricultural*** machines and implements;Repair or maintenance of air-conditioning apparatus [for industrial purposes];Repair or maintenance of amusement machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of automobiles;Repair or maintenance of boilers;Repair or maintenance of chemical plants;Repair or maintenance of chemical processing machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of chick brooders;Repair or maintenance of cinematographic machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of computers;Repair or maintenance of construction machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of conveyors;Repair or maintenance of cooking apparatus for industrial purposes;Repair or maintenance of cooking pots and pans;Repair or maintenance of cultivating machines and implements;Repair or maintenance of diving machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of egg incubators;Repair or maintenance of electric lighting apparatus;Repair or maintenance of electric motors;Repair or maintenance of elevators [lifts];Repair or maintenance of fire alarms;Repair or maintenance of firearms;Repair or maintenance of fishing machines and instruments;Repair or maintenance of fodder cutters;Repair or maintenance of fodder mills;Repair or maintenance of fodder mixers;Repair or maintenance of fodder presses;Repair or maintenance of freezing machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of gas water heaters;Repair or maintenance of gasoline station equipment;Repair or maintenance of glassware ***manufacturing*** machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of harvesting machines and implements;Repair or maintenance of industrial dish washing machines;Repair or maintenance of industrial furnaces;Repair or maintenance of industrial washing machines;Repair or maintenance of integrated circuits ***manufacturing*** machines and systems;Repair or maintenance of laboratory apparatus and instruments;Repair or maintenance of loading-unloading machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for lumbering;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for papermaking;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for paper-working;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for processing beverages;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for processing foods;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for pulp-making;Repair or maintenance of machines and apparatus for woodworking;Repair or maintenance of measuring machines and instruments;Repair or maintenance of ***medical*** machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of metalworking machines and tools;Repair or maintenance of milking machines;Repair or maintenance of mining machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of movie projectors;Repair or maintenance of musical instruments;Repair or maintenance of nuclear power plants;Repair or maintenance of office machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of optical machines and instruments;Repair or maintenance of overhead projectors;Repair or maintenance of packing or wrapping machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of painting machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of photographic machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of plant fiber processing machines and implements;Repair or maintenance of plastic processing machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of power distribution or control machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of power generators;Repair or maintenance of power-driven floor cleaning machines;Repair or maintenance of printing or bookbinding machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of railway rolling stock;Repair or maintenance of rubber-goods ***manufacturing*** machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of semiconductor ***manufacturing*** machines and systems;Repair or maintenance of sericultural machines and implements;Repair or maintenance of sewing machines;Repair or maintenance of shoe making machines and instruments;Repair or maintenance of storage tanks;Repair or maintenance of telecommunication machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of telephone apparatus;Repair or maintenance of testing machines and instruments;Repair or maintenance of textile machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of tobacco processing machines;Repair or maintenance of two-wheeled motor vehicles;Repair or maintenance of vehicle washing installation;Repair or maintenance of vending machines;Repair or maintenance of vessels;Repair or maintenance of video frequency machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of waste compacting machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of waste crushing machines and apparatus;Repair or maintenance of water pollution control equipment;Repair or maintenance of water purifying apparatus;Repair services for clocks;Repair services for domestic electrical appliances;Repair services for electric generators and wind turbines;Repair services for electronic business equipment;Repair services for fork lift trucks;Repair services for ***medical*** apparatus;Repair services for shoes;Repair services for toys;Repair services relating to engines;Repair services relating to vehicles;Repair, servicing and maintenance of vehicles and apparatus for locomotion by air;Repair (underwater-);Repair (Underwater -);Repair work on buildings;Repairing construction works;Repairing of furniture;Repairs to buildings;Replacement of batteries;Replacement of brakes;Replacement of exhaust pipes;Replacement of lights;Replacement of shock absorbers;Replacement of tyres;Replacement of window frames;Replacement of windows;Repointing of brickwork;Re-sharpening of knives;Re-sharpening of scissors;Re-sharpening of skates;Residential and commercial building construction;Restoration;Restoration (furniture-);Restoration (Furniture -);Restoration of architectural works;Restoration of bathroom fittings;Restoration of baths;Restoration of buildings;Restoration of fine artwork;Restoration of furniture;Restoration of musical instruments;Restoration of retail premises;Restoration of works of art;Resurfacing of facades;Resurfacing of roofs;Re-tinning;Retracking [alignment] of tyres;Retreading of tires [tyres];Retreading of tyres;Re-treading of tyres;Re-upholstering;Riveting;Road building;Road construction;Road marking;Road paving;Road sealing and stripping;Road stripping;Road surfacing;Road sweeping;Road sweeping machines (rental of-);Rock anchoring;Rock blasting;Rock drilling;Roof installation services;Roof repair;Roof restoration;Roofing installation;Roofing repair;Roofing services;Rug cleaning;Rug shampooing;Rust proofing of vehicles;Rust removal;Rust removing;Rustproofing;Rust-proofing;Safe maintenance and repair;Safe maintenance or repair;Sanding;Satellite dish installation and repair;Scaffold erection;Scaffolding;Scaffolding dismantling;Scaffolding, earthworks or concrete construction;Scaffolding erection;Scaffolding hire;Scaffolding rental;Scaffolding repair;Scaffolding services;Scenery construction;Scissors sharpening;Screeding;Sealing (building-);Sealing (Building -);Sealing of buildings during construction;Seat covering services;Security fencing (erection of-);Septic tank cleaning;Septic tank pumping and cleaning;Service stations for the maintenance of vehicles;Service stations for the repair of vehicles;Service stations (petrol stations);Service stations (Vehicle -) [refuelling and maintenance];Services for the application of protective coatings to building exteriors;Services for the construction of buildings;Services for the damp proofing of buildings during construction;Services for the dry cleaning of clothing;Services for the fitting of kitchens;Services for the hire of tools;Services for the installation of alarms;Services for the installation of cavity wall ties;Services for the installation of drains;Services for the installation of sewers;Services for the lining of pipes;Services for the maintenance of computers;Services for the maintenance of motor vehicles;Services for the maintenance of strong rooms;Services for the maintenance of windows in vehicles;Services for the maintenance of windscreens in vehicles;Services for the painting and decorating of buildings;Services for the redecoration of buildings;Services for the renovation of buildings;Services for the rental of machinery for building;Services for the rental of machinery for civil engineering;Services for the rental of machinery for construction;Services for the repair of canals;Services for the repair of conduits;Services for the repair of drains;Services for the repair of heat exchangers;Services for the repair of motor vehicles;Services for the repair of pipelines;Services for the repair of pipes;Services for the repair of signs;Services for the repair of vehicles;Services for the washing of buildings;Services of property development;Servicing of aeronautical engines;Servicing of cars;Servicing of commercial vehicles;Servicing of conduits;Servicing of cranes;Servicing of industrial boilers;Servicing of machine tools;Servicing of mains services;Servicing of nuclear plant;Servicing of pipelines;Servicing of typewriters;Servicing of vehicle engines;Servicing of vehicles;Setting of gems [repair];Setting of saw blades;Sewer pipe cleaning;Sewer pipe maintenance;Sewer pipe renovation;Sewer pipe servicing;Sewing [repair];Sewing repair;Sharpening (Knife -);Sharpening of kitchen knives;Sharpening of knives;Sharpening of lawnmowers;Sharpening of scissors;Sharpening services;Ship building;Ship conversion;Ship defence equipment construction services;Ship maintenance;Ship repair;Shipbuilding;Shoe mending;Shoe repair;Shoe repairing;Shoe shining;Shuttering services;Sign construction;Sign maintenance;Sign painting;Sign painting services;Sign posting services;Sign repair;Signs (painting and repair of-);Signs (Painting or repair of -);Site clearance;Site grading;Site levelling;Site preparation;Ski tuning services;Slating and tiling;Snow removal services;Snow-making services (artificial);Snow-making services (Artificial -);Soil blasting;Soil dredging;Soil erosion control services;Soil foundation work;Soil piling;Soil stabilisation;Solid waste landfill services;Specialist building restoration;Spillage clearance;Spindle rebuilding;Spindle reconditioning;Spiral welding;Spray painting;Spray painting of metals;Stabilisation of earth by cement injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of earth by grout injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of earth by insertion of reinforcing bars (services for the-);Stabilisation of earth by vibratory compaction (services for the-);Stabilisation of ground by cement injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of ground by grout injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of ground by insertion of reinforcing bars (services for the-);Stabilisation of ground by vibratory compaction (services for the-);Stabilisation of soil by cement injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of soil by grout injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of soil by insertion of reinforcing bars (services for the-);Stabilisation of soil by vibratory compaction (services for the-);Stabilisation of the sea bed by cement injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of the sea bed by grout injection (services for the-);Stabilisation of the sea bed by insertion of reinforcing bars (services for the-);Stabilisation of the sea bed by vibratory compaction (services for the-);Stain removal;Stain removal from carpets;Stain removal from fabrics;Stain removal from leather;Staple-guns (rental of-);Steel structure construction works;Stereo system repair;Sterilisation of surgeon's instruments;Stonemasonry;Storage tank cleaning;Stove-setting;Street cleaning;Street cleansing;Street construction;Street sweeping services;Stressing of concrete;Strong-room maintenance and repair;Structural engineering;Submarine cable jointing services;Suitcase repair;Supervision (building construction-);Supervision (Building construction -);Supervision of building construction;Supervision of building repair;Supervision of building work;Supervision of construction;Supervision of the engineering of buildings;Supervision of the engineering of structures;Supervision of underwater construction;Supervisory services relating to the construction of boilers;Surface conditioning of boats;Surfacing of pavements;Surfacing of roads;Swimming pool cleaning services;Swimming pool maintenance;Swimming-pool maintenance;Tailoring [repair];Telecommunication wiring;Telephone installation;Telephone installation and repair;Telephone repair;Television repair;Termite and pest control;Termite control;Textile cleaning;Textile ironing;Textile laundering;Textile pressing;Textile washing;Texturing (ceiling or wall-);Tile laying, bricklaying or block laying;Tiling services;Tinkering;Tire retreading;Tire rotating and balancing;Tires (Retreading of -);Tires (Vulcanization of -) [repair];Toner cartridges (Refilling of -);Trash collection [refuse clean-up];Treatment of surfaces with ***animal*** repellent formulations;Treatment of surfaces with bird repellent formulations;Treatment of surfaces with pest control formulations;Trestles (rental of-);Tube cleaning services;Tube maintenance services;Tuning of engines;Tunnelling;Tunnels (drilling of-);Tyre fitting;Tyre regrooving;Tyre repair;Tyres (Retreading of -);Tyres (Vulcanization of -) [repair];Umbrella repair;Unblocking of drains;Unblocking of waste disposal vessels;Underground civil engineering services;Underground construction;Undersealing of vehicles;Underwater abrasive cleaning of metallic surfaces;Underwater abrasive cleaning of non-metallic surfaces;Underwater building and construction;Underwater construction;Underwater construction, installation and repair;Underwater construction services;Underwater dredging;Underwater repair;Underwater repair services;Upgrading of computer hardware;Upholstering;Upholstery repair;Vacuum cleaner repair;Valeting services relating to household cleaning;Valeting services relating to industrial cleaning;Valeting services relating to office cleaning;Varnishing;Varnishing of board materials;Varnishing of card materials;Varnishing of paper;Varnishing of plastics;Vehicle battery charging;Vehicle breakdown assistance [repair];Vehicle breakdown repair services;Vehicle cleaning;Vehicle conversions [engine];Vehicle detailing;Vehicle fueling services;Vehicle greasing;Vehicle lubrication;Vehicle lubr For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at

[*htsyndication@hindustantimes.com*](mailto:htsyndication@hindustantimes.com)

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[***AECI LTD - Reviewed condensed consolidated financial results***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5BKY-FRC1-DXKS-J0RT-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

AECI LIMITED

(Incorporated in the Republic of South Africa) Registration number

1924/002590/06

Tax reference number 9000008608

("AECI" or "the Company")

Share code: AFE

ISIN Number: ZAE000000220

Reviewed condensed consolidated financial results and final cash dividend

declaration for the year ended 31 December 2013

\* Best-ever safety performance with a TRIR of 0,52

\* Revenue +15% to R15,9 billion, 33% generated outside SA

\* Headline earnings +57% to R885 million

\* EPS +63% to 845c

\* HEPS +57% to 791c

\* Results exclude Shanghai Zendai property transaction

Income statement

% 2013 2012 2012 2012

R millions change Audited(2) Adjusted(2) Restated(2)

Revenue(3) +15 15 908 14 916 (1 089) 13 827

Net operating costs (14 510) (13 575) 945 (12 630)

Profit from operations +17 1 398 1 341 (144) 1 197

CST share-based payment - (138) - (138)

(4)

Net income from pension

fund employer

surplus accounts - 8 (8) -

Net loss from plan - (6) 6 -

assets for post-

retirement ***medical*** aid

liabilities

1 398 1 205 (146) 1 059

Interest expense (211) (262) 6 (256)

Interest received 37 40 (2) 38

Share of profit of 43 - 57 57

equity-accounted

investees, net of tax

Profit before tax 1 267 983 (85) 898

Tax expense (313) (345) 36 (309)

Profit for the year 954 638 (49) 589

Profit for the year

attributable to:

- Ordinary shareholders 946 630 (49) 581

- Preference 3 2 - 2

shareholders

- Non-controlling 5 6 - 6

interest

954 638 (49) 589

Headline earnings are

derived from:

Profit attributable to 946 630 (49) 581

ordinary shareholders

Impairment of goodwill 5 9 - 9

Impairment of property, 9 3 - 3

plant and equipment

Profit on partial (38) - - -

disposal of net

investment in foreign

operation

Surplus on

derecognition of

businesses, joint

ventures and

subsidiaries disposed (3) (15) - (15)

of

Surplus on disposal of

property, plant and

equipment and

investment

property (49) (18) - (18)

Tax effects of the 15 2 - 2

above items

Headline earnings 885 611 (49) 562

Per ordinary share

(cents):

Headline earnings +57 791 547 (44) 503

Diluted headline 740 521 (42) 479

earnings

Basic earnings 845 564 (44) 520

Diluted basic earnings 791 537 (41) 496

Dividends declared +14 210 185 - 185

Dividends paid 290 257 - 257

Statement of comprehensive income

2013 2012 2012 2012

R millions Audited(2) Adjusted(2) Restated(2)

Profit for the year 954 638 (49) 589

Other comprehensive income

net of tax:

Items that may be

reclassified subsequently

to profit or loss:

Foreign currency 362 41 - 41

translation differences

Items that will not be

reclassified

subsequently to profit or

loss:

Actuarial gain on 86 - 49 49

defined-benefit

Obligations

Total comprehensive income 1 402 679 - 679

for the year

Total comprehensive income

attributable to:

- Ordinary shareholders 1 389 672 - 672

- Preference shareholders 3 2 - 2

- Non-controlling interest 10 5 - 5

1 402 679 - 679

Statement of changes in equity

2013 2012 2012 2012

R millions Audited(2) Adjusted(2) Restated(2)

Total comprehensive income 1 402 679 - 679

for the year

Dividends paid (336) (297) - (297)

Business combinations and 7 1 - 1

change in ownership

percentage

Issue of ordinary shares:

- at par value(4) - 4 - 4

- at market value(5) - 393 - 393

Net effect of acquisition - (393) - (393)

of non-controlling

interest to equity(5)

Share-based payment 47 30 (1) 29

reserve

Transfer to retained - 138 - 138

earnings for CST

share-based payment

Equity at the beginning of 5 757 5 214 (11) 5 203

the year

Equity at the end of the 6 877 5 769 (12) 5 757

year

Made up as follows:

Ordinary share capital 116 116 - 116

Share premium 496 496 - 496

Reserves 813 406 (1) 405

Property revaluation 237 237 - 237

surplus

Foreign currency 500 143 - 143

translation reserve

Share-based payment 76 30 (1) 29

reserve

Other - (4) - (4)

Retained earnings 5 394 4 697 - 4 697

Preference share capital 6 6 - 6

Non-controlling interest 52 48 (11) 37

6 877 5 769 (12) 5 757

Ordinary shares in issue

2013 2012

millions millions

Listed ordinary shares

At the beginning of the year 128,2 119,1

Issued during the year for CST and KTH - 9,1

transactions(4)(5)

At the end of the year 128,2 128,2

Treasury shares held by subsidiary company (11,9) (11,9)

116,3 116,3

Unlisted redeemable convertible ordinary

shares

At the beginning of the year 10,1 -

Issued during the year for EST transaction - 10,1

(4)

At the end of the year 10,1 10,1

Treasury shares held by consolidated EST(4) (10,1) (10,1)

- -

Ordinary shares in issue 116,3 116,3

Reconciliation of weighted average number of shares

2013 2012

millions millions

Weighted average number of ordinary shares 138,3 119,1

at the beginning of the year

Weighted average number of ordinary shares - 17,4

issued during the year

Weighted average number of ordinary shares (10,1) (9,0)

held by consolidated EST

Weighted average number of contingently (4,4) (3,9)

returnable ordinary shares held by CST

Weighted average number of shares held by (11,9) (11,9)

consolidated subsidiary

Weighted average number of ordinary shares 111,9 111,7

for basic earnings per share

Dilutive adjustment for potential ordinary 7,7 5,4

shares

Dilutive adjustment for share options under - 0,1

the AECI share option scheme

Weighted average number of ordinary shares 119,6 117,2

for diluted earnings per share

Statement of financial position

2013 2012 2012 2012

31 Dec 31 Dec 31 Dec 31 Dec

Audited(2) Adjusted(2) Restated(2)

R millions

Assets

Non-current assets 6 472 6 314 153 6 467

Property, plant and 3 756 3 733 (71) 3 662

equipment

Investment property 173 445 - 445

Intangible assets 143 214 (55) 159

Goodwill 1 123 1 124 (35) 1 089

Pension fund employer 231 267 - 267

surplus accounts

Investments in 217 56 - 56

associates

Investments in joint 301 - 318 318

ventures

Other investments 50 30 - 30

Loans receivable 10 11 - 11

Deferred tax 468 434 (4) 430

Current assets 7 921 6 752 (355) 6 397

Inventories(6) 3 090 2 867 (156) 2 711

Accounts receivable 3 326 2 737 (120) 2 617

Loans to joint ventures - - - -

Assets classified as 286 - - -

held for sale(6)

Cash 1 219 1 148 (79) 1 069

Total assets 14 393 13 066 (202) 12 864

Equity and liabilities

Ordinary capital and 6 819 5 715 (1) 5 714

reserves

Non-controlling interest 52 48 (11) 37

Preference share capital 6 6 - 6

Total equity 6 877 5 769 (12) 5 757

Non-current liabilities 2 214 2 488 (37) 2 451

Deferred tax 168 232 (31) 201

Non-current borrowings 1 099 1 251 - 1 251

Non-current provisions 947 1 005 (6) 999

Current liabilities 5 302 4 809 (153) 4 656

Accounts payable 3 284 2 912 (154) 2 758

Current borrowings 1 861 1 738 - 1 738

Loans from joint 21 - - -

ventures

Tax payable 136 159 1 160

Total equity and 14 393 13 066 (202) 12 864

liabilities

2012 2012 2012

01 Jan 01 Jan 01 Jan

R millions Audited(2) Audited(2) Restated(2)

Assets

Non-current assets 6 024 119 6 143

Property, plant and equipment 3 721 (134) 3 587

Investment property 436 - 436

Intangible assets 77 (56) 21

Goodwill 1 078 (54) 1 024

Pension fund employer surplus

accounts 259 - 259

Investments in associates - - -

Investments in joint ventures - 363 363

Other investments 22 - 22

Loans receivable 24 - 24

Deferred tax 407 - 407

Current assets 6 433 (372) 6 061

Inventories(6) 2 584 (158) 2 426

Accounts receivable 2 772 (172) 2 600

Loans to joint ventures - 40 40

Assets classified as held for sale 16 - 16

(6)

Cash 1 061 (82) 979

Total assets 12 457 (253) 12 204

Equity and liabilities

Ordinary capital and reserves 4 998 1 4 999

Non-controlling interest 210 (12) 198

Preference share capital 6 - 6

Total equity 5 214 (11) 5 203

Non-current liabilities 2 702 (49) 2 653

Deferred tax 179 (29) 150

Non-current borrowings 1 507 (13) 1 494

Non-current provisions 1 016 (7) 1 009

Current liabilities 4 541 (193) 4 348

Accounts payable 2 987 (188) 2 799

Current borrowings 1 421 (8) 1 413

Loans from joint ventures - 2 2

Tax payable 133 1 134

Total equity and liabilities 12 457 (253) 12 204

Statement of cash flows

2013 2012 2012 2012

R millions Audited(2) Adjusted(2) Restated(2)

Cash generated by 2 191 1 867 (90) 1 777

operations

Dividends received 62 - 28 28

Interest paid (212) (245) 7 (238)

Interest received 37 40 (3) 37

Income tax paid (464) (308) 19 (289)

Changes in working (426) (326) (5) (331)

capital

Expenditure relating to

non-

current provisions (66) (98) (3) (101)

Cash available from

operating

activities 1 122 930 (47) 883

Dividends paid (336) (297) - (297)

Cash flows from

operating

activities 786 633 (47) 586

Cash flows from

investing

activities (772) (645) 29 (616)

Net investment (239) (144) 10 (134)

expenditure

Net capital expenditure (533) (501) 19 (482)

Net cash generated/

(utilised)

before financing 14 (12) (18) (30)

activities

Cash flows from

financing

activities (28) 75 21 96

Non-current loans 1 14 - 14

receivable

Borrowings (29) 61 21 82

(Decrease)/increase in (14) 63 3 66

cash

Cash at the beginning

of the

year 1 069 1 061 (82) 979

Translation gain on 164 24 - 24

cash

Cash at the end of the 1 219 1 148 (79) 1 069

year

Other salient features

2013 2012

R millions Restated(2)

Capital expenditure 633 538

- expansion 293 259

- replacement 340 279

Capital commitments(7) 746 207

- contracted for 87 55

- not contracted for 659 152

Future rentals on property, plant and 199 130

equipment leased

- payable within one year 71 52

- payable thereafter 128 78

Net borrowings 1 741 1 920

Gearing (%)\* 25 33

Current assets to current liabilities 1,5 1,4

Net asset value per ordinary share 5 864 4 914

(cents)

Depreciation and amortisation 537 460

ZAR/US$ closing exchange rate (rand) 10,50 8,49

ZAR/US$ average exchange rate (rand) 9,63 8,20

Per ordinary share (cents) (excluding

CST share-based

payment):

- headline earnings 791 627

- diluted headline earnings 740 597

\* Borrowings less cash as a percentage

of total equity.

Industry segment analysis

2013 2012 2013

Restated(2) Profit from

R millions Revenue Revenue operations

Explosives 7 400 6 327 572

Specialty chemicals 8 359 7 621 922

Property 672 400 219

Group services and (523) (521) (315)

inter-segment

15 908 13 827 1 398

2012 2013 2012

Restated(2) Restated(2)

Profit from Net Net

R millions operations assets assets

Explosives 417 3 059 2 837

Specialty chemicals 891 4 541 4 374

Property 33 1 051 808

Group services and (144) (38) (94)

inter-segment

1 197 8 613 7 925

Net assets consist of property, plant, equipment, investment property,

intangible assets, goodwill, inventory, accounts receivable, and assets

classified as held for sale less accounts payable.

Specialty fibres (USA) has been reported as part of the Specialty chemicals

segment effective from 1 January 2013. The comparatives have been adjusted

accordingly.

Notes

1) Basis of preparation and accounting policies

The reviewed condensed consolidated financial results are prepared in

accordance with the requirements of the JSE Limited's Listings Requirements

("Listings Requirements") for provisional reports and the requirements of the

Companies Act of South Africa, No. 71 of 2008. The Listings Requirements

require provisional reports to be prepared in accordance with the framework

concepts and the measurement and recognition requirements of International

Financial Reporting Standards ("IFRS") and the South African Institute of

Chartered Accountants Financial Reporting Guides as issued by the Accounting

Practice Committee and Financial Pronouncements as issued by the Financial

Reporting Standards Council and to also, as a minimum, contain the information

required by IAS 34 Interim Financial Reporting. The accounting policies applied

in the preparation of the reviewed condensed consolidated financial results are

in terms of IFRS and are consistent with those applied in the previous

consolidated annual financial statements, except for the adoption of the new

standards as detailed below. The preparation of these reviewed condensed

consolidated financial results for the year ended 31 December 2013 was

supervised by the Financial Director, Mr KM Kathan CA(SA)AMP (Harvard). The

reviewed condensed consolidated financial results have been reviewed by the

Company's auditors, KPMG Inc., who have issued an unqualified review opinion. A

copy of the review opinion is obtainable from AECI's registered office.

2) Change in accounting policies

IAS 8 - Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors has

been applied retrospectively to adjust the income statement, statement

ofcomprehensive income, statement of changes in equity, statement of financial

position and statement of cash flows for the effects of the

following new accounting standards:

IAS 19 - Employee Benefits became effective from 1 January 2013. Under its

previous accounting policy, AECI elected to recognise its defined-benefit costs

in the income statement and applied asset limitation in recognising the

defined-benefit pension fund assets in the statement of financial position. The

liability for the post-retirement ***medical*** aid was recognised in the statement

of financial position. The income statement effects were recognised in profit

from operations except for the net return on the employer surplus accounts and

the net return on the post-retirement ***medical*** aid, which were separately

disclosed after profit from operations. Under the revised IAS 19, the basis of

calculation of finance costs has been altered and is determined by applying the

discount rate used to measure the defined-benefit obligation to the net

defined-benefit asset/obligation at the beginning of the year. Profit from

operations now includes only the current service cost and the net interest of

the defined-benefit asset/liability. Remeasurements of the net defined-benefit

asset/liability are now recognised in other comprehensive income. There are no

amendments to the statement of financial position.

AECI has also adopted the new Consolidation Suite of standards: IFRS 10

-Consolidated Financial Statements, IFRS 11 - Joint Arrangements, IFRS 12 -

Disclosure of Interests in Other Entities, IAS 27 - Separate Financial

Statements and IAS28 - Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures, effective

from 1 January 2013. In terms of IFRS 11, the proportionate consolidation of

joint arrangements is no longer permitted. Joint arrangements are now

classified as either joint ventures or joint operations. Joint ventures are

required to be equity accounted. For joint operations, AECI recognises its

share of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenses. This is done on a

line-by-line basis. Equity accounting of AECI's joint ventures has resulted in

a restatement of the income statement, statement of comprehensive income,

statement of changes in equity, statement of financial position and statement

of cash flows for the year ended 31 December 2012.

3) Includes foreign and export revenue of R 5 224 million (2012 restated: R 4 345 million).

4) Share-Based payments

CST share-based payment: The AECI Community Education and Development Trust

("CST") subscribed for 4 426 604 ordinary shares at par value in the Company in

2012. The shares vested immediately and a share-based payment expense of R138

million (2012 first half) was recognised in full in the income statement. These

shares are contingently returnable and, as a result, are excluded from EPS and

HEPS.

EST share-based payment: The AECI Employees Share Trust ("EST") subscribed for

10 117 951 unlisted B ordinary shares of the Company. The total cost is

estimated at R155 million of which R38 million (2012: R29 million) was

recognised in the income statement. The remainder of the expense will be

recognised in future periods over the respective vesting periods.

5) The Kagiso Tiso Holdings Proprietary Limited (RF) ("KTH") transaction in the

2012 financial year involved the purchase by AECI of the 25,1% interest held in

AEL Holdco Limited by a KTH-led consortium in exchange for 4 678 667 ordinary

shares in AECI. The shares issued were recognised in equity, with R5 million

allocated to share capital and R388 million allocated to share premium. The

non-controlling interest was reduced by the carrying amount of R172 million

with the balance of R221 million recognised directly in retained earnings.

6) AECI concluded agreements to dispose of a portion of its surplus property

assets at Modderfontein to Shanghai Zendai Property Limited in November 2013. A

significant portion of the transaction is expected to be effective during 2014.

Property assets to be disposed of include vacant land and property and

buildings held for leasing purposes and these assets, amounting to R286 million

have been reclassified from investment property to assets classified as held

for sale at 31 December 2013 in terms of IFRS 5 Non-current Assets Held for

Sale and Discontinued Operations. The agreements also include the disposal of

property under development and the related development costs (bulk

infrastructure) of R214 million which is included in the Group's inventory as

at 31 December2013.

7) Subsequent to year-end, AECI and Clariant Southern Africa Proprietary

Limited ("Clariant") have reached agreement for AECI's wholly-owned subsidiary

ImproChem Proprietary Limited to acquire Clariant's water treatment business in

Africa and its South African assets for a total cash consideration of R409

million. The acquisition is subject to certain conditions precedent.

8) The reviewed condensed consolidated financial results do not include all of

the disclosures required for full annual financial statements and should be

read in conjunction with the consolidated annual financial statements for the

year ended 31 December 2012 taking into account the changes in accounting

policies as set out above.

Commentary

AECI produced commendable results in 2013 in an environment where trading and

market conditions remained challenging. Revenue increased by 15% to R15 908

million (2012: R13 827 million). Revenue generated outside South Africa was 20%

higher at R5 224 million, representing 33% of total revenue. Headline earnings

improved by 57% to R885 million (2012: R562 million). Profit from operations

increased by 17% to R1 398 million compared to R1 197 million in 2012, the

trading margin was 8,8% (2012: 8,7%), earnings per share ("EPS") were 845 cents

(2012: 520 cents) and headline earnings per share ("HEPS") were 791 cents

(2012: 503 cents).

Key drivers of performance were pleasing year-on-year improvements in the

explosives and property businesses, the non-recurrence of the non-cash FRS

charge relating to the community share trust component of the B-BBEE

transactions concluded in 2012, the weaker ZAR/US$ exchange rate and increased

selling prices.

The Board has declared a final cash dividend of 210 cents per ordinary share

(2012: 185 cents) bringing the total cash dividend for the year to315 cents per

share, a 20% increase on 2012's 263 cents per share.

Safety

The Group again improved its safety performance, with a best-ever Total

Recordable Incident Rate ("TRIR") of 0,52. The TRIR measures the number of

incidents per 200 000 hours worked. Safety remains a key performance indicator

for management and it is pleasing that sustained efforts in this regard are

having such a positive result.

Explosives

AEL Mining Services ("AEL") achieved a 17% increase in revenue to R7 400

million (2012: R6 327 million) and overall explosives volumes to mining and

quarrying customers were 5,6% higher. Profit from operations improved to R572

million (2012: R417 million) after taking to account a R84 million retrenchment

charge for the closure of the old initiating systems plants and the subsequent

relocation of production to the Initiating Systems Automated Plant ("ISAP").

AEL benefited from the weakening rand as more than 50% of its revenue is

generated outside South Africa and is mostly denominated in US dollars.

Consequently, the profit improvement in AEL's foreign operations enhanced the

overall result by R72 million. In addition, a R38 million foreign exchange gain

was realised by repatriating cash to the AECI Group's central offshore

Treasury.

The trading margin improved to 7,7%, (8,9% before severance costs) (2012:

6,6%). The target remains to improve this to above 10%.

The South African business performed well notwithstanding lower gold and

platinum prices. Explosives volumes were 6,8% higher than in 2012. Market share

grew in the open cast and massive businesses, particularly in the iron ore and

coal sectors. New supply contracts were secured and this enabled AEL to

diversify its commodity portfolio further in line with its strategy. Major

contracts in initiating systems were retained although volumes declined in line

with decreased output from the narrow reef gold and platinum mining sectors in

South Africa.

The African business continued to expand its already extensive footprint as a

result of an increase in mining activity with the commencement of greenfield

projects and the commissioning of three new bulk explosive plants in Burkina

Faso, the DRC and Egypt. In addition, AEL gained new supply contracts in the

copper and gold mining sectors. Explosives volume growth in Africa was 5,4%.

The International business recorded improved profitability and growth even

though some new contracts were delayed by customers owing to low thermal coal

and gold prices. Explosives volume growth was 1,9%.

The ammonium nitrate plant in Indonesia, part of AECI's minority investment in

PT Black Bear Resources Indonesia ("BBRI"), was in commissioning by year-end.

It will provide AEL with a secure in-country source of ammonium nitrate.

During 2013 ISAP produced 98,9 million detonators and assembled 31,8 million

units in line with market demand. ISAP is commercially complete and its 120

million detonator output capacity has been verified. A further R30 million was

delivered in cost savings and efficiencies.

Capital investment amounted to R290 million (2012: R367 million). Of this, R126

million was for expansion projects in the African business and for the

improvement of ammonia storage facilities at Modderfontein. As part of the

phased investment in BBRI an additional R159 million was invested in 2013,

bringing the total investment to R201 million.

Further expansion in Africa and other territories of interest is expected in

2014.

Specialty chemicals

Revenue increased by 10% to R8 359 million (2012: R7 621 million). Excluding

sulphur trading, overall volumes grew by 5,2%. Profit from operations increased

by 3% to R922 million (2012: R891 million) and the operating margin was 11,0%

compared to 11,7% last year. Although commodity prices increased, profit

margins in rand terms did not follow the same trend owing to the subdued

trading environment in South Africa's ***manufacturing*** sector. Higher sales at

typically lower margins to the ***agricultural*** sector diluted the segment's

overall margin further.

Chemfit, Chemical Initiatives, ImproChem, Nulandis and Senmin delivered very

good performances when compared to 2012. Senmin's results in 2012 were

negatively impacted by strikes in South Africa's platinum mining industry but a

strong recovery was evident in 2013. ImproChem benefited from the integration

of General Electric's Chemical and Monitoring Solutions business in Africa,

which was acquired in 2012. Other companies in the specialty chemicals cluster

were challenged by the volatile conditions prevailing in South Africa's

***manufacturing*** sector.

A number of businesses in the cluster were restructured in the year, at a total

cost of about R30 million. ChemSystems terminated its electroplating activities

and Chemisphere Technologies, which supplies specialty chemical products and

services to the pulp and paper industry, will be integrated into ChemSystems as

a business unit in 2014. Industrial Urethanes was brought into Lake Specialties

and Infigro was moved to Lake Foods in the first half of the year.

The acquisition of SA Premix was finalised in June 2013 and integrated into

Chemfit's business in the third quarter. SA Premix produces and distributes

***animal*** ***feed*** formulations that fortify and enhance the nutritional content of

***feeds***. A new blending plant is scheduled to come on line early in 2014.

In January 2014 AECI announced that it had reached agreement with Clariant

Southern Africa Proprietary Limited ("Clariant") for AECI's wholly-owned

subsidiary ImproChem to acquire Clariant's water treatment business in Africa

and its South African assets for a total cash consideration of R409 million.

Also included in the acquisition is a 50% shareholding in Blendtech, Clariant's

B-BBEE partner in South Africa. The acquisition is in line with the Group's

strategy to grow its footprint in the water solutions sector. It is subject to

certain conditions precedent, including approval by the relevant competition

authorities.

Capital expenditure for the cluster totalled R236 million (2012: R145 million)

of which R151 million was for expansion, mainly at SANS Technical Fibers in the

USA where conversion to single stage nylon-spinning equipment is close to

completion.

Property

Revenue from Heartland's combined activities increased by 68% to R672 million

(2012: R400 million). Operating profit increased from R33 million to R219

million. Revenue comprised the recognition of land sale transactions totalling

R306 million (2012: R53 million) mostly in Longlake Ext 1 and Westlake

Industrial, primarily for industrial end-uses.

Heartland's results do not include income from the Shanghai Zendai bulk sale

transaction which will take effect in 2014.

On the back of weak demand for office space and no discernible improvement in

vacancy rates, office market rentals and office land sales continued to show

lacklustre growth overall although there was better demand for office space in

Somerset West, Western Cape. In the housing sector the entry level market was

strong.

To accelerate the realisation of value from its surplus property assets, in

November 2013 AECI concluded an agreement for the disposal of the bulk of its

surplus property assets at Modderfontein and its property development business

to Shanghai Zendai Property Limited ("Shanghai Zendai") for R1 061 million

(including VAT). Approval for the transaction was received from the Competition

Commission in South Africa in January 2014 as was the approval of Shanghai

Zendai's shareholders.

For the transaction to take effect, properties to the value of R513 million

(including VAT) (the "First Tranche") must be transferred to Shanghai Zendai's

South African subsidiaries. This transfer process has commenced and its

completion is anticipated by no later than 31 July 2014, subject to the

relevant extension provisions of the transaction. Once the First Tranche has

been executed the full purchase price will be remitted to AECI. The full terms

of the transaction were published on the Stock Exchange News Service on 4

November 2013. On receipt of the cash proceeds, the Board will evaluate options

for the application thereof.

The Group continues to investigate solutions for the disposal of its surplus

land and assets at Somerset West.

Financial

Capital expenditure totalled R633 million for the year (2012: R538 million)

with R293 million of this invested in expansion projects at AEL's customer

sites, SANS Technical Fibers' expansion in single stage technology and the

improvement of ammonium nitrate storage and nitric acid production facilities

at Modderfontein. Gearing was at 25% from 35% in June 2013 and 33% in December

2012. Net working capital was 19,7% of revenue (2012: 18,6%), reflecting the

longer working capital trade cycles in operations outside South Africa and in

the property market.

Cash interest cover improved to 11,3 times (2012: 7,8 times). Net interest paid

decreased to R175 million (2012: R201 million) as interest rates remained low

and offset the longer working capital trade cycle.

Higher corporate centre charges were incurred, due largely to an increase in

the provision for AECI's long-term incentive scheme which tracks the share

price and HEPS, a higher provision for costs associated with the Company's

defined-benefit retirement and post-retirement ***medical*** aid, as well as

transaction costs relating to the disposal of land to Shanghai Zendai. In

addition, the management of the Group's environmental costs and liability

provision were moved from the property segment to the corporate centre in 2013.

Restatement of 2012 comparatives

On 1 January 2013, the following accounting standards applicable to theAECI

Group's reporting took effect:

- IAS 19: Employee Benefits

- IFRS 10: Consolidated Financial Statements

- IFRS 11: Joint Arrangements

As a result of these changes comparative figures for the periods 1 January 2012

and 31 December 2012 have been restated. The effect of the restatements was a

decrease in HEPS of 8%, from 547 cents per share to 503 cents per share.

Directorate

Mike Leeming will retire as a Non-executive Director of the Company at the

Annual General Meeting to be held on 2 June 2014. Mike has served on the Board

and several Board Committees since 2002. The Board thanks him for his dedicated

service over the past 11 years. The recruitment process to appoint an

additional Non-executive Director to fill the vacancy has commenced.

Strategic focus and outlook

AECI's explosives and mining chemicals businesses are poised for further growth

in South Africa in open cast mining, particularly in iron ore and coal, while

the narrow reef platinum and gold sectors are expected to remain under pressure

owing to weaker commodity prices and escalating costs. Industrial action will

have a negative effect on local markets. Strikes in the platinum mining

industry in 2014 have already impacted on AECI's results in the early part of

the year.

The benefits of growth outside South Africa from both green- and brownfield

expansion projects in the copper, gold and iron ore mining sectors, as well as

those of the BBRI investment, are expected from 2014.

The expansion of the Group's African footprint will continue to be supported

not only in mining solutions but also in other markets of strategic interest

namely water, oil, energy and gas; food additives; ***agriculture*** and specialty

chemicals distribution.

Further restructuring in the explosives business as well as the specialty

chemicals cluster can be expected as the Group continues to review its

portfolio and cost base to ensure the best possible alignment with customer

requirements and the maximisation of growth opportunities in all countries

where it operates.

Acquisitions in South Africa, the rest of Africa and in selected other regions

in AECI's markets of interest will continue to be pursued in the coming year.

Schalk Engelbrecht Mark Dytor

Chairman Chief Executive

Woodmead, Sandton

25 February 2014

Notice to shareholders

Final ordinary cash dividend No. 160

Notice is hereby given that on Monday, 24 February 2014 the Directors of AECI

declared a gross final cash dividend of 210 cents per share, in respect of the

financial year ended 31 December 2013, payable on Monday, 14 April 2014 to

ordinary shareholders recorded in the books of the Company at the close of

business on Friday, 11 April 2014.

The last day to trade cum dividend will be Friday, 4 April 2014 and shares will

commence trading ex dividend as from Monday, 7 April 2014.

A South African dividend withholding tax of 15% will be applicable to all

shareholders who are not either exempt or entitled to a reduction of the

withholding tax rate in terms of a relevant Double Taxation Agreement resulting

in a net dividend of 178,50000 cents per share to those shareholders who are

not exempt. Application forms for exemption or reduction may be obtained from

the Transfer Secretaries and must be returned to them on or before Friday, 4

April 2014.

The issued share capital at the declaration date is 128 241 140 listed ordinary

shares and 10 117 951 unlisted redeemable convertible B ordinary shares. The

dividend has been declared from the income reserves of the Company. No

Secondary Tax on Companies' credits are available to be used.

Any change of address or dividend instruction must be received on or before

Friday, 4 April 2014.

Share certificates may not be dematerialised or rematerialised from Monday, 7

April 2014 to Friday, 11 April 2014, both days inclusive.

By order of the Board

EN Rapoo

Group Company Secretary

Woodmead, Sandton

25 February 2014

Transfer Secretaries

Computershare Investor Services Proprietary Limited

70 Marshall Street

Johannesburg

2001

Computershare Investor Services PLC PO Box 82

The Pavilions

Bridgwater Road

Bristol BS 99 7NH England

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Sponsor

Rand Merchant Bank (A division of FirstRand Bank Limited)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2014

**End of Document**



[***BLEDISLOE MEMORIAL LECTURE 2013 ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:59VN-CC01-JDKC-R2FK-00000-00&context=1516831)

UK Government News

November 15, 2013 Friday 12:09 PM EST

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**Length:** 3370 words

**Body**

LONDON, Nov. 15 -- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills issued the following news release:

David Willetts gave the Royal ***Agricultural*** University 2013 Bledisloe Lecture on the important role of science and technology in ***agriculture***.

I am delighted to be here today, at the newly named Royal ***Agricultural*** University. The name may be new, but the institution goes back to 1845. It has been known for many decades for its excellent teaching, research, and links with the ***agricultural*** industry. Previously, it was held back by a pointless rule that institutions with fewer than 4,000 students could not become universities. This government changed that. Now institutions are given university status based on quality rather than size. The new title is recognition of your strong performance, and I know that it means a lot to your students, staff and commercial partners.

I feel privileged to be giving a lecture named after one of your most illustrious alumni, Viscount Bledisloe, the former Governor General of New Zealand. Bledisloe is in good company. The Royal ***Agricultural*** University has a rich variety of alumni.

Household names include Sir Henry Cecil, the legendary racehorse trainer, and the broadcaster and countryside campaigner Jonathan Dimbleby. But the university has been the launch pad for many interesting careers.

Joe Henson, founder of the Cotswold Farm Park and responsible for saving scores of rare breeds in the early days of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, studied here. As did Tim Hadaway, who co-ordinated the equestrian side of the Olympics at Greenwich Park. And those brilliant equine events were commentated by another RAU old boy, the BBC's Mike Tucker.

As one would expect from a university which currently has students from 40 countries, you have impressive alumni overseas too. In Zimbabwe, Ben Freeth, a graduate of the class of 1990, has been inspirational in his campaign for justice for farmers. In Kenya, flowers are now the second biggest export after tea, and RAU graduate Hamish Kerr directs production at Kenya's largest flower farm. The farm produces 400 million flowers a year, but is entirely self-sufficient when it comes to power, using geothermal energy.

This sort of excitingly innovative practice will be driven forward by the RAU's new rural centre of excellence on its Cirencester farm. It will enable sharing of knowledge and ideas between those at the front end of ***agricultural*** production and applied researchers. This epitomises modern farming as it should be, transferring cutting edge knowledge into the field. And this is exactly the sort of thing we want to embrace with our new agri-tech strategy, and the theme of my lecture today.

Learning from history

Before we look to the future, it is important to learn lessons from the past. In agri-science we can learn 3 important lessons from recent history.

The first key lesson comes from the Rothschild review in 1971, which marked a serious turning point for ***agricultural*** R&D. The review was set up to examine the most effective arrangements for organising and supporting pure and applied research. Rothschild was an eminent biologist himself, but he was determined that the Haldane principle should not prevent government from dictating R&D priorities.

He said in his report: "The country's needs are not so trivial as to be left to the mercies of a form of scientific roulette".

To guard against this he made a clear distinction between how pure and applied research should be treated. "Applied research, that is R&D with a practical application as its objective, must be done on a customer-contractor basis. The customer says what he wants; the contractor does it...and the customer pays." The government welcomed his recommendation that applied research should be commissioned by the government (the customer) according to this model. And, as in other disciplines, a big chunk of the ***Agricultural*** Research Council's funding was transferred from the ***Agricultural*** Research Council to the Ministry of ***Agriculture***, Forestry and Fisheries, resulting in a loss of funding for translational and applied research.

This was reinforced by the second historical trend. Progressive reductions in the MAFF and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs budgets and successive cuts to research institutes left us with strong upstream pure research, but drastically weakened at the downstream development end. The argument was that near market work shouldn't be done in the public sector, and intermediate research institutes should be privatised. Hence in 1987, the Plant Breeding Institute was sold to Unilever. Some key teams were transferred to the John Innes Centre, but nonetheless this resulted in the loss of key public plant breeding facilities and programmes. PBI was later sold by Unilever to Monsanto, which subsequently closed the site.

Meanwhile, students regarded production ***agriculture*** as unfashionable, and vice chancellors saw it as expensive, so some universities opted to dispose of research farms and close schools of ***agriculture*** in the 70s and 80s, weakening our agri-tech base further.

Of course, those were the days of wine lakes and butter mountains, so it would have been tougher to justify funding for ***agricultural*** research politically. But agri-science and food security is a long term investment, and the intellectual choices made then were grievously misjudged in retrospect.

And this leads us to the third vital historical lesson, we invest in R&D now to save later.

Foot and mouth disease is a striking case study of the dangers of taking a short term view on research investment. Money was taken out of FMD in 1976 after the previous outbreak. Yet these outbreaks are never one-offs. We had another, catastrophic outbreak in 2001. It cost the economy a staggering £8.4 billion and even delayed the general election.

However, maintaining funding will ensure research into FMD keeps us at the forefront of technological advances helping to further support the response to future outbreaks both in UK and worldwide.

And R&D on vaccines, diagnostics and molecular epidemiology supporting this has moved on considerably. UK researchers have used the Diamond Light Source to develop a new vaccine which could be used in the UK and elsewhere, preventing costly outbreaks. This uses a synthetic virus rather than live samples, making it much safer and easier to produce. Researchers will also benefit from the substantial BIS capital investment being made at the Pirbright Institute, totalling some £250 million, for new facilities. Construction of the first phase will be completed by early 2014.

Bluetongue is a more positive tale. We kept investing in important research at Pirbright and that, coupled with close collaboration and development by industry and financial support from Defra, meant that when it surfaced in 2007 it didn't devastate. The costs of uncontrolled disease have been estimated at £485 million. By contrast Dutch losses were estimated at Euro 175 million. It is this partnership between the research base, business and government that I believe to be so important and which I will discuss later in relation to our agri-tech strategy.

Bluetongue defence has now taken another step forward thanks to Professor Polly Roy of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical ***Medicine***, whose team has assembled the virus in a test tube for the first time. Their new synthetic biology approach could provide scientists with the tools to develop vaccines with useful new properties like markers to distinguish between vaccinated and infected ***animals***. Professor Roy is now testing a new reverse-genetics based vaccine. Early trials suggest that it provides good protection against even the most virulent strains of the virus.

Investment in R&D

This government is acting on all 3 of these historical lessons. We are rebuilding links between upstream research and downstream applications. We are protecting important research institutes. And we are maintaining a crucial long term investment in R&D. I will talk briefly about each of these in turn.

First, we recognise that if we are to drive innovation and grow our economy we need to do more to promote links between research and industry. This government has invested over £200 million so far in Catapults, elite centres bringing industry and researchers together to bring emerging technologies to market in big growth areas.

We have leveraged nearly £1.2 billion to date through our new Research Partnership Innovation Fund, which rewards universities for partnering with industry. And we have committed at least £100 million a year more for 2015 to 2016 and 2016 to 2017. We have introduced the Catalyst fund to link up research councils with the Technology Strategy Board. We have invested £250 million in catalysts thus far with more to come. And we have R&D tax credits to encourage business to invest in research.

Secondly, because we have learned from the earlier rush to privatise, this government has established new guidelines for use when reviewing the future business model of public sector research establishments. At a time of great pressure to control spending I was concerned that these decisions should not be made in isolation, nor on the view of the sponsoring body alone. The government has put in place new guidance to be applied when an institute is being reviewed. It is based on expert advice from the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research. Departments must consider:

\* The institute's policy, regulatory and emergency response roles

\* Its special scientific and technical capabilities, facilities and resources

\* Its broader economic role regionally, nationally and internationally

Taking into account these factors should lead us to make better long term decisions about the future of organisations that make an important contribution to UK science capability and drive our innovation.

And thirdly, it is because we understand the importance of maintaining investment in basic research that our £4.6 billion ringfenced annual science budget continues to be protected.

Investment in agri-science

Let me now turn to ***agriculture*** as an example of this.

Today, we face some massive challenges to our food supply chain. We expect the population to grow from 7 to 9 billion by 2050 and the demand for food to double. Together with climate change and other environmental threats, achieving sufficient yields will be even more challenging. Low productivity is a huge challenge for Britain. Sustainable intensification is the answer. And this is where our agri-tech strategy comes in.

We believe that we have all the right ingredients: excellent farmers, a world class science base in many ***agricultural*** disciplines and a thriving food industry through ***manufacturing*** supply chain and retail.

Our new agri-tech strategy sets out a vision for the UK to regain its world-leading role in the race for better, more efficient and more sustainable ***agricultural*** production.

Again, the first important step is rebuilding the connection between basic research and applied science, so that our farmers can access the best agri-tech expertise and use innovative techniques. On the 9th October we launched a £70 million Agri-Tech Catalyst. This will help new ***agricultural*** technologies bridge the so-called valley of death between the lab and the marketplace. Designed to attract co-investment from industry, the catalyst will target SMEs as well as larger companies. It is being run by the TSB, who are now inviting bids for round 1. The TSB also launched new innovation vouchers last year with a special remit to target SMEs in the ***agriculture***.

Secondly, the government has committed to invest £90 million over 5 years to establish a small number of Centres for ***Agricultural*** Innovation to support advances in sustainable intensification. These centres will rebuild the applied research capacity and links with industry that was reduced in the past. In the strategy, we announced that the first of these centres would be in ***Agricultural*** Informatics and Metrics of Sustainability, to which we have committed up to £10 million. This centre will develop UK expertise and become a global hub of excellence.

And thirdly, we understand the importance of investing in agri-science. In 2011 to 2012 the government invested £450 million in R&D on ***agriculture*** and food.

Agri-engineering

We led the world in both the ***agricultural*** revolution and the industrial revolution. Now we are living with the consequences of disengaging in R&D in agri-engineering when farmers import thousands of Romanian labourers rather than using a machine to pick lettuces or cauliflower.

Pulling out of R&D and allowing in cheap labour through the Seasonal ***Agricultural*** Workers Scheme was doing things entirely the wrong way round.

However, there are signs that we are starting to regain our leadership in this area. G's, one of the UK's largest producers of salad, led the way when they designed their own in-field packing machinery. Buy a bag of their lettuce in Tescos and it will have been harvested, sealed in its packaging and even given a 2-for-1 sticker in the middle of a field. Many others have now followed suit. Machinery for picking and selecting delicate produce like this is what researchers are working on now. It is easier to do this in a lab or a factory of course; in a field, at the mercy of the British weather, there are a lot of variables to engineer out.

But if we can build a car through robotics, picking strawberries or an iceberg lettuce mechanically should not be beyond the realms of possibility.

At least 70% of all new farm equipment sold today has some sort of precision farming component inside, sat nav for tractors is now an everyday concept, and state of the art combine harvesters have up to 8 computers on board. New technology will continue to improve yields, reduce cost and protect the environment, delivering all-important sustainable intensification.

Former Silsoe researcher Tim Chamen is leading the way on 'controlled traffic farming'. This uses satellite technology to create permanent tractor wheel marks in a field. Research shows that three-quarters of a typical field is driven over in a year, causing considerable damage. Ensuring all vehicles use the same tracks cuts this down to less than a quarter.

And automatic wind control systems installed on spreaders measure the weather and adjust the angle and speed to stop fertiliser blowing off course. Again this about sustainable intensification. It delivers more cost effective spraying, with better results, at less cost to the environment. Meanwhile new fleet management software means different harvesting machines can talk to each other and farmers can manage harvest with real precision, reducing travel distance and fuel and cutting costs.

But engineering isn't only important for arable farming. Temperature and ventilation control in pig and poultry farming goes back to the 1950s.

The UK now has companies such as Fullwood and Delaval ***manufacturing*** cutting edge robotic milkers, which use novel sensors to milk the cow when it wants to be milked. This is good for welfare as well as increasing yield by at least 10%. The robot unit can identify cows and ensure they have the right amount of food too.

Looking to the future, biosensors in particular have huge potential to improve livestock health and wellbeing.

Agri-tech

There are numerous exciting examples of how agri-tech can change our world. Rothamsted is pushing the boundaries on how granular records of growth could improve crop production in the future. They are developing predictive phenotyping techniques that will enable farmers to predict exactly how a crop will perform based on its genetic make-up. Researchers will use cutting edge technology to monitor every detail of a plant growing in a field; obtaining an understanding of the complex traits linked to growth, yield, and its use of nutrients and water. Rothamsted researchers are also modifying wheat to take advantage of the ability of cotton to photosynthesise at higher temperatures.

Meanwhile, the National Institute of ***Agricultural*** Botany has recreated the original rare cross between an ancient wheat and wild grass species that happened in the Middle East 10,000 years ago. The result is a wheat which, when crossed with modern UK varieties, could offer a 30% improvement in yield, as well as drought tolerance and disease resistance.

And last December, 2 young entrepreneurs came together at a Space Solutions 'Hackathon' at our Catapult for satellite applications in Harwell. They developed the WeatherSafe Coffee App; an application that alerts Rwandan coffee farmers via their mobiles when temperature or humidity changes mean they need to watch out for disease or pests, based on satellite weather forecasting.

These are the sort of exciting new technologies that will transform ***agriculture*** and put Britain firmly back in the lead in the global race.

Genetic modification

However, in pushing forward these new technologies we face 2 major challenges: the confusion of risk and hazard, and excessive regulation.

GM is a case in point. The extreme difficulty of getting any GM crops through Europe is a failure of the regulatory regime. It ignores the fact that GM could bring the world more food.

One of the reasons that GM caused such public anxiety despite the strong scientific case, was that we did not have public scientific agencies involved. This was a consequence of the ***agricultural*** restructuring that followed the Rothschild review. If we had retained the Plant Breeding Institute for instance, and their experts had been involved, GM might not have been seen as purely driven by business interest. We had no trusted counter parties. But with strong public research figures involved we might have won the debate.

In contrast, the scientist-led public engagement on the Rothamsted GM wheat trial protest in May last year was perceived to be sensible and balanced and attracted positive media coverage. The Observer and The Times both ran leaders supporting Rothamsted. This shows the importance of scientific input to inform the GM debate, and to secure public trust.

We still have some way to go. At the Cheltenham Science Fair in March, I watched children taking part in a spot the GM plant competition, run by the John Innes Centre. They were shown 6 pea plants in pots, some healthy and others misshapen and small. When asked to identify the ones that had been genetically modified they chose the latter weedy looking ones; when in fact the former healthy ones were GM.

This is a reminder that scientists and the government need to work together to keep building on public understanding of GM.

But the GM story is indicative of a wider point. Science and ***agriculture*** are not opposed. Science and good food are not opposed. Science is not the enemy. No-one expects modern cars to be made using the techniques of Lord Nuffield, or doctors to use the practices of the 1950s. And in the same vein we should grow food using the very best of modern science. There is no reason why we should preserve the farming techniques of our grandparents.

If we are to meet the 20:20 challenge laid down by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and Rothamsted; producing 20 tonnes of wheat per hectare in 20 years' time (now less than 20 years), we will have to use technology.

Recent studies suggest that organic crop yields can be up to 40% lower than conventionally farmed crops, or worse. Europe is in real danger of failing to ***feed*** itself. If 1 of the most affluent continents is forced to import from other poorer countries, because of a fantasy about organic farming, that would be highly irresponsible.

We have learned the lessons from the past. Right now we are focusing hard on rebuilding the link between pure and applied research in ***agriculture***, improving engagement and collaboration with industry, and investing in long term R&D. With the right vision and the right people, the UK can regain its world-leading role in the race for better, more efficient and more sustainable ***agricultural*** production. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [*htsyndication@hindustantimes.com*](mailto:htsyndication@hindustantimes.com)

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[***Effect of knife sanitation on the surface microbial load of beef carcasses during the removal of the hide***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5D4V-K7K1-DYG1-P3W5-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

**ABSTRACT:**

By P. Simón, J. Grao, X. Barber, F.J. Dominguez Orive, J. Fernández-López and E. Sendra The study compares microbial counts on beef carcasses skinned with sanitised knives (in hot water at 82°C) with carcasses skinned with knives which were just washed with warm water until visible dirt was removed and sanitised in between four carcasses. The study was carried out in a small-medium size beef slaughterhouse where all other handling and hygiene conditions were kept invariable. No differences were found in total aerobic bacteria and enterobacteria counts between the two groups of carcasses. This proves that the practice of sanitising knives (after each carcass compared with in between four carcasses) did not have any effect on the microbiological quality of the carcasses, despite non sanitised knives had a higher microbial load. The final microbial load of carcasses was the result of general hygienic and handling practices, and the knives used to remove the hide were not a relevant source of carcass contamination when they were properly washed before use.

**FULL TEXT:**

Live ***animals*** are contaminated with pathogenic bacteria which are found on the skin, hide, fleece or feathers and in the gastrointestinal tract. During the slaughtering process these bacteria can cross contaminate the meat (Sheridan,1998). The surface of the carcass can be contaminated by direct contact with hair, hide or fleece, hands of operators, the surrounding environment as well as knives and other tools used in the dressing process (Bell, 1997). In those species where the skin is removed, it is during this dressing where most of the microbiological contamination occurs (Madden et al., 2004; Sheridan, 1998). Knives, used for the first incisions of the skin are an important source of contamination of the underneath carcass tissue (Koutsoumanis and Sofos, 2004; Peel and Simmons, 1978).

During slaughtering, in order to minimise carcass contamination from knives, many countries have the regulatory requirement of having facilities for disinfecting knives with water at not less than 82°C or alternative systems with proven equivalent effect (EC, 2004; USDA, 1999; Food Regulation Standing Committee, 2007).

Microbiological testing of carcass is generally acknowledged as a mean to evaluate the hygiene of the dressing process as well as a verification method for hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) systems, prerequisites, sanitation standard operating procedures (SSOP) and Good ***Manufacturing*** Practices (GMP) (Brown et al, 2000).

The aim of the present study is to assess, under real conditions, the effect on the microbiological loads of the carcasses when skinned with knives just sanitised or with knives only washed with warm tap water. Additionally blades from knives used during one of the carcass sampling days were tested for microbial counts of TVM and EB in order to assess their level of contamination before using them in the skinning process and after repeated uses.

Materials and methods

Description of the slaughterhouse, working stations and related hygiene practices

The study was done in a medium size slaughterhouse with slaughtering lines for cattle, lambs and pigs, located in Orihuela (Alicante, Spain). The study did not interfere with the regular practices and routine of the slaughterhouse.

All workstations have sinks and knife sterilisers at 82°C attached. Each operator has two knives, one in use and the other left dipped in the knife steriliser until used and replaced, 1-knife technique was used. During the study operators washed the knives with tepid water (approximately 40°C) from the tap as many times as they considered necessary, usually until macroscopic residues were visually removed. Five workstations were included in the study. These workstations were thosewhere the knives are used to incise the skin during dressing, except the ones used for bleeding and head skin removal because their contribution to carcass contamination in the sampling sites was considered negligible.

The oesophagus was tied off and the evisceration was carried out without bursting the intestines due to the skills, training and experience of the staff. As a result of this, contamination was a rare event. The carcass sampling sites were the external surface and not inside the abdominal or thoracic cavities.

Carcass identification and sampling

All carcasses were identified by consecutive numbers and carcasses that required a sanitised knife had an extra mark on the brisket (a cross) made with authorised food grade pencil for carcass marking. During the sampling sessions the operators involved in the study were continuously supervised by authors Simón and Grao to verify that they were following the instructions. Operatives were trained to change the knife and use a sanitised knife only when appropriate, following this sequence: the first carcass was dressed with a sanitised knife at all workstations, and this one was followed by the second, third and fourth carcasses that were dressed with the same knife that was only washed under warm water when the operators considered necessary and always in between carcasses. The fifth carcass was again handled with a sanitised knife. This pattern was followed during the whole sampling session. The first and fourth carcasses of each sequence were sampled. A total of 8 to 12 carcasses were sampled every sampling day (4 to 6 skinned with a sanitised knife and 4 to 6 skinned with a rinsed knife in warm water). At the end of the slaughtering process and before chilling, carcasses were sampled. The sampling procedure was made according to ISO standard 17604, following the template excision method procedure for the destructive method.

The four sampling sites in each carcasse were neck, brisket, flank and medial hindquarter corresponding with numbers 1, 2, 4 and 9 stated in ISO17604. For each carcass the sampling rules stated in Commission Regulation EC2073/2005 were followed.

Knives sampling

Commercial dip-slides from 3M with PCA (plate count agar) and VRBG (violet red bile glucose), for TVM and EB, respectively, were used for surface sampling. Instructions from the ***manufacturer*** were followed for sampling, incubation and reading.

The surface of the knives was evaluated according to the following pattern: (1) after knife sanitation, (2) after the first carcass was handled, (3) after the second carcass was sampled, (4) after the third carcass was sampled. This test aimed to evaluate the microbial contamination of knives immediately before carcass handling as well as the effectiveness of knife sanitisers.

Microbial analysis of carcass samples

Carcass samples were analyzed as described in EC Regulation 2073/2005, total aerobic mesophilic bacteria (TVM) were determined according to ISO standard 4833 and counts of Enterobacteria (EB) according to ISO21528-2. Microbial media used were: Peptone Water for microbial dilutions, Plate Count Agar and Vilolet Red Bile Glucose Agar were from Sharlau (Scharlab S.A. Setmenat, Barcelona, Spain).

Statistical analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using R software package (R Development Core Team (2010). A descriptive study for all data (EB and TVM in carcasses and EB and TVM in knives), sampling day was considered as a random effect and knife disinfection as a fixed effect; we used a generalized linear mixed model to study the effect for the fixed effects (Breslow and Clayton, 1993).

Results

Enterobacteria counts in beef carcasses

Data of log10 counts of EB/cm2 in beef carcasses surfaces were visually checked, given that the sampling day was a random effect and the knife disinfection was a fixed effect, random effect models were tested to assess both effects. EB data followed a non normal distribution and a heterogeneous variance, so a Mixed General Linear Model (MGLM) was used to analyze EB data.

Knife sanitation effect did not provide differences among EB counts in the surface of beef carcasses (p-value = 0.28). Significant differences were detected due to sampling day (p-value<0.01); sampling days 3, 5 and 6 were significantly different as can be seen in Figure1.

Total viable counts in beef carcasses

Data of Log10 counts of TVM/cm2 data were visually checked, and showed a similar behavior to EB. It is well known the relation among EB and TVM counts, so in those models in which TVM were to be evaluated, EB counts were included as co-variable. Random effect models were also tested to assess knife sanitising and sampling day effects. As described for EB, knife disinfection did not provide significant differences in TVM load (Figure2) (p-value = 0.34) and was correlated to EB counts (p-value<0.001). Sampling day significantly affected microbial counts. Both TVC and EB counts were acceptable under Regulation EC2073/2005 despite the method used for knives cleaning/sanitation.

Knives microbial load

Regarding knives surface counts of Enterobacteria, Figure3 represents statistics of data obtained for EB counts per square centimeter. No EB counts were detected in sanitized knives, however, given that a zero value cannot be taken as a reference to run inference tests, counts obtained after the first use of the knife were taken as reference values for inference tests. For model adjustment procedures: operators III (0 counts) and V (highest microbial load of the knives) presented a different profile form the others, so they were not included in the normality check. Following this consideration, the logarithm conversion of the EB variable yielded a variable with a gamma distribution. Using a MGLM it can be seen that EB counts were not affected by the repeated use of the knife once the knife had already been used (as counts after the first use were taken as reference as previously explained) (p-value = 0.51). Once data from operators III and V was removed, there were no differences due to 'operator' effect. If data from all operators was included, it resulted that all operatives were very consistent except number V, as expected from the descriptive analysis.

Knives surface counts of Total Viable Microorganisms statistics are represented in Figure 3. The number of re-uses of the knife increases its microbial load although a great variability has been seen in the results (wide size of the box) in Figure4.

Model adjustment of knife counts: following the logarithm transformation of variables EB and TVM correlation among both variables was calculated, giving an index of 0.57 (significantly different from zero p-value = 0.015) if data from operators III and V is removed; if all operators' data is included the correlation index is 0.55 (Spearman correlation = 0.6). Based on those results, for the adjustment of TVM, EB counts were included as independent effect of the model. After adjusting the model, knife sampling did not affect TVM average (p-value = 0.21), and TVM were parallel, mainly explained by EB counts (p-value = 0.03).

Discussion

The sanitising of knives was clearly efficient; as EB counts were always 0 and very low counts were obtained for TVM in knives immediately after sanitation. Counts on knives used and reused resulted in different counts for TVM and EB, but there were no significant differences after 1, 2 or 3 repeated uses. This can be due to the effect of rinsing them with tepid water as frequent as operators considered necessary, which may result in the melting of grease, avoiding protein coagulation. Several studies have proved this effect in reduction of microbial contamination on knife blades. Eustace et al. (2007) concluded that pre-rinse should be implemented where possible to increase the general hygienic status of knives in slaughter facilities. According to Bell and Hathaway (1996) the rinsing step removes most of the bacteria present in knives, as much as a 98.2% reduction after a hand wash of the blade at 44 °C. Midgley and Eustace (2003) reported a 70% reduction in knives bacterial load due to rinsing with water.

Bell and Hathaway (1996) reported that most reduction in the knives microbial load was achieved by rinsing under running water (20-40°C), which accounted for a 70% reduction of microbial load. However, even if followed by sanitation at 82°C did not guarantee complete removal of faecal contamination. These authors concluded that under current practices of rinsing and sanitizing at 82°C, even if disinfection was not achieved, there was no evidence of knives contributing to meat contamination. Their observations are in line with the results of the present study.

In our particular case the use of sanitised knives was a hygienic practice which did not had an effect on the microbiological quality of the carcasses, whenever knives were washed with tepid running water during working. Therefore, more attention should be paid to other hygienic practices during the slaughtering process. The importance of the operator's hands which unavoidably contact with hides and constitutes a source of cross contamination of carcasses and the effect of rinsing operator's hands to remove 90% of the hide derived microbiota has been already proven (Bell, 1997).

The reason for significant differences in EB and TVM in carcasses due to sampling day maybe related to the fact that the experience was run on summer time, and some sampling days the climatic conditions were quite suffocating favoring all factors involved in discomfort, contamination and finally increased microbial counts.

The beef slaughter line where the study took place is a medium-small size facility, where the degree of automatisms is not as high as it may be in larger facilities and it could influence the lack of differences in microbiological loads between the two groups of carcasses sampled. Some of these particular circumstances of the functioning of the line are as follows:

1. The beef line is not automatically moved and although it is designed to use gravity force to move the carcasses, often it is necessary to pull or push the carcasses manually, and this practice may increase and redistribute the microbial load.

2. Carcasses, after having been inspected by the official veterinarian, contact with each other and cross contamination may occur.

Hygienic practices aimed to minimise as much as possible the cross contamination from the hair and skin to the carcasses' surface of the carcass have a huge importance and should be emphasised during the training sessions of the staff.

Most of the regulations do not state the frequency of changing knives, although it is often required by guides of good practices, to do it before handling every carcass. Taking into account the results of this study the frequency of disinfecting knives during the shift, may be reduced as far as in between four carcasses without influencing the microbiological quality of carcasses.

Practical importance

In the real working conditions of the small-medium size slaughterhouse where the study took place, the use of disinfected knives at 82°C, for skinning beef carcasses did not improved the carcass microbiological quality for enterobacteria and TVC, in comparison with carcasses dressed with knives just rinsed with tepid water during dressing and that have already been used for the dressing of the previous four carcasses. Other hygienic practices seem to be more important in order to avoid surface carcass contamination and consequently to improve meat safety. Special attention has to be paid to the rinsing of knives as this practice results in a higher reduction of the knives microbiological load than the use of sterilisers at 82°C. Therefore adequate staff training programmes and supervision of hygienic practices such as the rinsing of the knives should be implemented in order to reduce carcass contamination as much as possible.

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- Knife sanitation

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- Carcass contamination

**Graphic**

Fig. 1: Log counts of Enterobacteria (EB) per square centimetre on the surface of beef carcase during the 6 weeks of the study depending on the sanitation procedure of knives ("yes": knives sanitised before the dressing of each individual carcase, "no": knives sanitised every 4 carcasses)

Fig. 2: Log counts of Total Viable Microorganisms (TVM) per square centimetre on the surface of beef carcase during the 6 weeks of the study depending on the sanitation procedure of knives ("yes": knives sanitised before the dressing of each individual carcase, "no": knives sanitised every 4 carcasses)

Fig. 3: Interaction plots for Enterobacteria (EB) (left) and Total Viable Microorganisms (TVM) (right) counts per square centimeter on knives used in the abattoir. Operator from I to V represent the identification number assigned to each operator.

Fig. 4: Interaction plots for Enterobacteria (EB) (1) and Total Viable Microorganisms (TVM) (2) counts per square centimeter on knives used in the abattoir. X axis levels from 0 to 3 represent the number of times the knife has been used after sanitation.

Effect of knife sanitation on the surface microbial load of beef carcasses during the removal of the hide - whole article (incl. illustrations)

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[***Sport scores for Team GB exporters; Britain's private companies with the fastest-growing overseas sales show what can be done when you deliver the goods, says Richard Tyler***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5CN6-5YN1-JBVM-Y4Y6-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Richard Tyler

**Body**

The summer of 2014 is unlikely to be seen as a time of great British sporting achievement, with failures in football, tennis, cricket and rugby. But when it comes to the business side of international sport, Britain's companies are [*www.excelling.Be*](http://www.excelling.Be) it the engineering behind motorsports, the high-performance clothing demanded by athletes, or the innovative facilities now used to house spectators - 14 companies appearing in the fifth annual Sunday Times HSBC International Track 200 league table are busy behind the scenes.

With the World Cup final taking place today in Brazil, London's Arena Group (No58) will be celebrating the construction oftwo9,000 seat stands with its technology at the stadium in Sao Paulo.

Six of the sports industry companies are allied to motorsports, such as Hampshire's Formaplex (No111), which engineers parts for Formula One and Le Mans racing teams. Others include Rapha, the cycling clothing firm at No86 that supplies Team Sky with high-performance outfits for the Tour de France, and LGC, the analytical labs firm at No107, that tests for doping in sports.

These 14 companies recorded average international sales growth of 41%

a year for the last two years, to secure a place in this year's ranking. They outperformed the rest of the table, where the average annual growth was still an outstanding 36%,and ranged from19%to 364%.

The 200 firms collectively booked £8.5bn in overseas sales in their latest year, a sizeable proportion of their total sales of £19.8bn. They employ 192,000 people, with No198 - facilities services provider OCS Group - the single largest employer with 70,000 staff worldwide.

Engineering is the dominant sector with 41 companies, including the No1 firm Congleton's Tandom Metallurgical, which recycles and trades scrap metal, and Express Engineering (No 52), the Gateshead business that supplies precision machined parts to the oil and gas industry. In total there are 40 companies that ***feed*** this industry, such as Aberdeen's electrical equipment supplier Dron & Dickson (No10). The industry's importance to Britain's economy is explored furtherby Ian Stuart ofHSBCon page 3.

Scotland is home to almost 40%

of these oil and gas related companies, while London boasts 13 of the 14 media firms that feature, and northeast England has four steel-related companies among the 22 from the region appearing in the table. The Midlands and Scotland are home to 21 firms each, southeast England has 25, the northwest has 26, and London houses 62 headquarters.

America is the largest single trading partner, with 88 firms citing it as a main market. Over a quarter have subsidiaries in the country, more than double the number in any other. They include digital marketing agency Essence (No 33), which generated half its £141m sales in the US last year. The companies typically cite Australia, Germany, France and China as their next big markets. HSBC's Dan Howlett discusses opportunities in western markets below.

Not all the companies require a large office network to prosper overseas, with Stoke-based online bookmaker bet365 (No 90) recording the biggest absolute increase in international sales, up from £505mto£989mbetween 2012 and 2014.

Many of the companies trade on their British heritage, including London folding bike ***manufacturer*** Brompton Bicycle (No135), Somerset's traditional cheddar cheese maker Barber's (No 141), and Charles Tyrwhitt Shirts, ranked at 149.

Sporting success may have been elusive this year, but the International Track 200 companies show what great success business can achieve when clever strategy and smart execution combine awayfrom home.

FAST TRACK

International Track 200 ranks Britain's private companies by fastest-growing overseas sales. It is produced by Fast Track, the Oxford firm that researches Britain's top-performing private companies and organises invitation-only dinners for their owners and directors to network and meet its sponsors.

For full ranking criteria, see page 2.

1 TANDOMMETALLURGICAL

Metal processor 364.05%

As mining costs have risen in recent years, in tandem with the world's rising consumption of metal, there has been a dramatic change in the way companies source raw materials. Prices have soared - copper alone has more than tripled in value in the last decade. As a result, electronic products made in China now contain upto 80%recycled copper, recovered from old mobile phones, computers and TVs. Recycling metals is a profitable business - which is where Britain's Tandom Metallurgical Group comes in.

The Cheshire company was founded in 2008whenmanaging director TomMuir, 57, and commercial director Andrew Lumsden, 48- with nearly 60years of sector experience between them - merged their two recycling companies.The following year they sold a 30%

stake in the business to American technology company Chinook Sciences, and used the capital to buy the Congleton premises of one of the largest aluminium ingot producers in Britain.

A third of Tandom's £58mturnover is generated from processing metal from scrapped cars into ingots of aluminium, some of which are exported to the continental automotive industry. Last year, the company expanded its Congleton facility and invested£2min new equipment, and can now produce more than 700 tons of alloy a week.

The larger part of its business is scrap metal trading - Tandombuys used drinks cans, electronic components and aluminium scrap. It began trading overseas when it bought its Congleton plant, though exports were only £1min 2011whenNick Rose, 43, joined as trading director to drive international sales. Today the majority of exports, which reached £21.9m in 2013, are scrap cables and electronics, shipped to processors in China and India, which extract copper and other metals to sell to local ***manufacturers***. Muir says this mix helps to spread business risk as these sectors are less vulnerable to a downturn than the car industry.

China is the world's largest metals recycler and, says Muir,Tandom could easily export 10 times as much scrap to the country as it does currently, if only it could source enough suitable metal.

2 PD&MS

ENERGY Engineering services 246.18%

PD&MS Energy modifies and upgrades offshore oil drilling and production facilities. It also hasarig repair site in Dundee.Amongmany customers, the Aberdeen firm has multimillionpound deals in place to upgrade BP's North Sea, Norwegian and Caspian Sea platforms. It is majority-owned by private equity house Equistone Partners Europe and is led by chief executive SimonRio, 38. Its international sales hit £12.2m last year.

3 MARKGROUP

Energy efficiency services 206.74%

MarkGroup helps its customers save moneyon their energy bills through avariety of energy efficiency measures, including providing loft and cavity wall insulation, as well as renewable energy technologies such as solar electricity and heat pumps.

Ledby chairman Lee Cottingham, 39, the group began its international expansion in 2009 andnowoperates in America, Australia andNew Zealand, generating international sales of £47.7m in 2013.

4 BJSS

IT consultancy 183.58%

This Leeds-based IT consultancy has astrong reputation in the financial and energy sectors, whereits customers include HSBC,UBSand BP.Demandfrom existing clients prompted expansion into America, wherethecompanyopened an office inNewYork last year. The business generated overseas turnover of £17.3m in 2013, derived mainly from itswork across Europe.

BJSS is led by managing director Glynn Robinson, 49.

5 GLOBALPERSONALS

Online dating provider 180.79%

Americans, Australians and South Africans use someof the 13,000 dating websites run by Global Personals. Founded in 2003 by Ross Williams, 36, and Steve Pammenter, 41, the firm offers white-label dating sites to 1,700 commercial partners worldwide. It also runs itsownniche websites and has branched out into online gaming. In the last two years it has opened offices inNewYork and Melbourne, helping international sales reach £10.4m in 2013.

6 CROWNPRODUCTS

Kitchen furniture supplier 172.31%

This Kent firm makes fitted kitchen, bedroomand office furniture, sold to independent retailers throughout Britain and exported toNorwayand Sweden. Its Coolectric subsidiary imports Liebherr refrigeration equipment, while its Boston Basinsarmdistributes sinks and taps in America. The group isownedand runby Michael Head, 71, and generated international sales of£5.1m in 2013.

7 OMG

Marketing agency 144.26%

Marketing groupOMGlaunched an office in Brazil last year, adding to bases in Poland, India, Singapore and Australia.The Norwich companyruns an "affiliate network",which enables companies to advertise on third-party websites,knownas affiliates.OMG specialises in the finance sector and its customers includeHSBCand Royal Bank of Scotland. International sales rose to£4mlast year under founder and chief executive Richard Syme, 43.

8 ARROWS GROUP

Recruitment consultancy 143.77%

Co-founders James Parsons, 37, and Adrian Treacy, 34, set up this recruitment agency in 2003 and have expanded froma two-manoperation to an international business with 140 staff. Arrows specialises in the technology, media, telecoms and healthcare sectors and works withmore than 450 clients across Europe. The firm has offices in London,Amsterdam and Munich, and international sales hit£8.9m this year.

9 ELBROOK CASH AND CARRY

Cash and carry wholesaler 142.89%

Managingdirector Fukhera Khalid, 45, set up his south Londoncash and carry business in 1984whenhe was just 16. Elbrook specialises in the wholesale of alcohol,and exports beers and spirits to France, Holland and Belgium, with overseas sales climbing to£48.7m last year. It alsoowns the Chak89Indian restaurant in SouthLondonand Chak89 filmandTVstudios in Middlesex.

10 DRON & DICKSON

Electrical equipment supplier 135.27%

With ateamof professional abseilers, Dron&Dickson supplies and maintains electrical equipment in hazardous areas, including oil rigs and refineries. The Stirlingcompany opened an office in Brazil last year, securing£10min contracts from oil and gas operators in the region. International sales reached £2.9min 2013.Runby Colin Rowley, 41, the firm already hasapresence in Dubai andAbuDhabi.

11 PGI

Business security provider 134.46%

Formedin 2008 to provide protection for commercial ships vulnerable to pirate attacks, PGI has diversified into protection services for industriesand governments. It employs former intelligence and military personnel specialising in corporate intelligence, risk analysis and cyber security, and has offices in America, Tokyo,HongKong and Singapore. Under chief executive Barry Roche, 41, international sales reached£50.7m in 2012.

12 PROAV

Audio-visual systems 127.60%

Foundedin 1969,proAV installs audio-visual systems in boardrooms, shops and superyachts. Its customers include companies, hospitals and schools. The Surrey-headquartered companyhas completed 400 international projectson six continents to date, and overseas sales were£11.4m last year. The business is led by managing director Richard Brookes, 50, and operations director Francesca Hazell, 45.

13 IKAS

Recruitment consultancy 116.25%

Foundedten years ago, iKas Group mainly recruits for financial services firms through its iKas International brand, while its iKonnect Global Solutions divisionwas formed two years ago to diversify into commercial ITand supply-chain recruitment. The business has offices in London,Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney andNew York, and group managing director Oliver Coughlan, 32, plans to open further bases in America. International sales hit an annualised£4.4m in 2012.

14 SPRING STUDIOS

Creative agency 115.34%

Luxury and fashion brands such as Calvin Klein,TomFord, Target, Versace andMaxMara use Spring Studios' brand communication services. Evolving from its roots as afashion photographic studio, the Londoncompanynowdevelops content, campaigns, events and global ecommercewebsites. It opened studios inNewYork this year, which played host toNewYork FashionWeekshows. International sales reached£13.5m in 2013 under founderMarkLoy, 41.

15 COMPELLO STAFFING

Recruitment consultancy 110.17%

Compello Staffing Group comprises a stable of companies offering recruitmentandHRservices. John Hailstone, 46,whofounded the Glasgow business in 1998, acquired oil and gas recruiters and used that as a springboard into other sectors including engineering and IT. Its businessesnowinclude FPS, NTEnergy and Tec Group, and thecompany recently opened operations in Houston, Dubaiand Kurdistan, boosting international sales to£8.9m in 2013.

16 HOTTER COMFORTCONCEPT

Footwear maker and retailer 109.75%

Thiscompanysays it is Britain's biggest shoe maker, with its Lancashire factory supplying 63 stores nationwide. It began selling online in America in 2010. In January, Electra Private Equity paid £85mforamajority stake to fund expansion. Founder Stewart Houlgrave, 54, retainsastake and Peter Taylor, 51, formermanaging director, took over as chief executive. Exports hit£6min 2013.

17 SPENCEROGDEN

Recruitment consultancy 108.76%

After selling his first recruitment business for £52m, David Spencer-Percival, 43, teamedup with tech entrepreneur Sir Peter Ogden, 67, to form this energy sector recruitment agency in 2009. The London-based firm has since opened offices in 12 countries, helping international turnover reach £35.5m in 2013.Ogden invested afurther£2min the business inMarch in order to fund further international expansion.

18 [*www.MUSICMAGPIE.CO.UK*](http://www.MUSICMAGPIE.CO.UK)

Online entertainment trader 108.38%

Foundedby Steve Oliver, 43, and Walter Gleeson, 48, this Cheshire-based companybuys unwanted CDs, DVDs, electronics,games and branded clothes from consumers using its Musicmagpie website or phoneapp. It resells the products in morethan 150 countries, and generated£36min overseas sales last year. It has recently launched an American website, [*www.decluttr.com*](http://www.decluttr.com), and openedastore in Blackburn for its used fashion brand, Bradley Street.

19 MPMPRODUCTS

Pet food producer 100.92%

This pet food firm celebrated a milestone last year-selling its millionth unit ofwet cat food worldwide.MPMProducts exports premiumdog and cat food to 35 countries, with key markets including Europe, America and the Asia Pacific region. In 2013, international sales reached£14.2m and the business secured a £10mfunding package from HSBCin order to accelerate further overseas expansion. Chairman and co-founder Jon Kinsey, 55, heads the Cheshire company.

20 THEBURDENGROUP

Meat wholesaler 100.15%

This supplier of red meat,game and poultry trades from London's Smithfield meat market, exporting to customers in France, Spain and Italy. It also has aship victualling business, Cavendish Ships Stores, which supplies cruise liners and ferries witharange of food. Exports rose to£11.1m in 2014. The business is led by chairman Trevor Hussey, 62,who boughtaminority stake from the founding Burden family in 2008.

21 MINDCANDY

Children's games developer 97.49%

MindCandy runs Moshi Monsters, an online children'sgamewith80m registered players inmorethan 150 countries. Subscriptions to additional online contentand merchandise sales generated international revenue of £15.9m in 2012. Thecompany introducedanewgame for mobile devices last year and is rolling it out in 100 countries.Aventure capital consortium led by Accel Partners backs the business, which is valued atmore than£200m. Founder Michael Acton Smith, 39, heads the Londonfirm.

22 ABILITY MATTERS

Healthcare products developer 96.77%

Ability Matters makes prosthetic and orthotic devices, and provides prosthetic care atNHSand private clinics in Britain and overseas. With offices in Ireland, Franceand the Netherlands, the company,based in Oxfordshire, also distributes mobility products to Europe and farther afield, and openedaclinic just outsideNewDelhi in 2013. Founded in 1989 by Michael O'Byrne, 54, the companygenerated international sales of£2.7m in 2012.

23 SIMPSONS MALT

Malt producer 91.52%

This family-owned firm makes almost 300,000 tons of maltayear, with its ***agricultural*** tradingarms-McCreath, Simpson&Prentice and John Guthrie- sourcing the rawmaterial, barley. The malt is exported to food, whiskyand beer ***manufacturers*** in markets such as Europe and North America, with international sales of£9.7m in 2013. Based in Berwick-upon-Tweed, the firmwas founded by corn merchant James Parker Simpson in 1862, and today his great-grandsonSimon Simpson, 78, is chairman.

24 FOUNDOCEAN

Offshore grouting specialist 91.23%

FoundOceanisaspecialist in subsea grouting-the use of concrete and sea water to stabilise pipelines and secure offshore oil rigs and wind turbines. The companyhas worked across five continents, and generated international sales of £34.4m last year. Chairman Keith Miller, 69, took control of the firm in 1988, and environmental investor Ambienta boughtaminority stake in 2012 for an undisclosed sum.

25 LONGFIELD CHEMICALS

Plastics distributor 86.22%

Longfield isaspecialist distributor and trader of the polymers used tomake plastic products. The Cheshire firm shipsmore than 70,000 tons ofraw materials every year to European plastics processors, and also helps customers in Eastern Europe to improve packaging quality by using better chemicals.Under directorsMark Pepper, 53, and Stuart Forsyth, 44, international sales hit£15.2m last year.

26 VISION SUPPORTSERVICES

Textile distributor 81.34%

Oneof this textile firm's brands, Liddell, supplied linens at the beginning of the last century to the Titanic. Today, the Blackburn firm provides bed linen, towels and bathrobes tosomeof the world's most famous hotels, such as the Burj Al Arab in Dubai. Other brands include Hilden, Lissadell, Whitakers, and Vision Assurance, supplying hotels, the public sector and retailers. Financier Daniel Wright, 42, bought out his family's textile business, Cohenand Chapman,in 2005 and has since built the group through acquisitions, with overseas sales reaching£7min 2013.

27 GCS RECRUITMENT IT

recruitment consultancy 81.01%

This recruitmentcompanyfills permanent and contract roles for blue-chip customers in technology, financial services and engineering. Ireland is one of GCS's main markets and the Reading firm isnowlooking to expand intoGermany. Led by managing director David Bloxham, 40, it had international sales of£3mlast year.

28 VEROSOFTWARE

***Manufacturing*** software designer 79.95%

This Cheltenhamcompany develops and distributes computer-aided design and ***manufacturing*** software and hasmore than 20,000 customers, including Audi andBMW.American private-equity firm Battery Ventures paid£7.2m to delist the business from the Alternative Investment Market in 2010, appointing chief executive Richard Smith, 49.

Acquisitions have boosted international sales, which reached£58.5m in 2013.

29 PTARMIGAN MEDIA

Financial media agency 79.02%

Namedafterarare bird and also the title ofasecure military communications system, Ptarmiganworks for blue-chip financial institutions such as JP Morgan, HSBCand Aberdeen AssetManagement to plan and buy their advertising. The Londoncompanywas founded in 1992 by David Wiggin, 54, andnowhas offices inHong Kong, Singapore and NewYork. International sales, including media space bought on behalf of clients, hit £10.6m in 2013.

30 SKY SCANNER

Travel search engine 77.31%

Skyscanner's growing popularity around the world has seen the referral fees it earns from overseas airline ticket sales swell to£46.4min 2013. Its flight search engine is available in 40 countries and 30 different languages, and last year, co-founderand chief executive Gareth Williams, 45, opened an office in Miami, adding to those in Beijing, Singapore and Barcelona. Venture investor Sequoia Capital took an undisclosed stake in the business in October, reportedly valuing the Edinburgh firm at£500m.

31 ALEXANDER DENNIS

Bus and coach maker 76.99%

InHongKong,4mpassengers travel on 4,200 Alexander Dennis buses every day. The Falkirk firm's fuel-efficient, environmentally-friendly buses are used in Asia, Australasia and North America. International growth has been boostedby large orders from Canada andHongKong, plus a£3.8m takeover of Australia's second-largest bus maker. Exports hit£165min 2012 under chief executive Colin Robertson, 49.

32 ENTIÉR

Facilities management services 74.73%

Chief executive Peter Bruce, 48, and four colleagues set up Entiérsix years ago to provide support services to the oil and gas industry off the Aberdeenshire coast. Itnowoffers catering and hotel services in regions such as the Gulf of Mexico, Canadaand America, generating overseas sales of £8.2m in 2013. Entiér opened an office in Houston in October and is expanding in Brazil.

33 ESSENCE

Digital marketing agency 73.70%

Foundedin 2005 withacontract from Carphone Warehouse, this London digital marketing agencynowgenerates half its turnover in North America, from clients that include Google, Walgreens, eBayand YouTube. Co-founder and chairman Matt Isaacs, 42, has been building Essence's presence in the region and last year's acquisitions of agencies in San Francisco and Seattle helped international sales reach£106.2m.

34 MATRIX POLYMERS

Plastic powder producer 72.83%

This company makes plastic powders in plants in Britain, Poland, Australia,New Zealand and Malaysia. The coloured powdersare therawmaterial for rotational moulding,aprocess used to makeproducts such as water and diesel tanks. Martin Coles, 50, founded the business in 1992,and in 2010 bought an Australian competitor. International sales reached£48.6m in 2012.

35 AVALON

Entertainment producer and manager 72.76%

Avalon has offices inNewYork and Los Angeles and produces Workaholics for ComedyCentral and John Oliver's Last WeekTonight forHBO, helping overseas sales reach £19.4m in 2013. It also exports British television shows, stages live comedyevents and represents talent including comedian Frank Skinner and TVpresenter Fiona Bruce. Avalon was founded in 1989 by Jonathan Thoday, 53, and Richard Allen-Turner, 48.

36 JEB ENGINEERING DESIGN

Precision engineer 72.52%

Fromsites in Suffolk and Lancashire, thiscompanyprovides precision engineering services to the electrical, ***medical*** and munitions industries in 45 countries.The business generated most of its 2012 exports of£31.5m selling non-lethal bullets and gun conversion kits to the American military and law enforcement agencies for weapons training. Chairman Barry Littlewood, 66, boughtamajority stake in Ultimate Training Munitions in 2003.

37 CENTEK

Oilfield equipment ***manufacturer*** 72.03%

Centekmakes "centralisers" for the oil industry-devices that keep pipelines centred in holes before they are cemented into place. TheDevon firm operates in morethan 50 countries, selling to customers such as Shell andBP and through distributor Halliburton. In 2012, it openedamanufacturing plant in America, helping international sales to reach£36min 2013. The business is led by founderTony Cutmore, 68.

38 TYRRELLS POTATO CRISPS

Crisps and snacks producer 69.85%

Knownfor its quintessentially English "posh" crisps, Tyrrells has expanded into emerging markets including China, Russiaand India, and recentlywona Queen'sAward for international trade. Its success has attractednewinvestors, with Investcorp buying out Langholm Capital for£100m in August 2013. Underchief executive David Milner, 51, international sales were£9.5m in 2013.

39 EQUIP OUTDOOR TECHNOLOGIES

Outdoor clothing supplier 69.12%

Equip founder Matt Gowar, 43, started making gloves and gaiters for climbers in the early 90s. Today his company, which is staffed by outdoor enthusiasts, designs and suppliesawide range of technical outdoor clothing and equipment, having bought the Rab brand in 2003 and saved LoweAlpine from administration in 2011. With operations in Europe, America and Canada,overseas sales hit£12.1m in 2013.

40 AYKROYD & SONS

Clothing ***manufacturer*** 66.69%

Aykroyd&Sonsmakes character children's nightwear for European high-street retailers such as Tesco,BHS andM&S.The Greater Manchester companyhas production and printing facilities in China and Turkey where clothing is decorated with licensed images from Star Wars, Angry Birds, Spiderman,Thomasthe Tank Engine and Disney film characters. Under twins David and Nigel Aykroyd, 63, great-grandsons of the founder, international sales hit£6.1m in 2013.

41 SMALLWORLDFINANCIAL

Payment services provider 64.97%

Small World uses proprietary technology to help people sendmoneyabroad from its branches and agents in 20 countries. It hasanetwork of institutions paying out themoneyin 160 countries and says it processes 750,000 transactionsamonth. Its services are popular in Spain, Italy, Switzerland and America, and it generated£49.6m in fees and foreign exchange gains last year. Co-founder and chief executive Nick Day, 39, plans to expand in France and Germany.

42 DKENGINEERING

Ferrari restorer and dealer 64.64%

DKEngineering specialises in the restoration, sale, storage and race preparation of Ferrari road and racing cars. It works for collectors around the world, including Ralph Lauren, Eric Clapton and Sir Anthony Bamford, and growingdemandin the face of scarce supply helped push international sales to£13.9m in 2013. Founded in 1977 by David, 71, and Kate Cottingham, 69, the Hertfordshirecompany isnowrun by their sons, James, Jeremy and Justin.

43 INTERPORT

Pharmaceuticals wholesaler 63.89%

Interport sources drugs and other pharmacyproducts from the Continent for distributors and pharmacies in Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Dubai and Angola. Led by chairman Harshadrai Patel, 71, the wholesaler posted exports of £100.5m last year and is exploringnewmarkets in Africa and South America.

44 CARDINAL

Shopfitter 63.02%

Cardinal fits out shops and offices for multinational customers including Nike, Primarkand Boots. Fittings are designed and ***manufactured*** in Britain and at its subsidiary in China. Brian Considine, 75, founded the business in 1995,and his sons Paul, 49, and Timothy, 44,nowrun the company. Cardinalworks across Europe, Australasia, Africa and the Middle and Far East, and its international sales reached£10.3m in 2012.

45 OILCONSULTANTS

Recruitment consultancy 62.99%

This niche recruitment agency was founded in 1999 by oil and gas engineer MarkCooper to provide well-testing contractors. Following investment from recruitment entrepreneurs Richard Fielding, 46, and Geoffrey Lennox, 57, in 2011 thecompanyexpanded the range of disciplines offered and opened offices in Brisbane, Houston, Indonesia and Malaysia.Under chief executive Helen Smith, 52, international sales reached £24.7m in 2013.

46 SALTIREENERGY

Oil drilling equipment provider 62.20%

Aberdeen-based Saltire Energy supplies drilling tools to the offshore oil and gas sector across the Middle East, Europe, Asia Pacific and Africa. It has subsidiaries in Singapore andAbuDhabi and in 2012 expanded its presence in Africa andNorway by buying rental equipment supplierOMM.Underchief executive andownerMike Loggie, 69, overseas revenues hit£20.1m in 2013.

47 KONDOR

Electronics accessories distributor 62.06%

This Dorset business has benefited from theboomin smartphones and tablets. Kondorsupplies electronics accessories, such as headphones, cases and speakers, tomorethan 18,500 stores in Britain and Europe, with exports reaching£5.7m in 2012. Customers include John Lewis, Tesco and Carphone Warehouse. Chief executiveRob Haycock, 47, led a managementbuyout in March, backed by private-equity firm HIGCapital.

48 WARRANT

Supply chain and logistics manager 60.40%

This Liverpoolcompanyprovides sea, roadand air freight services, and acts as an intermediary between ship owners and charterers such as Rio Tinto. It also offers warehousing and distribution for rawmaterials importers and specialises in recycled commodities and chemicals. Its bespoke supply-chain managementsystem, Ingot, allows customers to track productsfrom their start point to their destination. Warrant was boughtby managing director Ian Jones, 45, in 2011. International sales reached an annualised £11.4m in 2013.

49 TIME PRODUCTS

Watch distributor 60.18%

This company owns Sekonda watches, a favourite of airlines and duty free concessions worldwide, selling2mof the timepieces last year and clocking up international sales of£9.8m. It also specialises in luxury Swiss watches, such as Hublot, Piagetand Franck Muller, and claims its BondStreet store-named "Marcus" after chairman Marcus Marguiles, 71-houses one of the most importantwatch collections in the world.

50 PROSOURCE.IT

IT services provider 59.94%

The acquisition ofaHouston-based IT training firm in 2012 helped this Aberdeen IT services provider boost international sales to£20.3m last year. Ledby co-founders Stewart Proctor, 49, and Steve Mackie, 46, Prosource.it has benefitedfrom the buoyant oil and gas sector. With offices in Houston, Dubaiand Calgary, customers include BP, Maersk Oil and ConocoPhillips.

51 BRADGATE CONTAINERS

Equipment module ***manufacturer*** 59.72%

This Loughboroughcompany makes protective modules to contain equipment such as generators, switchgear and fire pumps. Customers from the oil and gas, petrochemical and rail sectors can specify modules offering fireand blast protection and engineered to withstand any environment. Bradgate recently shipped seven equipment roomsweighing 230 tons each to Chevron'sGorgon gasfields off the coast of northwest Australia. Exports reached £17.9m in 2013 under co-founder Patrick Stapleton, 64.

52 EXPRESS ENGINEERING

Precision engineer 58.48%

Express Engineering isaprecision engineer with ***manufacturing*** facilities in Gateshead and Brazil. It produces parts and assemblies for the oil and gas sector, as well as the defence and aerospace industries. Acquisitions and investment in factories and machinery helped international sales reach£6.9m in 2013 under chief executive Nigel Davison, 49. In October, Express secured funding from private-equity houseLDCto accelerate growth.

53 STAFFGROUP

Recruitment consultancy 58.31%

Foundedin 2003by Paul Flynn, 41, and MarkZnowski, 39, Staffgroup recruits mainly for the technology, finance and energy sectors. It works inmore than 40 countries with customers such as Intel and Chevron, and has offices in mainland Europe and the Middle East. Recent expansion in Germanylifted international sales to£35.6m last year.

54 ERBEN

Packaging ***manufacturer*** 58.24%

Thiscompanymanufactures packaging materials and machinery for the drinks, food, pharmaceuticals and healthcare industries. Customers include Diageo and Pernod Ricard. Founded in 1951 by Harry Erben, the business has been led by his son, Sasha, 37, since 2001.

International sales reached£7.2m in 2012, with key markets being North America, South Africa and Ireland.

55 REDEEM

Electronic devices recycler 58.19%

Redeemrecycles electronic devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, cameras and laptops for mobile network operators, corporate customers and consumers. Serial investor Trevor Bayley, 53, bought out the founder in 2011 and has sincemadesix acquisitions -including rival Eazyfone in January- and appointed Claes Svensson, 52, as chief executive. With offices in Madrid, Estonia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates andHongKong, international sales reached£37.8m this year.

56 A-GAS INTERNATIONAL

Chemicals and gases distributor 55.40%

A-Gas supplies environmentally friendly gases to replace harmful CFCs in products such as refrigerators and insulation foam. It is majority-owned by private-equity firm LDC,which backed a£70mbuyout in 2011. A-Gas boughttwo companies in Australia and two in America the following year, lifting international sales to£97.7m in 2013. Founder and chairman John Rutley, 63, with newly-appointed chief executiveAndrewAmbrose, 52, lead the Bristol-based firm.

57 PARK LANE

Car dealer 54.78%

Park Lane is the British holdingcompany for Australian motor racing team Triple Eight Race Engineering, which competes in theV8Supercars championship. Originally part ofaBritish team, racing entrepreneur Roland Dane, 57, bought the outfit in 2003 and has led it to five drivers' championships in the last six years. The group also operatesacar dealership in Hampshire, and reports international sales of£27.8m in 2012.

58 ARENA

Event services provider 54.49%

Arena benefited from global exposure after it built the spectacular Horse Guards Parade's beach volleyball arena for the 2012 Olympics. The events firm has landed contracts to provide seating and tented structures for sports events including theAbuDhabi Grand Prix, the BrazilianWorld Cup and the Rio 2016 Olympics. International sales reached an annualised £10.5m in 2012 and Arena acquired companies in America and Asia the following year. It is led by chief executive Greg Lawless, 54, and backed by private-equity housesMMLCapital and Sports Investment Partners.

59 RPV

Valve distributor 53.97%

OwnerRobert Palmer, 46, started his Suffolk business 20 years ago with a £6,000 redundancy payment. Today, with valves worth£60mheld in five warehouses,RPVcan offer very fast delivery times to its global oil and gas customers,which helped exports reach £37.6m in 2013. Thecompany also provides engineering, testing and coating services followingtwo acquisitions in 2012 and 2013.

60 MARDIX

Switchgear ***manufacturer*** 53.05%

Bankingand telecoms companies rely onMardix to ensure the power grids in their computer data centres operate smoothly. The Cumbrian firm designs andmakes electrical switchboards, power managementsystems and power distribution units for customers in Europe, the Middle Eastand Asia,and had international sales of £5.6mlast year. Managing director David Gardner, 44, has been investing in ***manufacturing*** facilities in Kendal.

61 KNIGHTS OF OLD

Logistics services provider 53.05%

Knights of Old is a logistics business based in Northamptonshire, whose operations cover Britain, Ireland and mainland Europe. The group has 200 trucks,somenamedafter Arthurian knights, as well as warehousing, packing and e-fulfilment services. It isabig shareholder in Partnerlink,aconsortium of 17 logistics firms in Britain and Ireland behind Partnerlink Europe. Under managing director Ian Beattie, 47, international sales reached£7min 2013.

62 ENGINEGROUP

Marketing agency 52.75%

Four acquisitions in America and China since 2010 have helped this London marketing and communications group expand overseas. Campaigns for customers including Unilever, Apple and Samsung generated overseas sales of£35.8m in 2013, with digital services representing60%of global turnover. Chief executive Peter Scott, 67, recently bought Shanghai digital and social agency FlipScript, which counts Bally, HermÈs and Starbucks as clients.

63 RALAWISE

Clothing wholesaler 52.34%

Foundedin 1978 at the Batson family kitchen table, Ralawise isnowaglobal wholesaler of promotional clothing, corporateworkwearand leisurewear. It sells tomore than 11,000 customers across Europe and operatesamulticurrency website in nine languages. Undertwin brothersand joint managing directors, Jonathan and Jeff Batson, 50, international sales at the Deeside-based business reached£6.7m in 2012.

64 THE LICENSINGCOMPANY

Brand licensing agency 51.85%

Foundedin 1996 by Angela Farrugia, 49 and Melvin Thomas, 48, this agency representssomeof the world's best-knownbrands, including Coca-Cola, Jeep and Budweiser, in 88 countries. It licenses their brands across other products in food and drink,home furnishingsand clothing.TLC has eight offices across Europe, America and Asia. Overseas turnover reached £33.9mlast year, representing more than80%of total sales.

65 BOB MARTIN

Pet care products maker 51.18%

BobMartin founded this business more than 120 years ago, making vitamin powdersfor dogs.The Somerset group has since expanded to cater for all household pets, and also makes food, grooming and health products. The company,stillowned by the Martin family, has been investing in overseas markets that include South Africa, Germanyand Australia. International sales reached£6.5m in 2012.

66 LEISURE PASSGROUP

Tourism marketing manager 50.77%

The Leisure Pass Group runs smartcards that give tourists cheaper entry to attractions in cities including London, NewYork, Paris, Berlin and Philadelphia. Customers include tourists, travel agents, hotels and airlines, earning the company£16.2m in international sales last year. The Londonfirm is led by chief executive Darran Evans, 50, and majority-owned by private-equity firm Primary Capital, which backed a £30mbuyout in 2012.

67 CONTENT MEDIA

Media services provider 50.41%

The Dutch warfilm BlackBook is one of 250 movies sold by Content Media, which delisted from the Alternative Investment Market in 2012. The company,backed by private-equity firm Syntek Capital, also holds the rights to morethan 4,000 hours of television programmes. International sales hit £44.6min 2013, and chief executive John Schmidt, 61, has since boughtastake in a Finnish production companyandmade an acquisition in China.

68 ACCESS

Software consultant and developer 50.33%

Access develops project management, business intelligence, financial,HRand supply chain software for 5,000 organisations throughout Britain, Ireland and France, ranging from The Wellcome Trust toDHL.Since chief executive Chris Bayne, 43, ledaLyceum Capital-backed buyout in 2011, the Colchestercompanyhas acquired five resellersand eight software firms, including a £2.6mcompany in Paris offering business intelligence products. This helped international sales reach £2.8min 2013.

69 SYNEXUS

Clinical trials manager 50.32%

This Lancashire firm recruits patients and conducts clinical trials for top pharmaceutical and research organisations. It performs trials across numerous disciplines, specialising in cardiovascular, diabetes, obesity, musculo-skeletal and respiratory conditions. Followingastring of acquisitions, itnowoperates 19 research centres across Germany, Eastern Europe and South Africa. International sales reached£19.3m in 2013 under chief executive Christophe Berthoux, 52.

70 CHI&PARTNERS

Advertising agency 50.15%

CHI&Partners is an advertising agency that manages campaigns for customers such as Samsung, Lexus, Argos and Diageo. Thecompany was co-founded by chairman Johnny Hornby, 47, in 2001. It hasaglobal network of offices with hubs in London,NewYork and Singapore, and international sales, which represent gross billings, hit £31m last year. Advertising giantWPPowns a minority stake in the business.

71 APRICOT

Fashion retailer 49.86%

London-based Apricot sells clothing in 10 standalone stores and morethan 350 concessions at retailers such asNew Lookand Debenhams. Philip Chaimo, 53, and Sophia Ciampa, 34, established the brand in 2007, and started their export drive three years ago.Germany has been the company's key overseas market, accounting for morethan two-thirds of its£6minternational sales this year.

72 UKASH

Online payment provider 49.67%

Three thousand Petrobras petrol stations in Brazil and 6,500 Canadian Post branches are the latest outlets to sell Ukash vouchers,which enable people to shop online withoutabank card. Chief executive David Hunter, 48, has successfully targeted cash-driven economies and regions with migrant communities, boosting international sales to £19.8m in 2013.

73 CHPCONSULTING

IT consultancy 49.47%

AndrewPage, 51, and Ian Hargrave, 54, co-foundedCHPin 1990, and its Alfa software and services arenowused globally by customers including Mercedes-Benz Financial Services and Nordea Finance. These firms provide finance to help companies and individualsbuy anything from cars to aircraft, and the Alfa system helps them run their businessesmoreefficiently. International sales expanded to reach £11.9m in 2012.

74 LKBENNETT

Women's fashion retailer 49.47%

Linda Bennett, 51, started withasingle shoe shop inWimbledon in 1990. Today thecompanyhas 141 stores and concessions worldwide and loyal fans that include the Duchess of Cambridge. Newstore openings in America, Europe and the Middle East boosted international sales to£27.4m in 2013. Phoenix Equity Partners and Sirius Equity backed a £100mbuyout in 2008. Sirius co-founder Robert Bensoussan, 56, is chairman and also took over as chief executive in February.

75 JDR

Subsea cable ***manufacturer*** 48.97%

JDR takes itsnamefrom British firm Jacques Cable Systems and Dutch rival DeRegt Special Cable, which merged in 1998. It designs and ***manufactures*** subsea cables for energy projects including Germanwind farms and oil and gas fields in West Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Australia. International sales reached £115.8m in 2012. Ledby chairman Pat Herbert, 67, JDR isownedby Vision Capital,which backed a £90mbuyout in 2007.

76 MIDWICH

Audio-visual products distributor 48.62%

Fromprojectors to commercial displays, Norfolk-based Midwich distributes security, printing and digital equipment and says it is the largest specialist audio-visual distributor in Britain. Over the last two years chief executive Stephen Fenby, 50, has invested in operations in France and madeacquisitions in Germany,New Zealand and Australia, which helped international sales expand to£47.9m in 2013.

77 ST GILES INTERNATIONAL

International language school 48.57%

Students from Switzerland, Korea and Japan areamongthe 100 nationalities that learn English at St Giles' seven language schools in Britain,NewYork, San Francisco and Vancouver. The Londoncompanywas founded in 1955 by Paul and Diana Lindsay and isnowrun by their son Mark, 55. Thecompanyalso offerssummerschools for younger pupils at 17 locations and generated international sales of£10.2m in 2012.

78 PENNPHARMA

Pharmaceutical services provider 48.19%

PennPharmaprovides drug developmentand ***manufacturing*** services formore than 150 healthcare companies in Europe, Japan and America. It also supplies services for clinical trials, such as drug labelling, packing and distribution,and it recently openedamanufacturing plant for potentcompounds in South Wales. Underchief executive Richard Yarwood, 59, Penn's international sales reached£39min 2013.

79 MRTYRE

Tyre retailer 48.00%

Thousands of garages across Britain, Europe, North America and East Asia are supplied with tyres and exhaust systemsfromMrTyre's Birmingham warehouse.The companyalso has 26 fast-fit outlets in the Midlands, and supplies Dunlop rallying and racing tyres to motorsport enthusiasts. Underowner and chairman,Arwyn Williams, 58, exports reached£4.4m in 2012.

80 JML

Household goods supplier 47.45%

Shoppers at Carrefour in Belgium or Tesco in central Europe can buythis retailer's household goods. Founded in 1986by chairman John Mills, 76, itnow sells in 85 countries through shops, catalogues, the internet and its television shopping channels. International sales atJMLexpanded to reach£34min 2013, with its ironing board coversaparticular hit- JMLhas soldmorethan20mofthem around the world.

81 EXPANDIGROUP

Marketing agency 46.87%

Expandi provides business-to-business marketing services for IT firms such as IBM, Microsoft and HP. The London group, which is ledby managing director Raffaele Apostoliti, 47, has 25 offices and eight joint ventures spanning five continents. Its key markets are Japan, Germany, Italy and France, and the companyisnowlooking to expand into North America, China and India. Setting upnewoffices and joint ventures in Europe, Asia and North America helped to boost the company's international sales to £38.9m in 2012.

82 MANTHORPE

Engineer, building products 46.68%

This family business ismadeup oftwo divisions, covering engineering and building products. Manthorpe supplies precision-engineered parts to power-generation, aerospace and defence sectors worldwide, while its buildings divisionmakes and sells insulation and ventilation products for the housing market. The Derbyshire firm, ledby founder Paul Pochciol, 62, reported that international sales to continental Europe and America hit £9.7m in 2013.

83 INTERBEVUK

Drinks wholesaler 45.63%

Each year Ascot-based Interbev exports morethan3mcases of soft and alcoholic drinks, ranging from British beers to international brands. Its customers, primarily in western Europe, Asia and Australasia, include airport duty-free shops and cruise ships. Former county cricketer Steve Brogan, 44, founded the firm in 2008 and international sales have grownto£33.9m in 2013.

84 NIFTYLIFT

Lift ***manufacturer*** 45.53%

Engineer and Niftylift chairman RogerBowden, 66, founded this Milton Keynescompanyin 1982. It designs and makes mobile hydraulic platforms, such as cherry pickers and access lifts, for construction and maintenance. Its main export markets are America, Holland, Australia,Germanyand France. Undermanaging director John Keely, 53, sales abroad totalled£35.8m in 2012.

85 HONEYGLADE

Contemporary art gallery 45.29%

Honeyglade is the holding companyfor the Victoria Miro art gallery. Founded in 1985 by contemporary art gallerist Victoria Miro, 69, the business operates from three central Londonexhibition spaces-twogalleries in northeast Londonanda third space opened in Mayfair last year. Exports to institutions and private collections in Europe, North America, South America and Asia helped international sales reach£18min 2012.

86 RAPHA

Cycling apparelmakerandretailer 44.86%

With Rapha, Simon Mottram, 48, has built an international cycling brand withastrong following in America and Japan in the 10 years since he founded the business. Its range of premium cycling clothing-which includes the TeamSky kit since it becameits official supplier-is sold online and through its cycle clubs. Exports reached an annualised£18.5m in 2014, and the companyintends to open clubs in Manchester, Los Angeles, Tokyo and Amsterdamthis year.

87 BARRETT STEEL

Steel stockholder 44.85%

Winningnewcustomers in the oil and gas and renewable energy sectors is the key to this steel stockholder's strategy for continued growth. In January, managing director James Barrett, 59, launchedanewdivision to specifically target the global energy markets,which-along with afacility in Houston, Texas, bought by Barrett in 2011-helped international sales expand to reach£30.7m in 2013. The Yorkshirecompanystocksmore than 80,000 tons of steel in 28 depots across Britain.

88 TANGERINE CONFECTIONERY

Confectionery ***manufacturer*** 44.14%

Butterkist popcorn,WineGumsand Liquorice Allsorts areamongthe wide range of confectionerymadeby this Blackpool business. Backed by private equity firm Blackstone, and under chairman Steven Joseph, 62, international sales increased to £20.9m in 2012. The firm's largest export markets are Ireland, Canada and Denmark.

89 LEO

Waste meat processor 44.10%

With seven sites across Britain and one in Ireland, this Yorkshire firm collects and recycles morethan 650,000 tons of ***animal*** by-products and food waste,and then processesthemto produce pet food ingredientsand biofuels. The business has recently been investing innew technologyand isnowbuilding a biomass plant at its site in Aberdeen. Underowner Daniel Sawrij, 45, international sales, mainly to the Continent,grew to£20.4m in 2013.

90 BET365

Online bookmaker 42.93%

Customers gambled nearly£20bn with bet365 last year-up57%.As well as having aflutter onavariety of sports, customers can also bet on the financial markets and play casino games or watch one of 40,000 live sports events shownannually. The firm attracts gamblersfrom 200 countries, helping international sales rise to £988.9m this year. Bet365 isowned and run by the Coates family.

91 CORE ASSETS

Foster agency 42.79%

This business has its headquarters in Worcestershireand was founded in 1994 by social worker Jim Cockburn, 64, and foster-carer Jan Rees, 73, to provide foster placements for children in Britain. It expanded into Ireland in 2005 and, responding to the global movetowards the outsourcing of foster care,nowhas 20 offices across 11 countries in Australasia, Europe and North America. Thecompany employsmorethan 1,000 staff and its expansion overseas pushed international sales to£18.9m in 2012.

92 WARDRECYCLING

Metal and waste recycler 42.23%

The recent struggles of Europe's economyhave drivenWardRecycling to find customers for its metals farther afield. It exports to foundries and steelworks worldwide from its Derbyshire base andnewdockside facilities in Wales, and orders from Indiaand Asia pushed international turnover to £41.7m in 2013.

Fourth-generation family members David and Michael Ward, 52and 57 respectively, lead the business.

93 CTC AVIATION

Airline pilot trainer 41.57%

CTCis investing to capitalise on the growing worldwide demandfor pilots. Chief executive RobClarke, 38, himself aformer pilot, ledabuyout backed by private equity house Inflexion in 2012 and has since opened training facilities in Arizona and expanded inNew Zealand.CTCtrains 2,000 pilotsayear for 50 airlines, including Qatar Airways, easyJet, British Airways and Australia's Jetstar, helping international sales reach an annualised £5.4m in 2013.

94 TURNERPRICE

Food wholesaler 41.22%

This food wholesaler's products, such as confectionery, biscuits and sauces, are lovedby expatriates. Turner Price also sellsawide range of frozen food and other groceries to morethan 50 countries, all from its warehouse in Hull. Undermanaging director John Gould, 45, exports at the family-owned companyrose to£10.1m in 2013.

95 LA INTERNATIONAL

IT recruitment consultancy 40.91%

LAInternational supplies IT and engineering contractors to organisations such as Nato, Hewlett-Packard and Huawei,and also provides security-cleared contractors to the British government. Founder and chief executive Paul Lukic, 61, has invested in the company's international division, targeting growth markets, andnowprovides services to multinationals across 23 countries. It is based in Stoke-on-Trent and employs 94 staff. Overseas sales reached£36min 2013.

96 FOCUS PHARMACEUTICALS

Pharmaceuticals licensing 40.78%

Focus Pharmaceuticalswas formed in 2003,whenMarkCresswell, 47, Roland Brown, 43, and Ray Maginley, 52, led a buyout ofADLHealthcare's generics business. The Staffordshirecompany licenses, markets, and distributes niche generic ***medicines*** throughout Britain, continental Europe and farther afield. It also develops pharmaceuticals to compete with branded drugs coming off patent. In 2013, it launched sevennew products. Exports totalled£2min 2013.

97 ABBEY FOR GED PRODUCTS

Steel products forger 40.68%

This Sheffield firm forges bespoke steel components for subcontractors in the oil and gas industry that build pipelines, rigs and refineries for multinationals such as BP,Exxon and Statoil. Managing director Jackie Neal, 64, founded the business with her husband Roger, 71, in 1983 and they arenowrapidly expanding its global footprint, with international sales reaching£10.1m in 2013.

98 MTL

Contract ***manufacturer*** 40.42%

MTLcounts international blue-chip firms such as Bombardier, Rheinmetall andBAESystemsamongits customers. The Rotherham group makes aluminiumand steel parts for military vehicles, construction equipment and offshorewind farms for clients across Europe, America, the Middle East, Africa and India. Managing director HenryShirman, 68, increased exports to£7.8m in 2013.

99 HYPERION INSURANCE

Insurance broker and underwriter 39.58%

This international insurance broker and underwriting group was formed in 1994 whenchief executive DavidHowden, 50, ledabuyout from Lloyd's broker SBJ. Thecompanyhas since grown organicallyand through multiple acquisitions and joint ventures across the Asia Pacific region, the Americas, the Middle East and Europe, andnowhas 83 offices in 33 countries. International turnover rose to£123.4m in 2013.

100 SPOONER INDUSTRIES

Industrial machine ***manufacturer*** 39.49%

Established in 1932by William Spooner tomakedrying machines for the local textile industry, this company, based in Ilkley, WestYorkshire,nowmakes ovens, dryers, coolers and pollution abatement equipment for the paper, metals, plastics and food preparation sectors. Australasia, Europe and Africa are significant export markets and Spooner Industries has offices in America and China. Under managing director Michael Brook, 53, international sales reached£20.7m in 2013.

101 HARVARD ENGINEERING

Lighting control ***manufacturer*** 39.00%

Foundedby John McDonnell, 50, Harvard Engineering provides lighting control systems and components that help save energy. Its LeafNut wireless control system for street lighting has been installed bymorethan 100 local authorities across the world. The Yorkshire firm has sales representatives across Asia, Australia and Europe, and in 2012 opened offices in America, helping international sales climb to £9.5min 2013.

102 CVP

Audio-visual equipment supplier 38.94%

Warwickshire firmCVPsells and rents broadcast equipment to the television industry in Europe and farther afield, from its six locations in Britain-ithas the contract to renewand then provide support for all the cameras used by journalists at the BBC, for example. It hasmadethree acquisitions since 2008 and its brands include Creativevideo, Mitcorp, Total Audio and Gearbox. Underco-founder Alison Baxter, 55, international sales hit£6.9m in 2013.

103 BENRIACH DISTILLERY

Whisky distillery 38.38%

This Edinburghcompanywas founded whenits management acquired a Speysidewhisky distillery from Pernod Ricard for£5.4m in 2004-ithas gone on to buy two further distilleries. Its overseas markets include the emerging economies of China, Russia, Poland, Ukraineand South Africa. Under managing director and master blender Billy Walker, 69, international sales grew to£25.5m in 2013.

104 HARDERBROS

Sausage casings ***manufacturer*** 38.28%

Harder Bros has benefited from the rising price of sausage casings as fewer of the lambs that provide theraw material are reared worldwide. The casings are processed in Leeds and Middlesbrough and exported to Germany, France, Holland and Spain. Overseas sales reached£20.5m in 2013 under managing director James Harder, 49, the third generation of the Harder family to run the company.

105 ABRAWHOLESALE

Consumer products wholesaler 37.94%

DeeThaya, 42, and his wife Bhavani, 41, founded Abra Wholesale in 2003 as a cash and carry, and thecompanynow trades froma75,000 sq ft warehouse in Edmonton, north London, stocking groceries, toiletries, tobacco and licensed goods. It exports to West African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, as well as to the Middle East, Greece and Malta. Exports reached£13.1m in 2014.

106 SEVERNGLOCON

Industrial valve ***manufacturer*** 37.57%

Severn Glocon ***manufactures*** industrial valves for extreme environments. The Gloucester firm supplies the liquefied natural gas and oil industries, and its customers include the world's biggest producer Saudi Aramco, as well as Malaysia's Petronas. Underchief executive Maurice Critchley, 65, overseas sales reached£65.2m in 2013.

107 LGC

Analytical services laboratory 36.91%

LGCoperates laboratories in 22 countries across Europe and America, as well as sites in Brazil, China and India, generating international sales of £99.1m in 2013. Founded in 1842, it works across sectors including pharmaceuticals and ***agricultural*** bioscience.LGCisowned by private-equity firm Bridgepoint Capital following a £257mbuyout in 2010. Chief executiveTimRobinson, 50, was appointed inMay2013.

108 P&BFOODS

Food wholesaler 36.77%

P&BFoods takes itsnamefrom the company's founders: Thakorbha Patel, 74, and Mohinder Bhatoa, 64. The Bradford wholesaler distributes Asian and oriental ingredients, such as rice, spices, lentils, flour and pickles, to retailers such as Tesco. Exports, mostly to the EU, reached£4.4m in 2013 and thecompanyis investing£10minanew distribution centre in Bradford.

109 THE MILL

Visual effects studio 36.09%

The Mill creates digital content and visual effects for advertisers. Its largest market is America, whereit opened a Chicago studio last year to complement existing bases inNewYork and Los Angeles. Led by co-founder Robin Shenfield, 58, it is majority-owned by private-equity firm Equistone. International sales hit £75min 2013.

110 AIR ENERGI

Recruitment consultancy 35.39%

Air Energi finds technical staff for oil and gas customers such as Statoil, BP, ExxonMobil and Shell. The Manchester firm recently boughtNewZealand consultancy Inspirec to add to hubs in Houston, Doha, Singapore and Brisbane and afurther 36 offices worldwide. Strongdemandfrom liquefied natural gas projects in Australasia and the Middle East boosted international sales to£290.3m in 2013 under chief executive DuncanGregson, 50.

111 FORMAPLEX

Tooling ***manufacturer*** 34.93%

Formaplex specialises in plastic and carbon composite components, pattern moulding and tooling for Formula One, international motor racing teams and the Ministry of Defence'sFoxhound combat vehicle.Led by managing director Michael Last, 45, thecompanyhas three British sites and European and Asian ***manufacturing*** partners, and it had overseas sales of £11.5m last year.

112 BYBOX

Delivery systems operator 34.76%

ByBox has an international network of lockers to which drivers can deliver 24 hoursaday, allowing businesses and consumers to pick uppackageswhen convenient. It also offers distribution services and supply-chainmanagement software. Underchief executive Stuart Miller, 46, international sales hit £8.7m in 2012. Operating mainly in Europe, ByBox has expanded into America,New Zealand and Israel in the last two years.

113 COGNITA

Schools operator 34.49%

In 2004, former government chief inspector of schools Sir ChrisWoodhead founded Cognita, whichnowcomprises 65 private schools in Britain, Spain, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Chile and Brazil. Last year, Bregal Capital sold part of its stake to private-equity firm KKR-the investment will be used to fund expansion in Asia and Latin America. Overseas sales reached £112.6m last year under chief executive Rees Withers, 61.

114 FREEWORLDTRADING

Dried fruit and nut wholesaler 34.16%

This Edinburghcompanytrades in dried fruit, nuts and seeds, which it sources through its subsidiary in China and partnerships in Turkey, South America and California. It also offers free-trade and organic produce and says it buys morethan20%of the world's crop of Brazil nuts. Customers include packaging companies that stock supermarkets in Germany, France and Scandinavia. Underchairman Sanjoy Das, 58, exports grew to£28min 2013.

115 NEXT VENTURES

Recruitment consultancy 33.99%

Foundedin 2001 by Richard Lacey, 44, and Darren Rosenfield, 40, this recruiter places IT candidates skilled in business enterprise applications, including Oracle and SAP. It offers permanent and contract services globally, and hasmore than 50 multi-lingual consultants working from offices in LondonandDüsseldorf. International sales to 21 countries reached£19min 2012.

116 PRETAMANGER

Sandwich shop operator 33.87%

Bridgepoint, the private-equity ownerof PretAManger, refinanced the sandwich company's debt to the tune of £375mlast year to help fund its international expansion. Pret already has 80sandwich shops abroad, with morethan 50 stores in four American cities, as well as outlets inHongKong and Paris. Overseas sales reached an annualised £82.2m in 2012 under chief executive Clive Schlee, 55.

117 NEAL'SYARDREMEDIES

Health and beauty products maker 33.67%

Neal's Yard makes and sells organic natural beauty and health products. RomyFraser founded the self-styled apothecary in 1981 in Covent Garden. Peter Kindersley, 73, of publisher Dorling Kindersley fame, bought her out in 2005 andnowruns thecompany with his son Barnabas, 43. Consumers seeking certified organic brands have madethe blue-bottled products popular in America and Asia,where the firm is targeting expansion. Exports hit an annualised £4.9min 2013.

118 STREETCRANE

Crane ***manufacturer*** 33.41%

With machines used by luxury yacht-makers, steel stockholders and on the Crossrail project, Street Crane is Britain's largest ***manufacturer*** of overhead factory cranes. Assembled cranes are too heavy to export but the Derbyshirecompanysends hoists, components and controls to equipment ***manufacturers*** abroad, generating overseas sales of £19.6m in 2013. Martin Street, 59-chairman of the company founded by his father-is investing£3m innewmanufacturing facilities.

119 WIGGLE

Online sports goods retailer 32.80%

Wiggle sells cycling and triathlon products online to customers in 80 countries.Keygrowth markets are Europe and Australasia, with exports reaching£82.7m in 2013. Bridgepoint, the private-equity firm, bought a majority stake in the Portsmouth business in 2011, valuing it at£180m, and has funded the launch of 12new websites for overseas buyers, most recently Wiggle.se in Sweden. Stefan Barden, 51, formerlyUKchief executive of food distributor Brakes Bros,became chief executive last year.

120 SWANMILL HOLDINGS

Paper tableware ***manufacturer*** 32.37%

Ledby managing director David Byk, 46, this Kent firm makes napkins, Christmas crackers, gift wrap and tinsel at its factories in Swanley, Kentand Hirwaun, Wales. Its distribution and manufacturinghub in HongKong producesahomebaking range. International customers include Primark in Europe and Woolworths in Australia, as well as firms in Canada,NewZealand and Russia, generating£6.4m in international sales in 2013.

121 MORRIS LUBRICANTS

Lubricants ***manufacturer*** 32.27%

Establishedby James Morris in 1869, this Shrewsbury firm blends more than 800 lubricants for cars, tractors, ships and construction vehicles. The oils- which have distinctive packaging featuringaUnion Jack-sell well in Australia and the Middle East and are distributed to 80countries. International sales grew to£9.1m in 2013 under managing directorAndrew Goddard, 41, a fifth-generation descendant of the founder.

122 FRESHLINC

Haulier 32.15%

This haulage and distributioncompany transports flowers and fresh food for wholesalers and growers in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, with international sales reaching an annualised£12.6m in 2013. The Lincolnshire firm, founded in 1996 by Robin Hancox, 57, Aubrey Day, 55, and Martin Tate, 47, offers logistics services to food ***manufacturers***, importers, and supermarkets across Europe.

123 TUNNOCK'S

Biscuit and cake maker 32.14%

Foundedin 1890whenThomas Tunnock boughtabaker's shop in Glasgow, today Tunnock's iconic products include Caramel Wafers, Teacakes, Snowballsand Caramel Logs. Thecompanyexports to 40 countries including Saudi Arabia, Canada, Japan, the Caribbean and Kuwait, generating international sales of£8.1m in 2013. Managingdirector Boyd Tunnock, 81, is the founder's grandson.

124 ARGUSMEDIA

Energy information provider 32.10%

Argus provides news, analysis and price information for global energy and commodity traders, as well as governments and international agencies. With offices in Londonand 19 of the world's principalcommodity centres, sales to Europe, the Americas, the former Soviet republicsand Asia all experienced strong growth, pushing international sales to £80min 2013. In the same year, chairman and chief executive Adrian Binks, 59, also bought three American petrochemical information firms.

125 CMSCEPCOR

Crushing equipment supplier 32.07%

CMSCepcor makes replacement parts for crusher machinery, which it supplies to mining and aggregate companies operating inmore than 120 countries. It offers 10,000 product lines, somefor machines dating back 50 years. The Leicestershire-based firm also provides repair services and has justopened a £3mtechnical centre. Exports,which are mainly to Russia and WestAfrica, reached£15.6m in 2013 and managing directorMatthew Weare, 43, plans to expand sales in South America.

126 PROGRESS GROUP

Power generator supplier 32.03%

This Leeds-basedcompanysupplies generatorsand emergency power equipment to businesses across Europe. The business was founded in 1956 and operations director, AdrianKemp, 55, ledabuyout from the founder's family in 2007. Following anHSBC-backed £4.4m refinancing in 2011, managing director MarkHenstock, 43, boughtaBradford competitor and has been investing in hire equipment and export operations. International sales expanded to reach £5.6min 2013.

127 GRAINGERANDWORRALL

Castings ***manufacturer*** 31.98%

Foundedin 1946, this Shropshire aluminiumand iron castings business is ledby brothers Matthew and James Grainger, 50 and 48 respectively,and remains family owned. It supplies the motorsport, defence and aerospace industriesand has developed complex engine block castings for demanding customers, including FormulaOne teams, Aston Martin and Bentley. Exports reached£20.4min 2013and markets include America, China and the EU.

128 QUANTACONSULTANCY

Recruitment consultancy 31.84%

Founded22 years ago by Stephen Trigg, 64, this recruitment agency posted overseas sales of £21.6m in 2013.The Hertfordshire-basedcompany specialises in finding process engineers toworkin the European pharmaceutical industry, and uses linguists to recruit staff forsomeof the largest drugs firms in 25 countries around the world. Quanta also recruits technical personnel for the offshore wind farm and semi-conductor sectors.

129 CELTIC MINING

Coal miner 31.66%

Thiscompanyproduces morethan1m tons of coalayear from its sites in South Wales for domestic, industrial and electricity-generation in Britain and mainland Europe. Its customers range from domestic heating in Belgium, FranceandGermany to industry in Norwayand France. Under founder Richard Walters, 34, international sales reached£12.2m in 2013.

130 ENDAVA

IT services provider 31.22%

Endava designs and manages IT infrastructure for multinational companies in retail, banking, insurance and publishing. The London firm has development centres across Romania, Moldova and Macedonia and opened offices inNewYork and Atlanta to increase its American presence. After its merger with IT consultancy Alpheus in February, it also hasaFrankfurt office. Underchief executive John Cotterell, 53, international sales hit£6.3m in 2013.

131 AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Luxury lingerie retailer 30.94%

Mentioned in the erotic novel Fifty Shades of Grey, this iconic lingerie brand has been busy opening retail outlets around the world and plans to open its hundredth boutique this year. Its offering of luxury underwear, swimsuitsand accessories generated £22.9m in exports in 2013. The London firm recently teamed up with actress Penelope Cruz and her sister Monica to developacheaper wholesale range, L'Agent,which chief executive Garry Hogarth, 59, expects togrow quickly.

132 WELDEX

Crane hirer 30.86%

This Inverness crane-hire firm provides equipment to oil, gas, renewable energy and construction sectors worldwide, and also hires out personnel. Its cranes helped build stadiums for the London Olympics, andwork installing turbines for onshore and offshore wind farmssaw international sales reach£6.4m in 2012 under founder Dougie McGilvray, 69. In 2010, Dunedin Capital Partners backed a secondary buyout fromNVMPrivate Equity, valuing Weldex at£100m.

133 LIGENTIA

Supply chain manager 30.50%

Foundedin 1996 by Nick Jones, 48, Ligentiamanages supply chains for retailers, ***manufacturers*** and miners. It has offices across Europe and the Asia Pacific region, as well as teams working in 60cities in China, India, Europe and North America. International sales were £15.8m in 2013, boosted by an Australian office opened in 2012.

134 YORKMAILING

Commercial printer 30.39%

York Mailing prints catalogues, newspaper flyersand direct mail items for large retailers at its factories in York, Scarborough and Leeds. It acquired the latter site last Augustwhenit bought The Lettershop Group following a £10m investment from the Business Growth Fund. It is led by founder and chief executive Chris Ingram, 49, and group managing director Mike Newbould, 43. International sales, mainly to Ireland and Scandinavia, hit£12.2m in 2013.

135 BROMPTONBICYCLE

Bicycle ***manufacturer*** 30.21%

These quirky folding bikes are built by hand in London from 1,200 mostly specially-made parts. FounderAndrew Richie, 67, designed his first Brompton in 1975 and managing director Will Butler-Adams, 40, has since driven expansion. Three-quarters of the 40,000 bikesmadeeach year are exported to 44 countries, generating £19.4m in 2014. Its first British shop opened in Covent Garden last year, adding to sites in Kobe, Shanghai, Hamburgand Amsterdam.

136 TREADSETTERS

Tyre wholesaler and ***manufacturer*** 29.98%

Treadsetters teamedup withaChinese tyrecompanyto buy Covpress, one of the Midlands' oldest ***manufacturers***, in a £30mdeal last year. Telford-based Treadsetters isadistributor for the Chinese firm, as well as other premium and budget tyre brands, which it exports to 35 countries. International sales hit £34.1m in 2013 under chairman and co-founder Peter Smith, 69.

137 OLIVER VALVES

Valve ***manufacturer*** 29.98%

This Cheshirecompanycompleted a £13.2m contract last year to supply high-performance valves and control systems to the Barzan gas project off the Qatar coast.With customers in the energy and petrochemical sectors, the Middle East is one of its biggest markets. Founder and chairman Michael Oliver, 75, recently opened offices in Brazil and Texas, adding to those in Asia and the Middle East. Exports hit £25.6m in 2013.

138 GRAVITY MEDIA

TVproductionequipment provider 29.88%

Gravity Media-founded in 2000 after a managementbuyout from Gearhouse- sells or rents equipment for television studios, controlrooms and for outside broadcasts.With offices in Britain, America, Australia and Qatar, it also undertakes location work, televising someof the world's most watched live events, including FormulaOnemotor racingand the AustralianOpentennis. Underfounder John Newton, 50, international sales hit£28.8m in 2012.

139 TRAC INTERNATIONAL

Engineering services provider 29.64%

Trac provides engineering support, products, services and training for oil, gasand telecoms customers. Its subsidiaries include Trac Oil&Gas, which inspects and maintains offshore and onshore facilities and has an office in Australia, and wireless technology specialist Radio Design, operating in Finland, India and China. These two companies are run by the Hawthorn brothers, Daniel, 44, and Eric, 51.

Overseas sales reached£11.3m in 2013.

140 ULTRA FINISHING

Bathroom fitting supplier 29.58%

Underthe brand names Hudson Reed, Ultraand The Premier Bathroom Collection, this Burnley group designs, ***manufactures*** and distributes bathroom, kitchenandhomeimprovement products. Managing director Stephen Heys, 57, set up the firm inadisused air raid shelter in 1982. The acquisition of two Chinese bathroom product ***manufacturers*** in 2012 helped international sales hit£11.9m that year.

141 BARBER'S

Cheesemaker 29.46%

The Barber family have been farming and cheesemaking in Somerset since 1833. The dairy supplies supermarkets and sells to 30 countries, including America, whereits premiumBarber's 1833 cheddar isaparticular favourite. It also has a joint venture exportingwhey protein. It is led by sixth generation familymembersPaul and Nicholas Barber, both 71, and exports, excluding the joint venture, hit £8.6m in 2013.

142 JOSEPH JOSEPH

Household goods ***manufacturer*** 29.23%

Withakeen interest in form and function, twin brothers Richard and AntonyJoseph, 39, started their business in 2003 selling just one product-aglass chopping board. Within 18 months they were selling their innovative kitchenware to department stores in France, Germany, Japan and South America, andnowsell 360 products to morethan 100 countries. Customers include Bloomingdale's in America, Isetan in Japan andKaDeWein Germany, and overseas sales were£25.8m in 2013.

143 MOUCHEL

Support services provider 28.80%

This Woking-basedcompany, founded in 1888, designs and supervises large infrastructure projects worldwide. It has offices in the Middle East and Australia, whereits joint venture has wonthree contracts worth collectively over£500m. Unsustainable debt and public sector spending cuts forced the companyinto administration in 2012, with its bankers agreeing a debt-for-equity swap. Chief executive Grant Rumbles, 56, returned Mouchel to profitability in 2013,when international sales reached£64.7m, close to its record year in 2009.

144 HAMMER

IT storage distributor 28.74%

Hammercustomises, distributes and supports data storage products such as encrypted solid-state drives designed to operate in extreme environments for the military and high frequency trading systems used by financial markets. The Basingstokecompany sells throughout Europe and opened its first European subsidiary in Swedenin 2006. Itnowhas offices in Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands, generating international sales of£54.2m in 2014. Hammeris ledby managing director James Stidwill, 43.

Main markets of the International Track 200 companies Regions of the world and the number of league-table firms doing their main business there. Many firms export to more than one foreign market 145 ORANGEBOX Office seating ***manufacturer*** 28.71%

Orangebox's chairs, sofas and pods furnish offices around the world for customers such as Wal-Mart and HSBC. Products are designed in rural Glamorgan, andmadethere and in Brazil, Toronto, Shanghai and Adelaide. Wireless technology and mobile phones havemadeoffice layouts moreflexible, drivingdemandfor the company's productsand helping international sales reach£5.5m in 2013.The companyis ledby Mino Vernashi, 52.

146 MEGGER

Electrical products ***manufacturer*** 28.61%

Ledby chairman Peter Frank, 68, this firm designs andmakes electrical test deviceswhich troubleshoot and predict the performance of anything from power cables to data networks. It has seven ***manufacturing*** sites in Europe and the US, and worldwide sales and marketing facilities. Acquisitions helped lift international sales to£164min 2013.

147 COINS

Software provider 28.38%

Coins provides business software to construction companies such as Taylor Wimpey,to help themimprove margins and service delivery.The Slough firm has 62,000 users in 36 countries with offices in America, Ireland, the United Arab Emirates, Australia,HongKong and Malaysia, and development staff in Russia. Strong growth in the Middle East helped overseas sales reach£14.1m in 2013, under co-founder and chairman Larry Sullivan, 60.

148 ROCCOFORTE HOTELS

Luxury hotel owner and manager 28.36%

The Forte familynameis synonymous with hotels. After Granada's hostile takeover of the Fortecompany in 1996, Sir Rocco Forte, 69-son of the original group's founder-established Rocco Forte Hotels. It has 11 luxury properties in Britain, continental Europe and Russia, and generated international sales of£133.3m in 2013.Anewhotel will open in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, this year.

149 CHARLES TYRWHITT SHIRTS

Clothing retailer 28.04%

This Londonbusiness has sold classic menswearsince 1986 and isownedand runby founder Nick Wheeler, 49. The retailer has 16 stores in Britain, five in the US, one in France and an online and mail-order business in Australia and Germany. International sales were an annualised£58.6m last year, accounting for half of total sales.

150 GLOBAL ENERGY

Energy services provider 27.83%

This Invernesscompanybuilds and maintains engineering equipment for the energy, oil and gas sectors. In 2012, founder and chairman Roy MacGregor, 61, solda25%stake to Japanese conglomerate Mitsui to help fund international expansion. Global Energy has since bought four Australian companies and the region isnowits largest overseas market, helping international sales rise to£54.3m in 2013.

151 GREY MATTER

Business software reseller 27.06%

Strongdemandfor Microsoft's Bing Maps-used by customers for fleet tracking and business intelligence- has helped boost the international sales of this Devon software wholesaler. Demandfrom Europe, the Middle East and the Far East helped international sales hit £2.6m in 2013. The firm is led by chairman Charles CookeHurle, 62.

152 151 PRODUCTS

Household goods ***manufacturer*** 27.05%

Thiscompanywas spun out of the Shonn family's cash and carry business in 1997 by Richard Shonn, 36,and his father Steven, 63. 151 Products supplies discount retailers and distributors with morethan 2,000 consumer goods, such as kitchenware and DIY items, and is namedafter 151 Great Ducie Street in Manchester,whereit was originally based. Exports to Europe, the Middle East and Africa reached£2.8m in 2012.

153 TANGENT INTERNATIONAL

Recruitment consultancy 26.99%

Tangent International supplies mobile telecoms experts to blue-chip customers including Ericsson and Huawei. It has offices in Dallas, Dubai, Mexico City, Sydney and Malawi and has placed people in 175 countries, with the Middle East, America, Japan and North Africa being key markets. Under chief executive Simon Dear, 46, the Essexcompany posted overseas sales of £38.1m last year.

154 GLENALMOND

Energycomponents ***manufacturer*** 26.81%

This Glasgow business makes parts for valves and clads tool and piping systems with corrosion-resistant alloys for customers in the oil and gas sector. The group, run byownerBarbara Mincher, 61, is opening a facility in Brazil to target the South American energy market, and invested inavalve components operation in Malaysia in 2008. Overseas turnover reached£31.4m in 2013.

155 SIGMA PHARMACEUTICALS

Pharmaceutical distributor 26.79%

Kenyan-born Bharat Shah, 64, founded Sigma Pharmaceuticals in 1975 and transformed it from asingle shop in Watford toamultimillionpound business. Sigma supplies wholesalers, pharmacies, hospitals and dispensing doctors with ***medicines***, dressings and over-the-counter products. Exports to Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Asia have driven international sales to£26.1m in 2013.

156 PENINSULA

Employment law consultancy 26.70%

This Manchestercompanyprovides outsourcedHRand health and safety services for customers including Laura Ashley and Betfred-also co-founded by Peninsula owners Peter and Fred Done, 67 and 71 respectively. Itsnewservice, HRFace2Face, offers legal experts to take charge of redundancies, dismissals and disciplinary procedures. The firm bought a65%stake in AustralianHRspecialist Employsure in 2012 for £1.6m, helping international turnover hit£6.8m in 2013.

157 DAVID MORRIS

Luxury jeweller 26.23%

This firm has designed one-off, handmadejewellery forBondfilms since 1971, and tiaras for Miss World.

Foundedmore than five decades ago by David Morris, 78, it isnowrun by his son, Jeremy, 52,whois the principal designer.With nine sites in the Middle East, Russia andHongKong, annualised international sales hit£39.7m in 2012.

158 BRITAM DEFENCE

Risk management consultancy 26.17%

This Londonriskmanagement company specialises in providing protection to oil and gas facilities in hostile environments in the Middle East. It was founded by Phillip Doughty, 60, in 1997, and its managementhasaUKSpecial Forces background. Its services include risk managementadvice, security services onthe ground and training of local personnel. With offices in Dubai, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Singapore, international sales were£28.8m in 2013.

159 BERWIN GROUP

Rubber and PVC ***manufacturer*** 25.98%

Rubbercompounds ***manufacturer*** Berwin Groupwas founded over 60 years ago.Nowled by chairman and managing director Glyn Williams, 62, thecompanydevelops bespoke products such as door and engine seals and hoses for vehicle makers, the oil and gas industry and the aerospace sector. Developing niche products for customers in Europe and America helped exports reach£14.4m in 2013.

160 ACEWINCHES

Winch ***manufacturer*** 25.98%

This Aberdeenshire firm ***manufactures*** and hires out winches and marine deck machineryand supplies supporting personnel for the global oil and gas, marineand renewable energy industries. Thecompanyoperates across six continentsand hasasubsidiary business in Norway. International sales reached £26.2m in 2013, accounting for three quarters of total turnover.ACEWinches is run by founder Alfie Cheyne, 50.

161 WILLIAMCOOK

Metal engineer 25.92%

Japanesepower stations, Slovenian high-speed trains, Britain's Challenger 2tank and Paris' CharlesDeGaulle airport all use specialist steel parts cast by this Yorkshire firm. WilliamCook founded the business in 1852 and, five generations later, Andrew Cook, 64, sits at the helm. Exports to continental Europe and America hit £35.6m in 2013.

162 GTGROUP

Precision engineer 25.89%

Counting Scania,BPand the likes of JCB and John Deere as customers, this engineering firm sells its exhaust control systems for diesel engines tomore than 50 countries. Increasingly stringent European emissions legislation helped boost exports to£23.4m in 2013. The CountyDurhamfirm, founded by Geoff Turnbull, 68, in 1983, also makes valves and seals for safe petrochemical transfer.

163 RHSMITH&SONS

Fancy dress maker, distributor 25.81%

Foundedin 1894 asawigmaker for the judiciary, this family-run businessnow designs fancy dress and party goods, such as Elvis and Shrek costumes. Its products are designed in Leeds,madein China and sold to 5,000 stockists in 42 countries. Underchairman RayPeckett, 69, the company's international sales grew to£17.3m in 2012.

164 RKHARRISON

Insurance broker 25.53%

RKHarrison is anemployee-owned insurance brokerwhose customers are businesses and private individuals. Led by chief executive Paul Bridgwater, 47, this London-basedcompanyhas eight offices in Britain and one in Bermuda. International sales reached£85.9m in 2013, with strong organic growth boostedby the acquisition of four businesses from rival Marsh in 2012.

165 NOVAOFLONDON

Fashion label 25.09%

Chairman Ajinder Chawla, 75, started selling clothes onamarket stall in 1973. Today his garment business, still run by the Chawla family, supplies retailers and wholesalers across Europe, Canada, Singapore and the Middle East. Nova of Londonsellswomen's fashion including brandQEDLondon, which it designs in Britain and sources from China, Asia and Turkey. Exports hit£7.4m in 2013.

166 PETROLEUM EXPERTS

Engineering software developer 24.97%

Chief executive Abdelhamid Guedroudj, 59, has built this firm fromastart-up in 1990 to international sales of£33.9m in 2013.The Edinburgh business develops software that helps energy firms model production and maximise the extraction of oil and gas. It hasnowgrown beyond its traditional markets in theUSand Europe, and is expanding in the Middle East, Africa and South America.

167 CROMWELL

Industrial equipment supplier 24.93%

Fromits origins in 1970 as a tooland engineering equipment shop in Leicester, Cromwell hasgrowninto an international business. Today it sells tools, maintenance products and safety equipment to customers in 50 countries onfive continents and has warehouses in 12 countries. Managing director Michael Kerins, 50, last year opened operations in Romania and Indonesia as well as expanding the company's business in China, all of which helped boost exports to£44min 2013.

168 KIN-TEC

Recruitment consultancy 24.39%

This oil and gas industries recruiter was formed in 2008whenmanaging director Neil McCarthy, 42, ledamanagement buyout of the business from recruitment firm Kinetic. The Manchestercompany places engineers and other technical specialists for clients such as Shell and ExxonMobil.With offices across America, the Middle East, Africa and Australia, international sales reached £13.3m in 2013.

169 HTI

Toy ***manufacturer*** and distributor 24.19%

HTI designs and ***manufactures*** children's toys for retailers and wholesalers in 75 countries, including Carrefour in Europe and Wal-Mart in North America. It hasawide portfolio of licensedand in-house brands, such as Barbie, Tonka, Teamsterz and Peppa Pig. Headquartered in Lancashire, the companyalso has operations in Germanyand China. Underchairman John Hutt, 46, international sales reached£14mlast year.

170 DEMONTWEEKS

Motorsports retailer 23.93%

DemonTweekswas founded in 1971by racing driver and motor trade salesman Alan Minshawto supply products for racing drivers, before expanding into car modification and the motorcycling market. Alan's son Jon Minshaw, 51, is nowmanaging director and the companyremains family-owned. Its website attracts overseas customers, whoare supplied from itsWrexham warehouse, and international sales raced to£6.7m in 2012.

171 FREUDS

Public relations agency 23.91%

ChairmanMatthew Freud, 50, sold a majority stake in his public relations firm to The Publicis Group in 2005, valuing it at(EURO)70m(£56m), but bought it back in 2011 for an undisclosed sum. Freuds'main business is consumer and corporate public relations,which it provides to customers that include Asda, Sky, Mars and Pepsi. The group morethan doubled its American revenues to£6.6m in 2012, and total international sales rose to £14.8m.

172 JACTRAVEL

Travel services provider 23.90%

JacTravel is an international wholesaler of travel services, supplying tour operators and travel companies with city hotelrooms around the world and tour packages for visitors to Britain and Ireland. Thecompany offers hotels in over 1,200 cities and is expanding across the Middle East, South America and Asia. Underchief executive Terry Williamson, 58, international bookings rose to £127.6m in 2013.

173 CARTEBLANCHE GREETINGS

Greeting card publisher 23.83%

TattyTeddy is the star of Carte Blanche's"MetoYou" greeting card range, launched in 1995. The grey bear with the blue nose also featureson clothing, figurines, wedding accessories and other gifts sold through retailers.The Chichester-based companyhas expanded into toys and digital games and licenses its brands worldwide. It openedasubsidiary in Australia in 2012 and international sales hit£12.8m that year, under founder and chairman Stephen Haines, 51.

174 BOODLES

Jewellery designer 23.50%

This family-owned jewellerwas founded two centuries ago in Liverpool and is run by brothers Nicholas and Michael Wainwright,66 and 56 respectively. Its exquisite pieces include the Greenfire necklace, crafted from Colombian emeraldsand costing £2.8m.The firm's jewellery is popular with buyers from America, China, the Middle Eastand Russia, as well as celebrities including actressEmmaThompson. International sales climbed to £21mthis year.

175 BRANDSLAM

Brand management agency 23.42%

BrandmanagementcompanyBrand Slamwas founded in 2007 by Canadian Marcia Kilgore, 45.The Londonfirm ownsFitFlop, a footwear range worn by the likes of MichelleObama,Chelsea Clinton and film directorSamMendes. It also ownsthe Soap&Glory cosmetics brand, which is licensed to Bootsand sold by beauty retailer Sephora across North America and Asia. The growing popularity of FitFlop in America helped overseas sales rise to £75.2m in 2012.

176 TURNER&TOWNSEND

Construction consultancy 23.39%

Turner&Townsend has been advising onthe creation of Qatar'snewcoastal city Lusail as well as its rail scheme, one of the largest in the world. Chief executive Vincent Clancy, 49, has driven the global expansion of this construction consultancy, acquiring businesses in America,Norway and HongKonglast year alone. The businessnowemploys 3,600 staff in 33 countries,and international sales reached£170.5m in 2013.

177 PENTA CONSULTING

Recruitment consultancy 23.20%

Chief executive officer Paul Clark, 49, and sales director Richard Wilson, 48, set up this IT and telecoms recruitment consultancy in 1998 with a£127,000 loan from non-executive director, Robert Harverson, 53. The business has operated in 126 countries-working mainly for global telecoms companies-andhandles workpermits and travel arrangements for technical contractors. International sales reached£34.5m in 2013.

178 VOHKUS

Computer hardware reseller 23.03%

Amongthe international customers of this Hampshire-headquartered computer hardware reseller are businesses in the American entertainment industry. It is also in the process of upgrading IT systems for companies in the Seychelles. The companyis run by co-founder Ritchie Sharma, 44, and focuses on medium-sized corporate customers. International sales, mainly to Europe, grew to£2.4m in 2013.

179 WOODMACKENZIE

Energy research consultancy 22.65%

This Edinburgh-headquartered companyprovides research, analysis and forecasts to the oil, gas and mining industriesand recently expanded into the petrochemicals sector. With 26 offices in 19 countries,WoodMackenzie provides data tomore than 900 companies, generating overseas turnover of £164.4m in 2012. Chief executive Stephen Halliday, 49, led a buyout in 2012 backed by private-equity firm Hellman& Friedman, valuing the group at£1.1bn.

180 OC&CCONSULTANTS

Strategy consultancy 22.64%

This strategic consulting firm advises midto large businesses onhowtogrow profitably.OC&Coperates in sectors such as retail, leisure, technology, services and media, and its customers include Argos,USprivate-equity firm CD&R,and business information group Experian. The London business has a global footprint and is expanding in America, Brazil, Turkey, China and Poland. International revenue reached £11.3m in 2013 under managing partner David Krucik, 48.

181 HHGLOBAL

Marketing services provider 22.62%

Since leadingabuyout in 2003, chief executive Robert MacMillan, 42, has shaped this south London print brokerage into an international group providing marketing and media services for big brands. Google, Bayer andHPareamongits customers, and its projects include printing the Pirelli calendar. It has offices in 30 countries across six continents and generated international sales of£82.8m in 2014.

**Graphic**

Recycling king: a third of Tom Muir's £58m turnover is generated from extracting aluminium and other metals from scrapped cars - and exporting some of it to the Continent

PHILTRAGEN

Sharp focus: Vision Support Services supplies bed linen, towels and bathrobes to exclusive hotels, including the world's only seven star establishment, the Burj Al Arab in Dubai

James Cottingham takes a 1955 Ferrari 857 S for a spin. The son of DK Engineering's founders David and Kate runs the Ferrari specialist with his two brothers

TIMSCOTT/FLUIDIMAGES

Flight club: Rob Clarke, chief executive of CTC Aviation, which trains more than 2,000 pilots a year for airlines around the world

Visual effects company The Mill creates eye-catching digital content for advertisers

THEMILL

The wheel deal: London-based Brompton Bicycles makes 40,000 folding bikes in the UK every year, exporting three-quarters of them to 44 countries around the world

Sophie Dahl models the latest creation from 200-year-old family-owned jeweller Boodles

Building the future: construction consultancy Turner & Townsend designed Abu Dhabi international airport and is advising on the creation of Qatar's new coastal city, Lusail

ABUDHABI AIRPORTS

**Load-Date:** July 13, 2014

**End of Document**



[***Journal: The long read: The battle for the soul of British milk: The supermarket price wars that let you buy a four-pint carton of milk for one pound are driving farmers out of business. Are American-style mega-dairies the only way for them to survive? Jon Henley reports from the front lines***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5D8H-B061-JC8W-62H4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Section:** GUARDIAN JOURNAL PAGES; Pg. 31

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**Byline:** Jon Henley

**Body**

On a still, close afternoon in early September, diggers and dumpers excavated and flattened a once-green field beside the winding country road that leads to the Victorian village of Leighton in the Welsh Marches. Behind 300 metres of gleaming chain-link fence, men in high-vis jackets paced and measured, while one man stood and watched. It had taken Fraser Jones six years of persistence, a public inquiry and a high court ruling to get to this point, and he still could not quite believe it was happening. "This is it, then," he said, an ample grin splitting an earnest face. "The future."

Jones is the fourth generation of his family to work the land in this part of the Borders, near Welshpool. He is 34, a fit, affable and enterprising young farmer. The future, as he sees it, looks like this: three huge, hangar-like sheds fitted with cattle cubicles; a three-storey robotic rotary milking parlour; six fodder storage buildings; two large-scale slurry stores; a high water-storage tower - and 1,000 peaceable black-and-white dairy cows who will spend their lives indoors.

"There is no room any more, in this game for people who are not efficient, don't control their costs," Jones pronounced, as we sat later in his warm and scruffy farmhouse kitchen. We're in a global market, up against the Europeans, the Americans. It's about efficiency. Economies of scale." By the time it is up and running in a year's time, Jones's new dairy will have cost him and his bankers £3.5m. It is an awful lot of money to be spending in a business that has not, of late, looked in the full bloom of health.

In 1995, there were 35,000 dairy farms in the UK; by last year, according to the industry organisation DairyCo, their number had fallen to 13,265. Every day over the past 12 months alone, one more has abandoned dairying - driven out by a market that often finds farmers selling milk for less than it costs them to produce it. Half of the milk produced in Britain is sold here as fresh, liquid milk for drinking. But the rest is sold for ***manufacturing*** - to make cheese, butter, and yoghurt - where it faces stiff competition from milk or powder produced in countries with lower costs or weaker currencies. In fact, Britain runs a dairy deficit: last year, we imported dairy products worth £1.3bn more than we exported.

But farmers also face a price squeeze at home. Since 1994, when it was deregulated, British dairying has been dominated by big processors that collect, pasteurise and bottle milk. Through contracts with farmers and supermarkets, Arla, Muller Wiseman, First Milk and Dairy Crest account for the bulk of all British milk sold to the public. When world market prices fall, these companies, not unnaturally, cut the "farm gate" price they pay to suppliers; just this summer, they sliced between one and three pence from the per-litre rate.

When the big supermarkets, often accused - not always fairly - of taking an excessive share of milk profits at the expense of dairy farmers, start cutting the prices they charge consumers, pressures in the market build further. This spring, led by Tesco, Britain's major retailers embarked on a price war, slashing the price of a four-pint carton of milk from £1.39 to a barely credible £1. Some now charge even less.

Against this backdrop, the rationale of the large, indoor-housed dairy herd is eloquent. For a farmer, the point of keeping cows is to produce lots of milk. To do that, the cows need to eat well and plentifully, lie down, rest, digest, socialise a bit, and give milk. Anything that gets in the way - a sub-optimum diet, sickness, walking miles to the parlour and then hanging around for hours to get milked - is not helpful.

So, rather than take your cow to her food in the field, you bring the food in the field to your cow. You ***feed*** her a scientifically devised diet, in a carefully controlled environment. You monitor her every move. You milk her more often - three times a day, instead of two - and you do it faster. And, bang: she gives you more milk. A lot more, in fact - at least 50% more than what she might give on pasture. At Lower Leighton Farm, Jones will aim for just over 11,000 litres per cow, per year. Forty years ago, the average British dairy cow was producing under 4,000 litres.

"Things have to move on, you know?" Jones told me. "You see wars getting fought over oil and gas, but at the end of the day, if a country is hungry . . . Look, populations are growing, land is shrinking. People want cheap food. Farmers have to produce more from less."

While indoor cows are considered perfectly normal in some countries, in this one we seem to be quite attached to the idea that cows belong in fields. It's a vision of our kind of countryside, a bucolic reminder of cherished rural roots - of Constable and Gainsborough landscapes, where Wordsworth's "green field sleeps in the sun", artfully dotted with "cattle grazing, their heads never raising". Cows, we feel - and have said, in opinion polls - should be grazing outside, solemn and sleek and big-eyed on our green and pleasant land.

To a large extent, that vision still reflects Britain's reality. Although it has been growing steadily, the average UK dairy herd still numbers only around 125 cows, and is farmed as it always has been: cows are turned out to graze in spring, and brought in to the barn for the winter. Less than 10% of this country's 1.8m dairy cows live in herds larger than 500.

Opposition to the kind of farm Jones is building comes from many directions. Conservationists object to blots on the rural landscape. Environmentalists fear the pollution of air and soil and water from so many ***animals*** kept in one confined space, and the vast quantities of slurry that would be spread in the surrounding fields. ***Animal*** welfare campaigners argue industrial farming methods are indisputably cruel.

That argument, in particular, seems to resonate with the public. Two decades ago, 90% of Britain's eggs came from factory farms. Then we learned something of the short, uncomfortable and intensely miserable life of the battery hen, and today nearly half the eggs we eat are free range. We don't like thinking of ***animals*** as high-output agribusiness machines.

For all these reasons, Fraser Jones has found himself, these past six years, on the front line of what might be called a battle for the soul of British milk.

On 17 December, 2009, David Barnes, a Lancashire dairy farmer, and Peter Willes, a Devon cheesemaker, filed a planning application with North Kesteven district council in Lincolnshire to build a large indoor dairy near the village of Nocton. It was a proposal for dairying on a scale unknown in Britain, and almost certainly in western Europe: 22 acres of sheds housing 8,100 cows producing 250,000 litres of milk a day. It provoked instant and vocal opposition. More than 170 MPs signed an early day motion registering their concern at what media reports dubbed "a battery farm for cows".

An alliance of protesters - from Vegetarian International Voice for ***Animals*** to Friends of the Earth, the Campaign to Protect Rural England to World ***Animal*** Protection, the Soil Association to Compassion in World Farming - joined forces with local campaigners to voice fears over disease control, security, transport issues and pollution of the soil and water.

The ***animal*** welfare charity WAP launched a hugely successful, celebrity-backed campaign, with the inspired slogan, "Not on our Cornflakes". An unfortunate remark from Peter Willes, in the early stages of the project, that in the modern ***agricultural*** age, "Cows do not belong in fields," inspired a similar effort from CWF. In April 2010, Barnes and Willes withdrew their planning application to amend it.

"The sheer scale of Nocton felt like a tipping point," the WAP campaigner Katherine Mansell told me at the charity's London offices. "It coincided with a big intensive farming PR push. British farmers were going out to the States, to Indiana, Idaho, Wisconsin, being shown 'best practice' on indoor-housed farms - the biggest has 32,000 cows." Designed in 1998 by Gordon "Gordie" Jones, a former ***veterinary*** surgeon and the acknowledged godfather of the American mega-dairy, Fair Oaks Farm, in Indiana, covers 25,000 acres. For obvious geographical and topographical reasons, Britain is unlikely ever to see anything remotely close to that size.

But the trend towards big, indoor dairies seems now inexorable. In France, where the largest dairy herd numbers 350 cows, environmentalists and campaigners from the militant Confederation Paysanne are fighting plans for a 1,750-cow dairy unit near Abbeville, in Picardy. Elsewhere in Europe, things have moved faster: between 2001 and 2010, the percentage of dairy cows kept on pasture in Denmark shrank from 85% to 35% - prompting a farmers' association in Sweden, where intensive indoor dairies are banned, to claim Swedish farmers would "drown in cheap Danish milk" unless their ban was scrapped. And there are farmers now in Britain - including Jones - who talk cheerfully of the possibility of 6,000- or even 8,000-strong herds here "if the site is right".

In November 2010, Willes and Barnes submitted a second, watered-down planning application, for a 3,700-cow dairy. Three months later, that too was withdrawn, and they admitted defeat - not to the campaigners, but to an insurmountable objection from the Environment Agency: that waste from the huge facility could leak into the ground and pollute an aquifer beneath that provided drinking water.

In a statement, Nocton Dairies insisted that the concept it had been proposing was "a sound one". It said it now "challenged other farmers to pick up the baton, and see where these concepts can take them". Across in Leighton, Jones was already doing just that. "I love dairying," he told me. "I just looked at where the industry was going, and at where I wanted to be, for myself and my kids, in 10 years' time. I wanted to invest in something sustainable, when others were giving up, and to do it transparently and honestly, not sneak it in. I put my head on the block. And it's cost me" - nearly £300,000 in legal expenses, he estimated.

As in Nocton, an awful lot of people - local residents, ***animal*** welfare campaigners, countryside conservationists and even the National Trust, which was worried about the view from the medieval ramparts and celebrated gardens of Powis Castle across the valley - did not like Jones's plans one bit.

There are, in truth, already a handful of indoor dairies in Britain on a comparable scale to what Jones is building in Lower Leighton - perhaps as many as 10, according to research by Oxtale, a food industry consultancy. But Jones may have set a precedent: instead of building first and getting permission later, as others have done, he dared to test the principle of the super-dairy against Britain's full planning and appeals process, and won.

The last time the seemingly intractable problems of Britain's dairy market made headlines was two years ago. After years of wildly fluctuating average farm gate prices, a group of dairymen called Farmers for Action barricaded roads and blockaded processing plants to protest having to sell their milk at a loss - finally winning price rises from the processors and the supermarkets.

We could soon be heading for a similar situation. World market prices for dairy are falling. Russia's tit-for-tat ban on imports of European and American produce is already prompting fears of a glut of surplus cheese and yogurt. Farmers' costs - ***feed*** in particular, but also fertiliser - are set to climb. And half of Europe is getting ready to ramp up production to take full advantage of the long-awaited end of EU milk quotas next year.

Milk prices, meanwhile, have been plummeting. According to the ***agricultural*** consultancy Promar, the milk price at which dairy farmers broke even in 2013 was around 30p per litre. It estimates the current cost of production, for a typical dairy farmer supplying to Tesco, at about 31.5p a litre. Farm gate prices, which were up at a healthy 34p at the start of this year, have since fallen to far below that level. According to DairyCo, the best milk contracts - so-called cost-of-production deals sealed directly between dairy farmers and supermarkets - are paying farmers 32p. The worst are paying 26p, as much as six pence per litre less than the cost of production. For the average UK dairy farmer, that represents £90,000 in lost revenue.

For farmers like Jones, the best - perhaps the only - way to really counter this sort of volatility is to do what he is doing: scale up, control costs, produce more for less. Steve Hook, who I met in the middle of a very green field in East Sussex, believes there is another way.

There are just 66 black-and-white cows in Hook's field just outside Hailsham. He knows their names: Rowena, Jill, Tina, Biddy, Ivy, Ida, Kate, Kitty. "It's a lovely sound, cows munching," he said. "I come out here once or twice a day, or try to. Talk to them. They're wonderful ***animals***. If ever I'm stressed - you know, tractor's broken down, we've passed our overdraft limit - I get out and stroke a cow for five minutes. Always works. Here, Ida: tickle."

A lot of dairy people these days, Hook reckoned, "tend to think of cows as being senseless units of milk production. Just some dumb herd ***animal***. But they're not. They're really not. And we shouldn't forget that."

Stocky, balding and, though a good decade older, every bit as passionate about his dairying as Jones, Hook operates a profoundly different business model. With his father, Phil - Hooks have been farming in East Sussex for 250 years - he has, amazingly, managed to duck the market altogether. In 1998, the Hooks took their 200 acres on the Pevensey levels organic: "An easy decision, actually," Hook said, "because the land here is so incredibly environmentally sensitive."

For a while, it went swimmingly. But then organic milk prices crashed, Hook's local co-operative failed to find a processing deal, and sometime around 2006, "things started to get really pretty bloody tough", he recalled. "It was clear to me that no matter what your story, now matter how good your quality, the only thing that actually mattered was price. So I started to think: is there any way I sell my own milk, direct to the consumer?" What Hook found was that a farmer producing raw, or unpasteurised, milk may sell it straight to the public: by law, in fact, he must sell it straight to the public. There can be no middleman. "Great," he thought. "That's what I'll do. Become a price maker, not a price taker." In January 2007, Longleys Farm got its raw milk licence. Phil Hook drove round Hailsham in an old Volvo delivering 12 bottles to locals who had said they'd like to try one, and handing out free samples on the market, asking people if they would like to be part of the farm's new raw milk round.

Today, the family employ 20 people and have 45% of Britain's growing raw milk market, producing around 8,000 litres a week. Three-quarters is sold as liquid milk, and the rest made into unpasteurised cream, butter and ghee. They sell it on local rounds, at a dozen farmers' markets in and around London, and - since the computer handling the transaction is physically on the farm - over the internet. Hook's fame is spreading internationally: an independent documentary about him, The Moo Man, was screened at Sundance last year.

Raw milk is admittedly something of a niche product. Its swelling army of fans swear by it, arguing that pasteurisation, introduced as a temporary measure 80 years ago mainly to halt the spread of TB, destroys not only the bad bacteria in milk, but also all the good. Hook happily read aloud from emails and letters he has received, telling him that his milk has cured asthma, eczema and hay fever, and lowered cholesterol levels. But all of Hook's milk must carry a cigarette packet-style health warning, and his cows and his products must pass frequent and very thorough health checks. He goes further, paying a laboratory to perform weekly tests for a host of different pathogens. And if any cow in the herd should ever came down with TB, he would be in big trouble.

The Food Standards Agency concedes there has not been a single incidence of food poisoning linked to raw milk in England or Wales for a decade, but it does not look particularly kindly on the product. And the big milk processing companies, who have the most to lose should it ever truly take off, are not falling over themselves to sing its praises.

Last year, at the suggestion of Selfridges, Hook installed and supplied a raw milk vending machine at the flagship store on Oxford Street - a novel way to sell direct to customers, as the law requires. But within 24 hours, the FSA had instructed Westminster council to remove it, and launched an investigation into a possible breach of food safety standards. (Hook complied, but still thinks vending machines could be "a great way forward" for small farmers.)

But in return for all those checks and tests, Hook is master of his market. He sees the point of pasteurising milk, on health grounds, when necessary. But commercially, he argues, once it has been pasteurised, milk becomes "a commodity".

"And so price-wise, it's completely elastic. A supply-and-demand price. I understood that my milk wasn't a commodity when a guy in London made a 120-mile round trip down here one New Year's Eve because he just had to have 20 pints of it," he said. "People will pay for my milk."

Depending on where and how they buy it, his customers pay between £1.50 and £2 a pint. "So my cows," he observed, "may only produce around 4,500 litres a year each - a bit more than half the industry average. But my milk sells for eight times the price. To me, that suggests either the industry's product is massively inferior, or they're selling it far too cheap."

He speaks, of course, from an unusual, and privileged, position. But he does believe the British dairy industry has "kind of lost its direction. Dairy farmers produce this wonderful food. White gold. And it gets turned into white water. And then sold, half the time, at a loss." Dairy farmers, Hook argues, need to "take back some control over their own destiny". But he is not sure that large, intensive farms like Fraser Jones's are necessarily the answer.

"Where's it leading?" he asked. "In whose interest is it that we're going down this route - the consumers, the ***animals***, the environment, the landscape, small communities, society? Or big business? Just how many of those boxes does a big industrial farm tick, against a small family farm?"

Back out with his cows, as one of Hook's four sons led the herd slowly across the fields to the farm's antiquated, but spotless, 1970s parlour for the afternoon milking, Hook didn't really have any doubts. "Indoor cows produce more milk, with all that fantastic nutrition," he said. "But would you like to eat steak and caviar every day? I think, probably, my cows have a better quality of life. They control their environment; their environment doesn't control them."

There are many besides Hook who do not buy the bigger-is-better logic. In an upstairs meeting room at Leighton village hall, a couple of hundred yards from where Fraser Jones's bulldozers and diggers were hard at work, villagers Holly Dyer and Ian Corke explained their view.

Leading lights in a now-dissolved pressure group, Campaign Against Leighton Farm Expansion (CALFe), they said they would now work with Jones to ensure his farm operates as it should. But there is much they did not understand about the process that led to the Welsh planning minister, Carl Sargent, approving his plans - and the high court upholding that decision.

"Our objections," said Corke, "were always to do with the size, and the location. It's just too close to the centre of the village, practically next to the school. We worry about noise, smell, traffic. Possible environmental issues." Leighton's residents were "90% against the farm", reckoned Dyer, a web designer who moved to the village 11 years ago and whose two children attend the school. "We ran a letter-writing campaign, a big fundraising effort; coffee mornings, raffles, a black-tie ball. We raised £12,000 for the solicitors."

Corke, now retired, was still puzzled as to how, after six years of argument and counter-argument - over plans, revised plans and revisions to revised plans - culminating in an eight-day public inquiry in March last year, a chief planning inspector concluded that Jones's application should be refused - only for Sargent to overrule it.

"There were so many objections," Corke said. "And the minister actually accepted almost all the inspector's report - but then rejected it, on the grounds of 'economic benefit'. And the high court ruled that even though his decision flew in the face of all the recommendations, he was entitled to make it."

The villagers, Dyer said, "feel like guinea pigs. If a factory farm like this can be built here, then really it can be built anywhere." Laws exist, she noted, to keep large-scale, intensive pig and chicken farms away from towns and villages, "but there are none for dairies. No one has the least idea what the long-term consequences of this might be."

As it was at Nocton, WAP was also heavily involved in the campaign to stop Lower Leighton, "because of what these farms do to communities, to the environment, and - of course - what they do to cows," said Ian Woodhurst, the charity's dairy campaign manager. Cows, he continued, "have evolved over millions of years to be outside and to eat grass, and taking them out of that environment has huge implications for their wellbeing. A cow has a natural lifespan of 20 years; in these intensive systems they are often exhausted and culled after four."

Woodhurst and other campaigners cite research showing cows kept indoors suffer more often from lameness and mastitis, a painful infection of the udder. They argue they are at greater risk from infectious disease; that their fertility rate is lower; that year-round housing deprives highly-developed, sentient creatures who can feel and express pain, pleasure and fear, of the right to express natural behaviours.

Given the choice, campaigners argue - again citing scientific evidence - cows dislike being kept in cubicles, becoming more aggressive, fearful and intolerant. As social ***animals***, they are most comfortable in small social groups; herds of 500 or more hinder the social interaction that prevents stress. In such unnatural conditions - on such a supercharged diet, being milked three times a day - an intensively farmed dairy cow, Woodhurst's colleague Mansell argued, "basically feels full-up, hungry and sick, all at once, and all the time".

But at Nocton and at Leighton, WAP also raised serious doubts about the environmental impact of super-dairies: mountains of manure, needing to be spread - subject to strict nitrogen restrictions - on surrounding fields; exceptional demands on the water supply, for cleaning, cooling and drinking; the risk of contamination from runoff. It presented evidence from families living near a very large indoor dairy, in Carmarthen, who complained of smells so overwhelming that their health has suffered, and of ammonia levels so high they are suspected of causing conjunctivitis and even a rise in incidences of asthma.

Not least of all, the campaigners contested the central argument for super-dairies - economic sustainability - arguing that unlike a small family farm that can, to some extent, tighten its belt in tough times, mega-farmers locked into a high-input, high-output system, with far higher fixed costs for machinery, ***feed*** and specialist labour, actually become more vulnerable, not less, to unpredictable swings in world market prices for energy, grain, and milk. "It's an unfolding metaphor for our times," said Mansell. "But what we're saying is, we do not have to go down this route. Sustainable intensification is a myth. You can make a profit on a traditional dairy farm, in a way that's better for ***animals***, the environment and for communities."

"Yes, you have to get paid a bit more for your milk, we see that. But our heritage, here, is cows in fields. It's crazy, just crazy, to throw over our whole farming tradition and infrastructure for the sake of this."

Back in Leighton, Fraser Jones had few words scathing enough for WAP. "They've lost credibility," he said. "I can understand the concerns of the village. But welfare - it's just wrong. Poor welfare has nothing to do with the size of the operation. And good welfare is my top priority - it has to be."

At his indoor farm near Crewkerne, in Somerset, Neil Baker would enthusiastically agree. We talked as he sat in front of a computer screen, which displayed a constantly updated real-time database containing every piece of information he might conceivably want to know about each of his 1,300 cows - from their average yield to the date their feet were last inspected.

Baker's father and grandfather were dairy farmers. "Back then," he said, "you bought a cow on Glastonbury market and looked after it well enough until you could afford another one. The principle's not so different now."

Fifteen years ago, when he was 27, Baker found himself with an ailing father and 250 cows, farmed traditionally - grass in summer, silage and concentrates in winter - around the village. With the confidence of his years ("Most farmers who go this route," he said, "are young. It's not something you start when you're 50"), he expanded to 350, and eventually 600 cows. Then in 2005 - after a visit to the States - he began shutting his cows in. "If you're going to keep a cow in a barn," he said, "it has to be a good barn. And the barn you put a cow in over the winter was never good. Why would it be? You wanted her out of there as fast as possible."

Before, Baker said, when he used to turn his cows out in spring, their milk yield would shoot up. Now, if he lets some out, the yield goes down: "It's the difference between a five-star hotel and a B&B. You have to see things through the cow's eyes: what does she need to do her job, the best she possibly can?" Baker reckoned he has spent £3,000 per cow getting his system right; he fine-tunes it constantly. His computerised parlour milks 350 cows an hour; his cows produce, on average, around 11,500 litres of milk a year. But a modern, high-yielding Holstein cow, he believes, is probably capable of doing 15,000: "The only barriers are the ones we put in their way. Yes, it's unnatural. But actually, you know, having cows is unnatural."

Tended by 20 mainly Polish farmworkers, Baker's cows live in vast, open-sided sheds whose interiors he has adapted and improved over a decade. Their cubicles are longer and wider; their sand beds deeper; their new drinking troughs shallower, because "that's the way cows prefer to drink".

Ceilings are higher, for better air; passageways are wider, for more loafing room and socialising. When Baker's cows stand to eat, they stand on rubber, to ease the load on their feet. There are fans, sprinklers, grooming brushes and scratching posts. On call are a vet, a nutritionist, and a man whose job it is to inspect each cow's feet and trim them to prevent lameness, because if it hurts a cow to stand she eats less, and so milks less. Their diet, mixed in computer-controlled ***feeder*** wagons, is a rigorously calculated mix of grass and maize silage and cattle cake, known as TMR - Total Mixed Ration.

"And I would argue," Baker declared, as a curious cow approached from behind, "that this is actually high welfare. These are healthy ***animals***. They exhibit natural behaviours - they chew the cud, socialise, groom each other."

"It's a perception that cows need to gambol in fields," he said. "What cows need is comfort, and time to eat, rest, and be milked. People who say cows should be on grass say they have more freedom, but they don't, really. Freedom is wild ***animals***."

For every scientific paper cited by those who say intensive farming is wrong, those who support it can produce one suggesting the contrary. They cite the Farm ***Animal*** Welfare Council's view that "a cow housed all year round with no access to grazing can have a satisfactory standard of welfare". Or the RSPCA's stance, that it is "not the scale of the production, in itself, that has an impact on ***animal*** welfare, but the conditions under which ***animals*** are kept".

For some, the super-dairies that have begun to come Britain's way are inhumane and environmentally disastrous - and represent a choice, by modern agribusiness, to treat ***animals*** and the environment badly. For others, they are a necessary and sustainable way to provide a livelihood for Britain's farmers, and cheap food for a growing population - and to oppose them is to put ill-founded emotive arguments ahead of evidence. There seems little doubt on which side of the fence many in the dairy industry now sit. When the high court, sitting in Welshpool, finally threw out the last objection to Jones's plans in June, the influential agribusiness consultant David Alvis wrote that it had "set a new precedent in law".

Based on "the best available evidence", he argued in Farmers Weekly, it had been established that "there is no fundamental risk posed by large, year-round-housed dairy farms to either ***animal*** welfare, the environment or public health that cannot be mitigated by appropriate management and existing best practice". The court's decision, Alvis said, amounted to "a victory for the whole of UK dairying". By refusing to accept "the weight of the evidence against them", the opponents of intensive farming had "undermined their own arguments".

Sitting at the battered table in his scruffy kitchen, Jones was, undeniably, chuffed. He recognised, he said, that his six-year battle would, in the end, add up to a "massive test case, with huge implications" for British dairying.

"If I'd lost? Well, it doesn't bear thinking about," he said. "I think it would have meant the slow death of the industry."\*

<01F4F7> David Levene

Jon Henley is a Guardian feature writer. Formerly the paper's chief Paris correspondent, he was the author of Firestorm, the Guardian's acclaimed longform multimedia project

Captions:

Some of the 1,300 cows at Neil Baker's indoor farm in Somerset

Credit: David Levene for the Guardian

Steve Hook at his farm in East Sussex

Credit: Frantzesco Kangaris for the Guardian

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[***Big changes for 2014***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5BJ8-1GM1-JD39-X3N4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

With a thriving economy and significant potential returns on investment, York is attracting a wide range of investment from both private and public sectors. As a result, big changes are in the pipeline for the physical and economic landscape of the city. These are some of the major projects taking place in 2014 and beyond.

Hiscox

This year sees the start of construction work on a new £19 million flagship office for Hiscox after the global insurance provider chose a move to York, bringing with it 500 jobs to the city.

Following a unanimous vote of approval from City of York Council's planning committee at the end of 2013, work will start in April this year on the development in Hungate, which will see the creation of a glass and stone structure, designed by the same architect who created London's Millennium Bridge, The Gherkin and City Hall.

The project is being carried out by York developers S Harrison, with Hiscox planning to move into its new office in 2015.

The £1.6 billion turnover company arrived in York in February last year when it moved 70 people into a temporary office in Mallard House, also in Hungate. When its new office is ready for occupation, Hiscox plans to have 300 new staff move in, with a further 200 jobs to be created within five years.

The investment is the largest in York since credit card insurer CPP moved into its Holgate Road premises in 1999 with 750 staff.

Steve Langan, managing director for Hiscox UK & Europe, said: "This is a significant investment for us as a business, as it will be our largest office in the UK outside of London.

"We are committed to York and to creating a building that represents a progressive and high quality addition to York's long architectural history. " The new office is set to come complete with a rooftop terrace and atrium, with the four levels of the building linked by a ribbonlike staircase, inspired by the City Walls.

The roof terrace, with views of the Minster, will be used by staff as well as organisations who are invited to hire it out.

Hiscox has also received planning permission for a neighbouring building which could become home to retail or leisure uses on the ground floor and a hotel or offices on the upper floors, all bringing more jobs to the area.

Alan Millard, chief operating officer of insurance firm Hiscox, who will head up the new York office, explained why the company chose to invest £19 million in the city. He said: "We wanted high quality people and we wanted it to be a good place to live, and the costs to be right as well. It wasn't a straightforward journey for us.

"York will be our largest office in the UK with 500 people over time.

We researched which cities were best for business. When you look at what's important York comes out really well.

"It's going to be the highest quality office building in York, creating a totally different environment. We are trying to help York become a world-class business destination."

The council has forecast that Hiscox's investment could have an annual impact on York's Gross Value Added (GVA) of £21.4 million through supply chain impacts, rising to £26.8 million GVA impact per year by 2026.

Hiscox, which is headquartered in Bermuda and London, provides insurance against international catastrophes and more steady local and regional businesses.

The firm has promised job opportunities will be available for both high-skilled and lowerskilled workers, with work being undertaken with the city's universities to provide graduate opportunities.

Speaking about why York is such a "great place" for developments, Ann Scott, managing director of S Harrison said: "York is an attractive, expanding city with a perfect blend of history, heritage and progressive thinking.

"York is genuinely 'open for business'. It has a tremendously diverse economy - tourism, science and technology, education and service centre businesses and a strong ***manufacturing*** base.

"The business community has an inclusive cohesive feel to it - sectors successfully ***feed*** off each other.

"Officers and politicians within the council are enthusiastically pro-development, but only appropriate development, not for growth at any cost.

"The city faces the challenges you would expect of a place with such a rich history and heritage - archaeology, space, access, traffic, heritage and design - but there is a genuine spirit of cooperation between public and private sector organisations to overcome them.

"There is an extensive developer-led talent pool in the city and in the broader region, of property specialists who know and understand the community and who, together, help deliver the platform for future growth and success."

Hungate

A decision is due over coming months on whether the next stage of the stalled Hungate development can go ahead.

Plans for the second phase of the £130 million Hungate scheme were submitted to City of York Council in September after the project had ground to a halt amid the recession.

Hungate (York) Regeneration Ltd's application includes a five and six-storey block containing 195 homes and a commercial unit for shops, restaurants or bars. If approved by the council, the work would begin the overall 720-home project, where the first 162 apartments and houses were completed in 2009.

The entire scheme may not be finished until 2024. The second phase will consist of 99 onebedroom, 80 two-bedroom and 15 three-bedroom apartments around a central courtyard. There will be less commercial space than originally intended because of the economic downturn.

There will also be 78 car-parking spaces and 156 cycle-parking spots.

Hungate (York) Regeneration Ltd - a partnership between Lend Lease, Evans Property Group and Land Securities - has said the empty land could have a temporary use before being fully developed. Ideas include a community garden, festival and events space and as the site for a "pop-up hotel" when the Tour de France comes to York in July.

Terry's Chocolate Factory

The first homes on the former Terry's site are due to go on the market in the spring, almost a decade after it was announced the iconic chocolate factory was to close.

The start of 2014 saw the start of construction at the site off Campleshon Road as part of a scheme to build more than 200 homes.

York-based developers David Wilson Homes are carrying out the project after receiving planning permission at the end of 2013 for the first phase of the build at the Chocolate Works. Phase one will include 57 houses, 29 apartments and a convenience store, which will be used as a sales office while the site is being developed.

Paul Newman, managing director of David Wilson Homes, said it was no ordinary housing scheme because the site held a special place in York's history.

He said: "We are determined to make a landmark statement which respects the heritage and reflects the architectural legacy of the former Terry's Chocolate Works."

The scheme been designed by London-based Richard Partington Architects, which also designed the Derwenthorpe "model village" in York.

The work by David Wilson Homes forms one half of a wider project to develop the site, which has been derelict since the works shut in 2005 with the loss of more than 300 jobs.

David Wilson Homes, which is part of the Barratts group, bought the site in conjunction with Henry Boot Developments.

The two companies purchased the 27-acre site from its previous owners, GHT Developments LLP, in April last year for an undisclosed sum.

The development by David Wilson Homes will form the South Bank end of the site, while Henry Boot Developments is taking charge of the redevelopment of the former chocolate factory buildings.

Outline planning permission has already been granted for them to become housing, offices, shops and hotels, with Henry Boot in talks with potential occupiers of the development.

Throughout the David Wilson construction period there is to be between 70 and 80 people working on the site at any one time, with numbers peaking to about 150.

The entire Chocolate Works project will create 270 homes and 200 construction jobs.

Monks Cross

York's new £90 million shopping centre is set to open in April as work draws to an end at the Vangarde Shopping Centre at Monks Cross.

The development is set to include York's first John Lewis store, which has brought 300 jobs to the city, a new Marks & Spencer, which will be one of the retailer's biggest in the region, bringing 200 jobs, and a new Next store.

Developed by The Oakgate Group and Caddick Construction, the new retail park has also secured Costa Coffee, Prezzo, Nando's, Frankie & Benny's, Ed's Easy Diner and York's first Giraffe restaurant.

The development has also provided £13.75 million towards a neighbouring community stadium for York City FC and York City Knights.

York Central

Development plans dating back 50 years could finally come to fruition after plans for a £10 million bridge opened up the potential for thousands of new homes in York. City of York Council announced on the opening day of York Business Week last year that it will be investing the sum from its £28 million economic infrastructure fund to build a bridge to give access to the York Central site.

The teardrop-shaped site has been earmarked for the development of thousands of new homes, offices and leisure use, but has been slow to attract investors due to difficulties in accessing the site. Now, following a land swap between the council and Network Rail, plans for an access bridge from the former carriageworks have been revealed as "the key to unlocking the site for development".

The York Central site is 90 per cent owned by Network Rail which has recently started a programme of site clearance as well as the development of a £36 million operating centre.

The site has been highlighted due to its transport links and brownfield status as a key opportunity for solving a need for high-quality office space in York.

British Sugar

Plans for hundreds of new homes at the former British Sugar site are due to be submitted in spring this year with work to begin in the autumn.

The development will be one of the biggest in York's history with 1,300 homes in total. The proposals for the site are also set to feature a large supermarket, bringing more jobs.

Associated British Foods (ABF), the owners of the site off Boroughbridge Road, met with City of York Council for preplanning talks last year, and confirmed they will submit a formal planning application this spring, following "extensive community consultation".

The factory closed in 2007, and demolition work started the following year.

The scheme for the 42 hectares of land, which also includes the old Manor School site, is expected to include as many as 1,300 family homes, a retail centre including business space, restaurants and bars, a "community hub", which could be used as a health centre, hall or primary school, a new road through the old Manor School site, Plantation Drive and Millfield Lane, and land reserved for a tram-train halt.

The land forms part of the York Northwest corridor, a "regeneration area"

including the York Central site next to York Station.

The council has earmarked the site as being pivotal to its aim of 22,000 new homes being built in York by 2030.

London-based planning consultants Rapleys, acting for ABF, last year submitted a "scoping report" to the council, which owns the former school site.

British Sugar announced in 2006 that the factory, which had been processing sugar beet for 80 years, would close with the loss of about 100 full-time and 40 seasonal jobs, blaming changes to European Union sugar production quotas.

The factory closed in 2007 and demolition work began the following year, and city leaders say the site has "huge potential" after progress stalled for years.

York Racecourse

The first phase of one of the biggest developments in York Racecourse's history is continuing, with the aim of completing it by the start of this year's racing season in May.

Initial work at the northern end of the venue is seeing a new pathway and course crossing point built to improve access, alongside a new pre-parade ring, modern saddling boxes and vet treatment and wash-down areas.

The overall £10 million project will be completed in stages over several years, with most of the work being carried out between racing seasons.

The new pre-parade ring will be larger and more level than its predecessor.

Although not part of the project's first phase and not intended to be completed by May, work on a new weighing room alongside the preparade ring has also begun.

A racecourse spokesman said the brick and timber building will be "equipped for 21st century jockeys" while reflecting the course's history, and will boast ***medical*** and physiotherapy rooms, a changing room for women riders and a jockey's lounge.

Future phases will see the existing Moet Pavilion replaced with a new building including a roof terrace and bar looking towards the parade ring.

The tented canopies in front of the John Carr Stand - the only Grade II\*-listed building on a British racecourse and believed to be the oldest grandstand in the world - will make way for a lightweight single-span canopy, which the racecourse said would be "less intrusive".

The whole project is expected to take until 2015 or 2016 to complete, with the work being carried out by main contractors Lindum York.

Askham Bryan

Planning approval has been granted by City of York Council for Askham Bryan College's £34 million expansion.

The development, which will create 120 jobs and see almost 1,600 extra students based there by 2017/18, will now have to be approved by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, because it is on a green belt site.

The plans include a purpose built ***animal*** management centre and an international-standard equine centre.

The college, specialising in ***agriculture*** and land management courses, also plans to build a polo field, new teaching areas, a 300-student accommodation block and a grass roof over the campus' quad, as well as improving its farm buildings and wildlife park.

If approved, the scheme's first phase, costing £6 million, would see the ***animal*** management centre built with the aim of opening it in September, followed by a £9.5 million stage including the equine centre, quad roof and farm improvements.

York Potash

Sirius Minerals, the firm behind the York Potash project is continuing its work on a new planning application for a billion pound potash mine in the North York Moors National Park.

Plans had been submitted in September 2012, with a decision due in July last year, however Sirius Minerals asked for the national park's planning authority to defer its decision, before withdrawing the plans completely at the end of last year.

Sales of potash, a plant fertiliser, are still being lined up by Sirius as it works on putting together a new planning application for the sunken headed mine, which is set to create more than 1,000 jobs.

The company has secured the sale of the site for the mine, which sits just outside Sneaton, near Whitby.

Drax

This year will see the second Drax generator convert to biomass fuel as the Selby power station reaches the half way point in its mission to convert three of its six generators by 2016.

The first converted unit has been up and running since April last year, with the second due this year, and the third in 2016.

Once converted, each of Drax's biomass boiler units will provide enough renewable electricity to meet the needs of more than one mllion homes. By the end, Drax will be the largest renewable energy supplier in the UK, and its emissions will reduce by ten million tonnes.

Drax is part of a consortium which has won a Government contract which will be the next step towards the White Rose Project a clean coal power station with technology to capture and transport 90 per cent of its carbon to the North Sea.

**Load-Date:** February 17, 2014

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[***North Korean agency publishes full text of rights report***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5D4D-Y061-JC8S-C4FS-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Text of report headlined "Report of the DPRK association for human rights studies" by state-run North Korean news agency KCNA

Report of the DPRK [acronym of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea] Association for Human Rights Studies

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Review of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies

Preface

Recently, distorted views are floated by anti-DPRK hostile forces about the realities of the DPRK, especially its human rights situation, causing serious misunderstanding thereof.

The United States and its followers are pursuing persistent anti-DPRK human rights campaigns aimed at interfering in its internal affairs and eventually overthrowing the social system by fabricating "human rights issue" of the DPRK to mislead international opinions and raise it to the United Nations.

However, truth will always prevail and cannot be covered by whatever means.

The DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies, with a view to helping the international community have a correct understanding of the human rights situation in the DPRK, publishes this comprehensive and detailed report on the history of the Government's efforts for protecting and promoting human rights, realities, obstacles to its efforts in ensuring human rights, and status of implementation of its international obligations.

This report has been prepared on the basis of studying and analysing a huge number of documentations such as official documents, human rights-related laws and publications of the DPRK, international human rights instruments, documents and data of international human rights organizations and the current situation of the country as well.

Contributions and views were solicited from State organs such as the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, Supreme Court, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education Commission and Ministry of Public Health, non-governmental organizations (social organizations) like the Korea Education Fund and Korean Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and professors and researchers at the institutions of legal education and studies including Law College of Kim Il Sung University and Legal Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences and many other individuals.

This report was published with consent to any insufficient and incomplete parts in its contents.

1. Human Rights Mechanisms in the DPRK

This part provides a summary of the geographical location, history, and social system of the DPRK, views and stand of the DPRK in respect of human rights and development of legal system of human rights protection, as well as the current situation of the country.

1) Review

- Physical Geography

Korea is situated in the east of the Asian continent. It consists of the Korean peninsula and 3,452 islands around it, extending over a total area of 223,370 square kilometres.

The northern part of the Peninsula is bordered by China and Russia with Amrok River and Tuman River between two sides. The Korean Peninsula is surrounded by East Sea, West Sea and South Sea of Korea, faced with Japan in its East Coast.

With nearly 80 percent of its territory mountainous, it has high mountains, deep valleys, hilly areas and thick forests. The six famous mountains, namely, Mt. Paektu, Mt. Kumgang, Mt. Myohyang, Mt. Kuwol, Mt. Chilbo and Mt. Jiri are well known to the world.

There are rivers, lakes and springs in many different parts of the country, ranking it among those countries with plenty of water sources. Mineral water and hot springs numbering 179 are well known for their good quality.

Korea has four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter; each season has its distinctive characteristics and unique beauty.

Considering the size of its territory, Korea is rich in mineral resources. Hence, they say its area should be measured by cubic meters, not square meters.

In particular, Korea ranks among the leading countries in the world in terms of deposits of iron ores and magnesite. The area of limestone deposits, the main raw-material of cement, covers 25-35 percent of its land and coal deposits amount to billions of tons.

- History

Korea is a land of Korean ancestors that lived there generation after generation from ancient times, and one of the origins of human culture where they created and succeeded their own Taedonggang Culture.

In the early 3,000 B.C., Tangun, the founding father of the Korean nation, opened a new era of civilization by founding Ancient Korea with Pyongyang as its centre, which was the first ancient state in the eastern Asia.

Koreans, a homogeneous nation with the same blood, language and culture, lived in one land from ancient times. They are a resourceful nation that created material and cultural wealth through their creative activities.

Koreans were the first in the world to invent iron-clad warship, metal types and astronomical observatory. Numerous historic sites and relics including Koguryo tomb murals and historic relics in Kaesong were registered as the world cultural heritages.

In modern times, Korea was turned into the arena of competition between big powers, finally suffering the disgrace of being occupied by the Japanese aggressors in early 20th century.

Under the leadership of the Great President Kim Il Sung, Korean people waged a 20-year long anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle to liberate the country on August 15, 1945.

On Sep. 9, 1948, they formed a genuine people's government for the first time in the national history by founding the DPRK that represents the interest of the entire Korean nation.

The US imperialists occupied the southern part of Korea after the World War II under the pretext of "liberating" it and invaded the northern part of Korea on June 25, 1950 to eliminate the country in its infancy. However, the Korean people performed a world-startling heroic feat by defeating the US who boasted of being "the strongest" in the world.

Korea was first divided into the north and the south after the liberation from the Japanese military occupation with the 38th parallel of the north latitude as a border and then after the Korean War by the military demarcation line drawn in accordance with the Korean Armistice Agreement.

Upholding the banner of independence and self-reliance, Korean people successfully carried out the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution, post-war reconstruction and socialist construction, and established in 1958 the first socialist system in the East.

After the establishment of the socialist system, the DPRK strengthened the political foundation of the country by dynamically carrying out the three revolutions of ideology, technology and culture and laid firm foundations of the independent national economy by carrying out the historical task of industrialization in a short span of 14 years.

In the DPRK, great efforts were exerted to raising people's living and cultural standards, thus resulting in a great advance in basically meeting their needs for food, clothing, housing, education, cultural activities and health care. Taxation was abolished and systems of universal free ***medical*** care and free education have been put in place.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s when many countries were undergoing great political turmoil due to the collapse of the socialist system and the return of the capitalist system, the DPRK continued to maintain its socialist system and worked hard to safeguard its ideology and system and provide people with happy life.

The DPRK strengthened its defence capabilities by virtue of the Songun politics, successfully went through the Arduous March and Forced March and laid firm foundations on the basis of which the building of a prosperous and powerful country could be dynamically pushed forward.

The 60-year long history of the DPRK is a history of self-reliance in which Korean people established and strengthened the people-centred socialist system under the wise leadership of the great President Kim Il Sung and the great leader Kim Jong Il.

If the DPRK had yielded to unprecedented trials and difficulties and depended on others or given up the principle of self-reliance in the face of the pressure of outside forces, the socialist system centred on popular masses could not have been safeguarded and its identity would have disappeared with the collapse of world socialist system.

- Guiding Ideology and Social System

The guiding ideology of the DPRK is the Juche idea.

In a nutshell, the Juche idea means that man is the master of everything and decides everything. In other words, it means that man is responsible for his own destiny and also has the capacity to shape his destiny.

The Juche idea is the most scientific and revolutionary guiding ideology as it guarantees, through adherence to the principles of independence, self-reliance and self-defence in the activities of the State, the status of the people as the masters of the revolution and construction in the political, material and military fields, realizes the independence of the people in all aspects of social life and advances the revolution and construction to victory.

All the achievements made by the Korean people in their efforts to build and strengthen the socialist system represent the triumph of the line and policies of the DPRK guided by the Juche idea and vivid manifestation of superiority and stability of the government of the DPRK.

The Juche idea is the ideology of believing in people as in heaven. Take full responsibility for and protect people's future and spare nothing for the promotion of their welfare - this is a political doctrine and principle of activities of the DPRK Government.

The Government of the DPRK guided by the Juche idea is carrying out its responsibility and mission as a representative of people's independent rights, organizer of their creative abilities and activities, householder responsible for their living conditions and protector of their independent and creative life.

The social system of the DPRK which has embodied the Juche idea is a people-centred social system in which people are the masters of everything and everything serves them.

Its political system is popular as it makes people masters of state governing, serves them and bestows upon them priceless political integrity.

Its economic system ensures people an independent and creative working life, as well as affluent and civilized living standard. Its cultural system enables people to create and fully enjoy socialist culture.

All the lines and policies adopted and implemented in the DPRK, a people-centred social system are directly related to ensuring people's independent rights, with top priority given to their interests and convenience.

Under such social system, the Korean people enjoy a worthwhile and happy life without any social and political uncertainty, and beautiful traits of helping each other and sharing joys and sorrows under the slogan of "one for all and all for one" are witnessed in various social life.

The Korean People are convinced that their state and social system based on the Juche idea are the most superior and popular one as it guarantees them genuine freedom and rights and place absolute trust in it, making devoted efforts to further consolidate and develop it under the wise leadership of the respected Marshal Kim Jong Un.

2) Views and Stand of the DPRK on Human Rights

At present, countries and nations have their own views and stand on the concept of human rights, and international human rights instruments adopted so far fail to provide unified and correct definition thereof.

Furthermore, certain countries and hegemonic forces are spreading their values and grossly distorted human rights views, while violating the sovereignty of other countries and infringing upon their human rights.

Under such a situation, without a correct view on human rights, countries cannot guarantee their people genuine human rights or properly deal with human rights issues arising at the international level by counteracting the arbitrariness and high-handedness of hegemonic forces.

Placing human being at the centre of all considerations and in consideration of the actual realities of the country and practical experience, the DPRK endeavours to protect and promote the genuine human rights with correct views and stand on human rights.

The following are the main views and stand of the DPRK on human rights:

\* Views and stand of the DPRK with respect to human rights are based on the people-centred Juche idea, the most scientific ideology for the protection and promotion of people's independence.

?Human Rights is Independent Rights.

As human rights literally mean the rights of human beings, their concept should be defined on the basis of human nature.

Independence is intrinsic to the nature of human being. The right to realize independence is after all the independent rights; that is the human rights.

Independence is an attribute of a social being desirous of living and developing in an independent way as the master of the world and his destiny.

Independence is the life and soul of man, a social being. Man can maintain his dignity and worth as a social being and live a life worthy of a human being only when he achieves independence.

If man is to achieve independence, he needs to have the right empowering him to realize it. It is because the right embodies his wishes and needs, as well as the responsibility on the part of the State concerned to ensure that it is realized.

Independent right reflects independent wishes and demands of a man desirous of living and developing free from all sorts of restrictions and subjugation as the master of the world and his own destiny, and makes it possible for him to maintain and realize it.

The rights that do not embody independent will and demand of man or fail to realize them are not human rights in the real sense of word.

This shows that any discussion of human rights apart from the independent nature of man is meaningless, and that human rights cannot be protected and realized unless man's independence is realized.

Man's activities to realize his independence cover all aspects of social life.

For this reason human rights are independent rights that enable man to hold his position and play the role as the master in all fields of social life including politics, economy and culture.

In the final analysis, if human rights are regarded as independent rights, the efforts to realize them are just. However, protection and promotion of "human rights" based on unscientific viewpoint on man's nature cannot be justified no matter which country claimed them or which international document "confirmed" them.

? Popular Masses Enjoy Genuine Human Rights

Human rights are defined in international human rights instruments as the "rights of all members of the human family" or "rights of all human person".

It is understandable that the definition of human rights is given in such broad terms since it should be acceptable to all states and nations with different social and political systems and different level of development.

Such definition has some significance in avoiding argument and dispute among different states and nations concerning the concept of human rights and leading them to compromise and agreement.

However, the failure to provide clear-cut definition of human rights in the international instruments gave room to different countries to interpret it in their own ways.

Those who make such interpretation can be divided into two groups.

In the first group they argue whether human rights are the rights of individuals or collectives, while to the second group belongs to those debating whether human rights have class character or super-class character.

Whether human rights are the rights of individual or collective - the former is the right of an individual as a member of the collective. Therefore, the right of individual apart from the social collective is unthinkable.

Popular masses demand the genuine rights, the independent rights, to live and develop independently and creatively free from the all kinds of fetters of nature and society and they are the owner of creative capability to realize it.

As historical facts show that all rights that the people in different time championed are presented by their intention and demand and realized by their efforts.

The rights that do not reflect their demand and the right that is not guaranteed by the people's efforts can not be regarded as genuine rights.

The independent demand of the social collectives for the existence and development of the collective is the common demand of the social members and independent demand of the individual is the demand which one deserves as the member of the society with guarantee from the collective.

The demand of the popular masses, social collective, represents the demand of the community and coincides with the demands of each member of the social collective.

In this context, guaranteeing human rights, in its true sense, means meeting both demands of collective and its members.

The true ideal of human rights to fulfil the demands and interests of the popular masses is out of agenda in countries where class confrontation, inequality, exploitation and oppression are rampant. The human rights in such countries are not meant for the popular masses which form majority of the society.

Regarding the human rights as the rights of the popular masses does not mean it ignores the general concept of human rights as defined in the international human rights instruments.

? Human Rights is State Sovereignty.

At present, respect of sovereignty and non-interference in other's internal affairs are recognized as the main principles in international relations.

It is important in international relations to respect other country's independence and sovereignty and refrain from infringing upon them and interfere in matters under the jurisdiction of other country.

Nevertheless, the US and some western countries are of the view that the human rights comes before the state sovereignty, and the interference in other's internal affairs is justified under the pretext of the "protection of human rights".

The issues including political system, policy planning and its execution, administration of state organs, customs duty, nationality, ties and measures of each country in the international relation fall under category of internal affairs.

The same applies to the policy, mechanism and measures of each country related to ensuring the human rights.

Human rights is internal affairs and it presupposes the ensurance of state sovereignty. It is by no means an object of interference or a tool to justify it.

From this perspective, the DPRK maintains that human rights is state sovereignty.

In other words, it means that state sovereignty is the national independent rights.

People meet their independent needs in each national state as a unit.

The national sovereignty is needed to meet the demand of people in each national state.

All the people in each country exercise the human rights to meet the independent right of their own with the state ensurance of systematic and legal guarantee.

This means that the human rights is secured and guaranteed by the sovereignty of each country and nation, not by the interference and instruction of any country or international organizations.

In case a state loses its sovereign right, then human rights of the people and its promotion will remain a paper argument.

The colonial history of Korea in the past and violations of human rights currently committed by hegemonic forces in some countries such as Iraq clearly proves this fact.

\* Korean people were subject to a miserable life worse than a dog of a family having funeral due to the deprivation of the country by the Japanese Imperialists. Japanese Imperialists occupied Korea by force of arms and trampled down all rights of Koreans under the gangster logic "Koreans should obey the Japanese laws or they shall die."

There are big or small and developed or developing countries but no country has the right to trample upon the sovereignty of other nations.

Sovereignty of each country is equal; it is the absolute and inalienable right for all countries.

Human rights and state sovereignty are not the matter of theory. These are the serious political and legal matters which are directly connected with the destiny of sovereign country.

Therefore, high vigilance is required not to permit any act of interference by some countries and international human rights organizations under the name of "human rights protection".

Not allowing any act of interference means the implementation of obligations by each country in promoting the human rights at international level.

? Basic Human Rights and its Standards.

- Basic Human Rights.

o Assessment of Different Views on Basic Human Rights.

At present, there are a lot of mentions about identifying basic human rights in international human rights instruments but no definition is given in that regard.

Not only in the arena of the international human rights but on the international political stages, various opinions circle around on the issue to which rights belong to the basic one among the rights which people have.

At present time the origin of the basic human rights are found in the "Declaration of the Rights for Human Being and Civilian" adopted in France on August 26th 1789 and "Declaration of Independence" adopted in US on July 4, 1776 in the capitalist world

The Declaration adopted by France asserts that "freedom, property, safety and resistance to the suppression" are the basic human rights while the "life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness" are regarded in such a way in the US Declaration.

But "basic human rights" in these declarations can not be the general basic human rights because it confirmed and consolidated the political and economic hold of the bourgeoisie.

Also there is view that the right of peace, right of environment is the basic.

It is the fact that the issue of the peace and environment presents itself as a very important one in the safety of the human rights today when aggression of hegemonic forces and acts of war are becoming evermore undisguised and the pollution and destruction of global environment threaten the existence of human beings.

But those can not be the basic human rights.

The meaning and content of the basic human rights can not be changed even though new matters of rights arise and they become the important rights.

Rights of peace and environment and asserted other rights are different in the content but they are asserted because of the lack of the guarantee of the basic human rights.

o Socio-political Rights, the Right of Dignity, the Right to Existence and Inviolability constitute Basic Human Rights

Basic human rights are the most important one which is the foundation and source of all rights. In other words, campaigning for the other rights can not be thought without basic human rights.

From this point rights bellow belong as follows.

First of all socio-political rights for protecting the socio-political independence belong to the basic human rights.

Socio-political independence is vital to the human, social being.

Without it, human is a social outcast and can not escape from the slavery even though he has physical life.

Socio-political independence can be campaigned through rights, the guarantee and exercise of socio-political right which contains the content of the freedom and right which people can participate in the realization of state authority, state management and socio-political activity.

If the human doesn't become the political master with socio-political right and exercise, he can not be guaranteed the economic and cultural rights.

This shows that socio-political rights is the basic rights based on the human's all rights and the most important right that can make him occupy the position and play the role as the master of the state and society.

There is right of dignity which the man should be respected socially in the basic human rights.

In the world the most dignified and valuable being is human.

Everything in the world has value of its own when it serves the human, the most dignified and valuable being.

Dignity and value of human can be exercised fully through the achievement of the social, moral equability, free development and exercise of right to be treated manly.

Moral discrimination is the insult to the dignity of human and slavery and inhuman and dishonourable morality and forcible acceptance is the infringement to the human dignity and right no matter it is done for any reason.

Also the international human rights documents confirmed that the right of dignity is the basic human right.

Right of existence and inviolable right also belong to the basic human rights.

Economic life is the field of social life that is essential to the existence and development of human.

Human can maintain its existence and glorify it when he has the right in the economic life which are rights of labour and ownership, and right of existence and exercise it freely.

Any exercise of rights can be thought without guarantee of freedom.

Human can exercise the human rights fully and peacefully when the inviolable rights, the right not to be in confinement and arrested imprudently, are guaranteed.

- Human Rights Standards

o Assessment on Human Rights Standards in the International Human Rights Instruments

"Human rights standards" in the international field were established through the UN's activity for the adoption of the human rights conventions after World War II.

Human rights standards established in the international human rights instruments reflect the reality of international community with existence of various idea and system and have the general standards and goals which each country should achieve in the arena of human rights.

Much progress has been made in the protection and promotion of human rights by the establishment and adoption of human rights standards.

But confrontations and contradictions exist between the states and groups over human rights standards and its adoption and it has been the serious international political and legal issue.

The important reason is the anti-human act of the US and western countries.

It will be explained in detail.

There is no human rights standard which every country can accept.

In every respect international human rights standards were reflected human noble ideal and justice to protect the human rights and established but that does not mean ignorance of demand and interests of people in every country.

Furthermore international human rights standards do not copy "standards" of particular countries or demand to follow it evenly.

As the guarantee of the human rights takes place with each national state as a unit, reality and demand of the national state should be concerned inevitably in analysing and applying the international human rights.

This means that international human rights standards should be established to be fit for the demand and reality of the national state and each state can establish human rights standards of their own and apply them.

o Negative nature of the "human rights standards" of the US and Western countries

The US and western countries misuse universality of the human rights standards established in the international human rights instruments and they are going still endless lengths in their manoeuvres to force their "human rights standards" upon other countries as they did before.

These countries make the rumour afloat that their "human rights standards" are the "fair standards" and "the best standards" which can be decided and solve all issues in the field of human rights.

It is axiomatic that "civilization" and "standards" of US and western countries, the boss infringing upon the human rights, can not be the unique human rights standards in the world.

"Human rights standards" of the US and western countries are reactionary ones applied in the imperialist way of thinking, with the view of value and way of life which look down, oppress and dominate others.

Nobody in international community empowered them to establish the international "human rights standards".

These countries, unqualified to discuss the noble human rights, pretend to be "incarnation of human rights" and have been trying to force their standards as universal ones.

It was proved vividly that "COI" attempted to bring down the DPRK by collecting the prejudiced "data" without any scientific accuracy and objectivity in the content and raising the publication of "report" of intervention which is extreme in the selectivity and double-dealing standards.

Starting from the one-sided interests non-relevant to the human rights, US and western countries are exercising the collective force upon the countries maintaining their specific system and political mode by accusing them as "states infringing upon human rights".

If the act of politicization, selectivity and double-dealing standard of the US and its followers, unqualified to discuss the genuine human rights, is connived, acts of taking issue with particular countries selectively for the political cause will be rampant more and more.

The acts of the US and western countries should not be allowed to go on as they happened in the arena of international human rights ; criticizing and taking issue with the human rights situation of the other countries for one reason that they are not their "allies" or "partners."

o Standards of Human Rights Approved by the People is just

In every county those who demand the human rights and campaign it are the people and the one who decide and analyse is the people, too.

The standards which reflect the demand and intention people and realize it, is the human rights standards and that is the fair and genuine human rights standards if the people like.

There are so many countries in the world and each country is different not only in the field of political system but also in the fields of history, custom, economy, standards of cultural development and life style.

In such situations, the human rights standards should be established to meet the demand of people in each country.

No doubt that it is necessary to respect and consider the principles of international law and standards established in the international human rights documents as circumstances that countries established the human rights standards which meet the demand of people.

It is related that the principles of international law and human rights standards were reflected and established on the noble intention and desire for the building of new world with guarantee of genuine human rights and development of relations between countries based on independence.

Establishment and applying the human rights standard which respects the standards established in the international human rights instruments and fits for demand and reality belong to the sovereignty of each country.

Human rights could be only guaranteed by principled standards which respect the principle of international law and demand of people in each country, not by the arbitrary "standards" geared toward the narrow, selfish and vulgar purposes.

Government of DPRK has established the fair standard and guarantees all rights of social beings universally.

Through the practical life experience Korean people assure that human rights standards of DPRK are the true and fair standards which can guarantee their independent right.

"Human rights standard" based on the American view of value should never be applied to DPRK and used for the political purposes and precondition with development of relations.

3) Development of Human rights Mechanisms in the DPRK

The human rights protection system established in the DPRK right after its liberation from the Japanese colonial rule has a history of nearly 70 years.

For space constraints all of the particulars cannot be covered.

Therefore, the process of establishment and development of human rights protection system in the DPRK will be summarized, divided into several stages.

(1) Foundation for the Establishment of Human Rights Mechanisms

Efforts in the DPRK to establish the human rights protection system started with the laying of foundations.

As a structure on strong foundation is secure, so the effective human rights protection system requires good groundwork.

?Abolition of Colonial Anti-Human Rights Laws

Each and every law ***manufactured*** by Japan in Korea in the past were unprecedentedly evil, anti-human rights laws aimed at depriving Korean people of all political freedoms and rights, and forcing colonial slavery upon them.

Abolition of these evil laws that served to systematize servile submission and deprivation of rights was the first priority for the establishment of the human rights protection system that provides genuine democratic freedom and rights to Koreans.

Thus, soon after the liberation measures were taken to declare that all the laws and regulations enforced under the Japanese colonial rule were no longer effective and no legal order was permissible which was opposed to the building of a new country and the interests of the Korean people.

It was the manifestation of the will of the Korean people to verify by law that all laws that oppressed and plundered the Korean people and fettered Korea as a colony were abolished and to establish a new human rights protection system for the guarantee of the freedoms and rights of Korean nation on the basis of the democratic legal order.

Given the fact that in those days (1945) new democratic state laws were not yet enacted, these measures were significant as they laid down general principles to be adhered to in abolishing evil Japanese laws and enacting and enforcing new democratic human rights laws.

It was regarded as something unavoidable in former colonies to continue to enforce some of the colonial laws or refer to them when preparing bills.

Quite a few countries are known to have done so.

But Korea adhered to the principle of abolishing the whole lot of evil colonial laws and establishing a new legal system and order for the protection and promotion of the freedoms and rights of people on the basis of the democratic and revolutionary legal consciousness of people and as required by the new society.

? Establishment of Organizations for Human Rights Legislation

First priority was given to establishing local people's committees and adopting legal instruments.

Organization of the mechanism for the enactment of the human rights and augmentation of its function and role became the important issue to establish the human rights mechanism in the liberated Korea without united central legislature.

Hence, various kinds of meetings including conference of people and inhabitants' sessions were held and representatives were elected by the will of people and the local organs of power were organized.

Through these local organs of power popular and democratic policies were suggested to establish new democratic legal order and legal documents were made including decision, order, and proclamation for its implementation.

It shows that new popular and democratic documents of the human rights instruments were made from the level of the local people's committee.

Even though the legal documents of local people's committee represented the idea of local people and local effect but they played an important role in the establishment of popular and democratic human rights mechanism as the document of codified style which represent the consensus of the local people and protect their interests.

Thus, 10 Administrative Bureaus of north Korea were organized and enactment was undertaken.

As local people's committees were set up in the north after the liberation of the country, it was necessary to strengthen relations between committees in all sectors including economy to give unified guidance to the economic sectors. On this purpose, the 10 Administrative Bureaus were organized on November 1945.

The 10 Administrative Bureaus, the sectional and central administrative organ, which gave instructions to each section of the economy and kept economy of each province connected, enforced various kinds of the human rights documents including decisions, proclamations, orders, rules and restriction.

As human rights law documents of local committee of people had effect in the scope of its region, the documents of the bureaus of north Korea had legal effect in every field across north Korea.

The enactment of the human rights law documents of bureaus was big progress for the organization and management of united human rights mechanism.

And provisional committee of north Korea was established and enactment was undertaken.

In Korea the provisional people's committee of north Korea was established, the central government body of north Korea in the conference of the representative of democratic political parties and public organizations, administrative bureaus and people's committee on February 8, 1946.

Provisional People's Committee of north Korea was the legislative organ with the function of popular democratic dictatorship that enacted and enforced the united human rights laws and regulations all over north Korea.

From the time of establishment of the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea and enactment of the human rights laws and regulations the united mechanism was established for the human rights instruments in Korea.

? Democracy in Judicial System

Work of democracy in judicial system was the popular and revolutionary work of establishment of judicial system which protected the rights and interests of people by abolishing the old-fashioned judicial system that used to serve for the Japanese Imperialist rule.

Thanks to the democracy in judicial system, pro-Japanese elements and national traitors could be cleaned up while establishing the people-oriented and democratic human rights mechanisms and countering all the moves of the hostile forces.

By this 10 Administrative Bureaus of north Korea were organized and provision to organize the public prosecutor offices and court of justice of each level were made and systems of dual-instances was applied in judgment and people's jury system was established.

After the establishment of Provisional People's Committee of north Korea, the democracy in judicial system was accelerated even more.

Several laws and regulations including provision of Provisional People's Committee of north Korea on March 6, 1946, "Fundamental Principle of the Organization and Function of Bureau of Justice, Court of Justice and Public Prosecutor Office" extensively regulated the fundamental principles of the duty, organization and activity of the judicial administrative and court of justice and prosecution organs.

These laws and regulations became legal foundation that judges could adjudicate fairly on the basis of the interests of Korean people and democratic legal consciousness on the condition that the laws and regulation such as civil and criminal substantive laws and regulations were not ready.

Democratic legal procedures and preliminary proceedings of organs court of justice and preliminary trial were also regulated.

Provisions of PPCNK "Regulations on the criminal judgment of the judicial organs of north Korea" (May 14, 1946) and "Law on criminal case examination of the security organs of prosecution level of north Korea" (June 20, 1946) regulated democratic principle in the organizing and activity of the court of justice.

Judges were elected in the people's assembly - genuine organ of power of people - according to the provision of PPCNK "On the Election of Judges" for the first time in the history of DPRK on January 14, 1947.

This meant that court of justice was formed by the genuine representatives of people and became the court of justice that guaranteed the rights and interests of people in the true sense.

And also independence of judge was recognized and principle of open trial and rights of defence and appeal of accused were guaranteed by the enactment of the several legislations in order to realize democracy in judicial system.

Thus the democratic rights and freedom of people were guaranteed and democratic judicial system which guaranteed the construction of new fatherland was established after liberation in a short period of time.

(2) Establishment of Democratic Human Rights Mechanisms

After the liberation of the country, the establishment of democratic human rights mechanisms was raised as the important issue in the construction of new fatherland.

At previous time, corrupt class of feudal rule oppressed the people's will and made people ignorant so that they could exploit and rule as they pleased.

Furthermore, the Korean people had nothing but to suffer from the absence of the rights and slavery in decades of occupation of Japanese Imperialists.

The system is needed that can guarantee the democratic freedom and rights of the people who led a miserable life due to maltreatment, contempt and ignorance for centuries. Under such system, the people could actively participate in the construction of new country full of pride as true master of the state and society.

The main principle in the establishment of democratic human rights system was the system that can ensure the democratic freedom and rights of the people.

Representative legal laws and regulations are as follows.

?Democratic Election Legislation

Democratic election legislation in the DPRK was established by the enactment of the laws related with the election of representatives in the local and central power organs.

The election law of representatives of local power organ includes the "Decision of the 2nd Enlarged Committee of Provisional People's Committee of north Korea on the Election of the Member of People's Committee of Sub-county, County, City and Province "(Decision of PPCNK on September 5, 1946) and "Election Regulation of Member of People's Committee of Sub-county and ri of north Korea" (Decision of PPCNK on January 7, 1947).

These election laws regulated all the comprehensive rules to guarantee democratic election, including fundamental principle, procedure of framing list of elector, electoral district and sub district, procedure of candidate nomination, procedure of election and procedure of confirmation of result of election.

These laws had their own characteristics with the deepest consideration to legalize democratic electoral principle by means of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballots, and to offer conveniences to the people in the election.

Election laws on the reflection of the intention of the popular mass for the first time in the history of DPRK regulated the content to make people elect the representatives directly thus 99.6 percent of the wholes electors participated in the election.

Approval rate was 97 percent in election of provincial level, 95.4 percent in the level of city and 96.9 percent in the level of county.

Representative one among the election laws and regulations of the central organ of power was "Regulation on the election of representative of People's Assembly of north Korea".

According to this law the election of representatives of central organ of power held on February 17 to 20, 1947 was conducted in the ratio of five to one candidate of people's committee of province, city, and county on the basis of democratic principle by secret ballots.

As a result 237 candidates from all walks of life including 86 from Workers' Party of Korea, 30 from Democratic Party, 91 from Chongu Party, 91 independent representatives (34 women, 7 enterpriser, 10 merchants, 4 handcraft men, and 10 religionists among them) were elected as representatives of the central organ of power.

The fact that candidates from all walks of life were elected and broad masses of people participated in the election and cast the favourable vote, showed that election law established in Korea was democratic one which reflected exactly the demand of people who exercise the political rights through election.

By the establishment of election law, Korean people could have the absolute legal guarantee which they could exercise the political rights to the full and freedom by assuming the power

? Labour Legislation

In the DPRK, genuine and democratic labour legislation were established by the Labour Law and its detailed regulations.

Guaranteeing genuine rights of labour to the workers and office workers and improving the condition of labour and material life fundamentally is the important content of guarantee of democratic rights and freedom.

Laws and ordinances were promulgated on June 24, 1946 by the decision of the PPCNK.

"Labour Law of the Workers and Office Workers in north Korea" with 26 articles regulated extensively democratic freedom and rights including the 8-hour workday, equal wage system, paid vacation, social insurance system.

Particularly important one in the content of labour laws was to regulate the introduction of the 8-hours workday.

By regulating the introduction of the 8-hour workday remnants of the forced labour of Japanese colony which forced the unlimited labour time and severe labour condition, was abolished and the avenue of new life of labour was opened.

The introduction of 8-hour workday was the creation of the solid foundation that solved the biggest issue in the fulfilment of the independent and creative labour life and could accelerate the construction of the country dynamically by firing workers' voluntary zeal.

The labour law regulated to introduce the 7-hour workday to the workers who worked underground and in the section of production that was harmful labour conditioned.

Considering that the intensity of the expenditure labour was different from the labour condition, it was the just step to guarantee the health and safety of life of workers.

According to this law child labour was prohibited completely in every field.

And it also regulated the issue of absolute abolishment of murderous famine wage system of during colonial time, introduction of the two week regular paid vacation to the workers and office workers, issue of the introduction of additional vacation of two week except for the regular vacation and the affair of introduction of social insurance such as issue of ***medical*** aid and payment subsidy according to the loss of the labour ability and death.

After promulgation of the labour law, PPCNK intensified the supervision and control for the enforcement of labour law while making people understand advanced content of the labour law and its enormous significance.

So the Labour Law was enacted and enforced in the whole region of north Korea in a short period of time.

After that as the situation developed several regulation that materialized and developed the law were established

Thanks to the democratic labour law, all the Korean workers and office workers could be free from the severe and forced colonial labour and gain the genuine and democratic freedom and rights. And fundamental change was made in their works and lives and the dramatic development was accomplished in the construction of new fatherland.

? Gender Equality Legislation

In the past, the Korean women were ill-treated and regarded with contempt domestically and socially for a long time due to the idea of predominance of men over women. Especially situation under the colonial rule of Japanese imperialist were miserable and tearful indeed.

Japanese imperialists forced great number of Korean women and let work hard like beast of burden in the caves and wire entanglements in ***manufacturing*** war supplies. They even committed all kinds of atrocities such as forcibly drafting women to the war and to serve as sex slaves.

The number of Korean women who lost their youth and lives due to inhuman oppression, exploitation and unbearable acts of manly insults, was countless.

Out of this, legal confirmation and complete guarantee of women's rights had been one of the essential issues in democracy in society and democratic human rights mechanism the after liberation.

Law for Gender Equality was established by enactment of several laws and regulations on the equality between men and women.

On July 30, 1946, PPCNK promulgated decision No. 54 "Law on Gender Equality in north Korea" to abolish the remnants of Japanese Imperialist colony and reform the feudal relation between men and women and let them to participate to the social life including politics, economy and culture.

Law declared that Korean women who were forsaken from the world and lived under the ill-treatment and contempt had equal rights with men in all fields of social life including political, economic and cultural life.

First of all, law for gender equality granted equal political freedom and rights with men.

By this law, women could participate in the election of all levels and had the right to vote and to be elected.

Also it regulated women had rights on same labour like men and rights of education.

This was the popular regulation which liberated them from the colonial labour life and absence of rights of education and guaranteed the equal stands with men in the economic life and made them to be creators of science and culture and enjoyers of it.

It regulated age of marriage, rights of free marriage and divorce, rights to claim the expense of bringing up a child and rights to inherit of assets and land equal with men. It also regulated to prohibit polygyny, feudal traditional customs which infringed the human rights such as the slave trade, licensed prostitute, unlicensed prostitute and professional entertainer system.

The promulgation of the law for gender equality was the century-old declaration of women's liberty that realize the earnest desire of Korean women who tried to abolish the old wicked customs of predominance of men over women handed down for thousands of years and look forward the equal stands and rights with men.

PPCNK adopted the decision No. 78 of PPCNK "Detailed Regulations to Enforcement of Law for Gender Equality" (September 14, 1946) for the strict enforcement of law for equality between men and women.

Decision regulated in detail every provision relevant to the rights which could be demonstrated in actual life.

By establishment of the law for equality between men and women, all kinds of colonial and middle-aged wicked evils were thoroughly abolished which violated the human rights of Korean women for a long time. Women could also exercise the equal rights with men in the socio-political life and family life and the legal guarantees were made that could respect and protect the dignity and human rights of the Koreans.

Lots of laws and regulation were enacted and enforced to guarantee the democratic freedom and rights to people in social life including science, education and public health and the domestic measures were taken in relations with the laws.

? Legalization of Democratic Human Rights Mechanisms by virtue of the Constitution

The DPRK Constitution was adopted with the founding of the DPRK in September 1948.

The Constitution integrated the democratic freedom and rights granted and ensured to people through individual law and regulations.

Declaring the equal rights of citizens in all spheres of social life, the Constitution stipulated, first of all, the rights in the political sphere including the right to elect and to be elected, freedom of speech, press, assembly, demonstration, mass meeting, association, religion and holding of religious ceremonies as well as the right to organize and join political parties, public organizations and other institutions.

This was the legal expression of political independence of people as the fundamental freedom and rights attained in the sphere of socio-political life.

The constitution also stipulated the rights of the working people in the sphere of economic life; the right to equal pay for equal labour, the right to material assistance through social insurance system and the right to management of small- and middle-size trade and industry.

The Constitution specified the rights in the sphere of social life; the right to compulsory primary education and education in college and university at the state expense, the right to protection of marriage and family, the right to inviolability of the person, the right to submission of complaints and petitions.

The Constitution also stipulated the right of asylum and the equal rights of minority citizens.

Rights and freedom of citizens as specified in the Constitution were mere legalization of what the people living in the northern half of Korea were already enjoying, since citizens as the masters of the country and society were entitled to such rights and freedom.

Rights and freedom of citizens specified in the Constitution were the practical rights and freedom which were guaranteed politically by the state power, materially by the successes of democratic reform of economy, legally by the individual laws and regulations.

With the adoption of the Constitution, the issue of fundamental law, which is most important in the human rights mechanism, was settled satisfactorily, laying legislative foundations for the human rights laws and their further development in an integral form.

Since the adoption of the Constitution, the limitations of individual human rights laws were overcome and the human rights laws and regulations defining the social relations of the same field were systematized in integrated context according to a certain standard.

At the same time, great efforts were made to improve and perfect the human rights mechanism by adopting sectoral codes such as the Law on Establishment of Tribunals, Penal Code, Laws of Criminal Procedures, etc.

As a result, the democratic human rights mechanism was established basically in the DPRK.

The establishment of democratic human rights mechanism was the epoch-making landmark in the course of development of human rights law to guarantee the independent right of popular masses.

It also provided practical answers to the countries which achieved national independence from colonial or semi-colonial rule of imperialism and began construction of new society on how to enact and enforce the human rights laws and regulations.

(3) Democratic Human Rights Mechanisms in the Wartime

The Korean War (June 25, 1950-July 27, 1953) provoked by the US brought the Korean people untold sufferings and calamities.

The brutal air bombing and artillery shelling by the US severely destroyed factories and enterprises, and turned urban and rural areas into ruins.

In the period of strategic temporary retreat during the Korean War, the US massacred the innocent people indiscriminately, destroyed and burned down hundreds of thousands of houses, a large number of schools, hospitals, factories and enterprises, set the tax-in-kind stores and peasants' rice stacks on fire and plundered a large amount of food and livestock.

The war deteriorated the people' livelihood drastically and produced many war victims and orphans.

However, the people' livelihood was relatively stable during the 3-year war period, and there was not a single case of death due to starvation or cold other than those killed by the US indiscriminate and brutal air bombing and artillery shelling.

This is the precious fruition of the people-oriented policies and efforts of the DPRK Government which paid deep attention to the people' life, health and the stability of their livelihood, and maintained and developed the democratic human rights mechanisms even in the wartime.

?Maintaining Human Rights Mechanisms

The history of world wars spans thousands of years but it is the Korean War only, in which human rights mechanisms for the people were defended and people' livelihood stabilized even in the severe circumstances of war.

As the wartime ordinances take strict and legal sanctions against the slightest behavior of violating the labour discipline or laying down weapons and deserting the battlefield, it has been recognized that they generally slight the protection of people' s life and health, and the people's livelihood in particular.

For this reason, it has become unavoidable that human rights mechanisms in peace time are either abolished or reduced to a mere name in wartime, the consequences of which were factories, hospitals, schools, houses burnt to ashes, countless refugees and orphans, deterioration of people' lives.

Providing necessary human and material resources to the front and preventing disturbance of the rear were the only things that mattered.

However, the DPRK Government regarded the protection of people' s lives and the stabilization of their livelihood as the most important nationwide work and an important mission of the wartime ordinances.

From such viewpoint and attitude, the DPRK Government has taken people-oriented legal measures such as the enactment and enforcement of legislation to ensure the rights of people in the circumstances of war, which other countries couldn't imagine even in peacetime.

For example, according to such legislation as the Cabinet decisions "Decision on the relief measures for war victims (November 20,1950) and "Decision on the measures for stabilization of people's livelihood in the Fatherland Liberation War"(January 25,1951), camps for war victims and orphans, old people's homes and orphanages were set up, food and shelter provided, and all convenience offered through public catering and commercial networks.

Several legislation, such as the Cabinet decisions "On lending working food to calamity-stricken peasants"(March 13,1952) and "On measures to provide houses to workers and officers"(September 2,1952), provided the poor and calamity-stricken peasants with conditions for living and production and those who lost their jobs in the war with settled jobs, stabilized the lives of the workers and officers and raised their income.

Along with the measures to stabilize people's material life, many legislation on education and culture were enacted and enforced for the stability of their cultural life.

Thanks to such legal measures for the protection of people's life and health and the stabilization of their livelihood, no one died of hunger or was left homeless in severe war circumstances, and the children kept on studying without any interruption.

The people-oriented legal measures played an effective role in giving full play to the people's strength and wisdom in their struggle for victory in the war.

? Evolution of Human Rights Mechanisms

Democratic human rights mechanisms of the DPRK were not at a standstill during the wartime but developed further in expectation of victory.

One good example is the free ***medical*** care system enforced in wartime .

The state's measure to enforce universal free ***medical*** care system at its expense is the most popular public health policy.

It was not just an administrative affair but an important political work of realizing the long-cherished desire of the people and bringing earlier victory in the war.

It was by no means easy to enforce the universal free ***medical*** care system at state expense during the time of war decisive to the destiny of the country.

For the successful enforcement of free ***medical*** care system, a state should appropriate huge fund to public health and provide necessary material conditions. At that time, the DPRK was short of fund, and all ***medical*** facilities built in the post-liberation period have been completely destroyed in the war.

However, the DPRK Government was firmly determined to enforce the universal free ***medical*** care system for the protection of people's life and health despite the heavy state burden and many obstacles arising in the war, and adopted the Cabinet Decision No. 203 on the enforcement of the universal free ***medical*** care system at state expense on November 11, 1952.

This Cabinet decision stipulated that the ***medical*** treatment and ***medicine*** at state-owned ***medical*** treatment and prevention institutions shall be provided free of charge to both in-patients and out-patients, and that Korean People's Army ***medical*** treatment and prevention establishments shall also offer universal free ***medical*** care to ordinary people.

According to the Cabinet decision, the free ***medical*** care system was introduced for the first time in history from November 1, 1953 .

The universal free ***medical*** care system enforced in the fierce flames of Fatherland Liberation War is characteristic in that all citizens of the country were provided access to free ***medical*** care without discrimination.

The universal free ***medical*** care system enforced in the grim days of the war is the culmination and fruition of the love for the people shown by the DPRK Government which spares nothing for the protection of people's life and health.

(4) Establishment of Socialist Human Rights Mechanisms

?Adoption of the Socialist Constitution

With the successful fulfilment of postwar rehabilitation and socialist revolution and the dynamic acceleration of socialist construction, socialist relations of production held undivided sway, and the collectivist character prevailed in all spheres of social life.

Against this background, the DPRK was faced with the task of fully legalizing the rights and freedom to be enjoyed by the people in socialist society, and of establishing the socialist human rights mechanisms.

The 1948 Constitution and the democratic human rights legislation could not correctly reflect the newly developed socialist relations as they were mere consolidation of victory and achievements gained in the struggle to eliminate remnants of the Japanese colonial rule and feudal customs and provide the people with the democratic rights and freedom.

For this reason, it was necessary to consolidate the achievements gained in the socialist construction and establish the human rights mechanisms to provide and promote the rights in reflection of the newly-developed socialist human relations in socialist society.

The adoption of the Socialist Constitution is highly significant for establishing the socialist human rights mechanisms.

It is because the Socialist Constitution, as a fundamental mother law, regulates all spheres of state and social life, and indicates the direction and sets criteria in the framing of other legislation.

All the laws in socialist law system are enacted in keeping with the requirements of the Socialist Constitution, and the Constitution and all sector-specific laws based on it build the framework of the law system.

The DPRK adopted the "Socialist Constitution of the DPRK" in December, 1972, at the First Session of the Fifth Supreme People's Assembly.

With regard to the fundamental rights of citizens, the Constitution elucidated the principle of collectivism on which the rights and duties of the DPRK citizens were based, and specified that the State would effectively guarantee genuine democratic rights and liberties as well as the material and cultural well-being of all its citizens, and that the rights and freedom of citizens would be amplified with the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

The Constitution stipulated the rights of citizens in the sphere of political life including the right to elect and to be elected and the freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, demonstration, association, religious beliefs, complaints, petitions, etc.

The Constitution also stipulated the rights of citizens in the sphere of economic and cultural life including the right to work, rest, free ***medical*** care and education, and the freedom of scientific, literary and artistic pursuits, etc.

The Constitution stipulated the rights of the people in need of special protection of the state and society, social status and rights of women equal to men, protection of marriage and family, inviolability of the person and the home, privacy of correspondence, legal protection of Korean nationals abroad, the right of asylum, etc.

\* The basic rights of citizens stipulated in the Socialist Constitution are explained in details in page 40.

The Socialist Constitution fully reflected the interests and demands of workers, peasants, soldiers, working intellectuals and thoroughly defended their interests, legally guaranteeing all conditions to ensure genuine freedom and rights of all citizens in every sphere of social life.

The adoption of the Socialist Constitution was not only an epoch-making event of historic significance in the revolutionary struggle and construction work of Korean People but also marked a milestone in the establishment and development of socialist human rights mechanisms.

? Establishment of Sector-specific Human Rights Mechanisms

Following the adoption of the Socialist Constitution, the DPRK was faced with the task of adopting and revising the sector-specific human rights laws and their detailed regulations in keeping with the requirements of the Constitution.

The human rights laws of the socialist society are branched into distinctive sections of laws according to their specific characteristics, and these are linked organically together to form the integral system.

Sector-specific human rights mechanisms are based on such sectoral human rights laws.

The overall adoption and revision of sectoral human rights laws on the basis of the Socialist Constitution was not only a requirement of the socialist lawmaking but also an inevitable necessity in view of the reality of the DPRK where the socialist construction embarked on a new phase of development.

At that time the Socialist Constitution, the basic law that regulated all state and social activities and laid down the fundamental rights and duties of citizens, has been adopted but many sectoral human rights laws were not passed yet, while the existing sectoral laws did not meet the developing requirements of the socialist society.

Although the adoption of the Socialist Constitution was a great historic event in the Korean revolution and in the social and political life of the Korean people, it alone could not substitute for various codes of conducts in all spheres of social life.

For this reason, the DPRK eliminated all outmoded remnants of capitalism in the human rights laws and regulations, and enacted and enforced new socialist human rights laws, thus establishing the sector-specific human rights mechanism, that is, the sectoral-specific human rights law system.

The following are the typical laws that are significant in the establishment of sectoral human rights mechanism.

- Law on the Enforcement of the Universal 11-Year Compulsory Education System

The basic aim of educational policy of the DPRK was to develop general education, improve and strengthen the popular educational system, and train a large number of technical cadres.

In particular, the introduction of compulsory education system in the field of general education was of great significance in ensuring the working people's right to learn.

Despite the postwar difficulties, the DPRK introduced the universal compulsory primary education system in 1956, the universal compulsory secondary education system in 1958, and based on earlier successes, passed the law on the introduction of universal 9-year compulsory technical education system in 1966.

For the enforcement of this law , a dynamic struggle was launched to strengthen the material and technical foundations of schools, build up the ranks of competent teachers , improve the contents and methods of education, increase the term of education, and establish the education system of correspondence course and evening schools.

As a result, all preparations for the enforcement of the universal 11-year compulsory education system had been made to give the new generation the highest level of general education before and after the adoption of the Socialist Constitution.

Keeping up with developing realities, the law "On the introduction of Universal 10-Year Compulsory High Education and Compulsory 1-year Preschool Education" was adopted at the Second Session of the Fifth Supreme People's Assembly on April 9, 1973.

This law declared that the universal 11-year compulsory education system would be introduced from 1972-1973 school years.

With the adoption of the law on the introduction of universal 11-year compulsory education, all the rising generations were granted the right to learn at state expense.

This far surpassed the standard set by the international human rights instruments including the international convention on economic, social, and cultural rights which stipulated that primary education should be compulsory.

The DPRK first introduced the universal 11-year compulsory education system in September 1972 and fully enforced it from September, 1975.

The 11-year compulsory education system has now developed into the 12-year compulsory education system under the law adopted at the Sixth Session of the Twelfth Supreme People' Assembly in September 2012.

- Law on the Abolishment of the Taxation System.

After the liberation, DPRK regulated and enforced the single popular taxation system.

Since then, it systematically took legislative measures for the improvement of taxation system in a way of reducing tax, and took the historic measure of completely abolishing the system of ***agricultural*** tax in kind in the period of overall socialist construction

The DPRK has the unique system of socialist production. Thanks to the system, the DPRK could fully afford the necessary funds for the economic and cultural construction, improvement of people's livelihood, and the state management with the income of socialist state-run enterprises and cooperative organizations

In this circumstance, it was not necessary to maintain any longer the taxation system, the legacy of the old society.

Therefore, the state adopted the law "On the Complete Abolition of Taxation System" on March 21, 1974.

Under the condition that the system of ***agricultural*** tax in kind had been abolished, the overall abolition of taxation system was to let the workers and officers free from tax once and for all.

That's why the law completely abolished the small amount of tax paid by workers and officers.

The decision of the Administration Council (now Cabinet) for the correct enforcement of law on the complete abolition of taxation system was adopted on March 30, 1974.

The law and decision on abolishing the taxation system turned DPRK into a tax-free country for the first time in history and firmly guaranteed the realization of the historic cause of completely freeing the Korean people from tax burdens.

- Law on the Establishment of the Tribunals and Civil Procedures Law

The Law on the Establishment of Tribunals adopted in November, 1976 is a sector-specific code which regulates the duties and competences of courts and other relevant organizations participating in the judicial activities, their organization and principles of activities, working procedures and methods by correctly embodying the state's judicial policy and the constitutional principles of judgment

The Law on the Establishment of Tribunals has become the powerful legal weapon with which to protect the people's sovereign and socialist system, citizen's legitimate rights, life and properties from all sorts of infringements, enables all the state organs, enterprises, social cooperative organizations to correctly abide by the state law, and to wage an active struggle against all sorts of criminals.

The newly adopted Civil Procedures Acts (enacted at the same time as the law on the establishment of tribunals) consists of fundamentals of civil proceedings, general regulations, jurisdiction, litigators, evidence, litigation, judicial preparations and hearing, judgment and decision, second trial, extraordinary appeal, retrial, and the execution of judgment and decision.

The adoption of the Civil Procedures Acts provided legal guarantee for the smooth settlement of civil cases in accordance with the socialist principles, the requirements and interests of the people.

-Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children and Land Law

The law on nursing and upbringing of children was adopted at the Sixth Session of the Fifth Supreme People's Assembly on April 29, 1976, as it was necessary to legally confirm the brilliant achievements gained in DPRK to nurse and educate children, and to further strengthen and develop this work.

The law on nursing and upbringing of children was the first sector-specific code of the DPRK that regulated the main systems in the field of nursing and upbringing of children.

The law on nursing and upbringing of children is the most popular one that guarantees the equal and impartial nursing and education of children at the expense of state and society, and at the same time, the most advanced one that guarantees the scientific and cultural nursing and upbringing of children.

The land-law adopted at the Seventh Session of the Fifth Supreme People's Assembly on April 29, 1977, not only clearly defined the land ownership but also defined such issues as its important contents; the issue of doing planned land development as required by the master-plan for land development, of launching the nationwide and countrywide movement for land conservation and protection, of actively improving the paddy and dry fields and making an effective use of them, and so on.

Land law, a legalized land program of DPR Korea, was of significance in bringing about a great change in the development, protection, and management of land and improving the people's living environment.

?. Socialist Labour Law and Public Health Law

The DPRK adopted a new socialist labour law (April 18, 1978) which legally confirmed the achievements gained in the process of implementing the democratic labour law and the government's labour policy and contained the principles and requirements of socialist working life.

The Labour Law proclaimed after the liberation was a democratic labour law to liberate the workers from colonial and feudal exploitations and oppressions but the socialist labour law is the new one which regulated the socialist working relationship to provide the independent and creative working life to the working people emancipated from the exploitations and oppressions.

The DPRK adopted the Public Health Law at the Fourth Session of the Sixth Supreme people's assembly on April 3, 1980, to legally confirm the proud achievements gained in the most superior socialist health system and the field of public health, and develop the work of public health to a new higher stage as required by the developing reality.

The Public Health Law comprehensively regulated all the problems related to the public health services such as the basic principle of public health, complete and universal ***medical*** care system, health protection by the prophylactic policy, Juche-oriented ***medical*** science and technology, material supply to the work of public health, health workers, the true servants of people, public health establishments, their guidance and management and so on.

The Public Health Law firmly guaranteed the complete realization of the Korean people's desire to enjoy a long life in good health by further consolidating and developing the socialist health system and boosting up the public health services to a new higher stage.

In addition to this, DPRK launched a dynamic struggle to enact and enforce the several sector-specific laws for the guarantee of people's freedom and rights.

As the Socialist Constitution was adopted, and on the basis of it, sector-specific human rights laws were enacted and enforced, the socialist human rights mechanisms were fully established to make a big progress in promoting and protecting people's freedom and rights.

(5) Consolidation of the Socialist Human Rights Mechanisms

?Adherence to the Socialist Human Rights Mechanisms

The fall of Berlin wall, the symbol of Cold War between the East and West in November 1989, led to the collapse of socialism in several countries of East Europe, and eventually the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The western countries described this event as the victory of bourgeois human rights system over socialist human rights system, and viciously undertook the anti-socialist human rights offensive as never before.

In particular, the US, wielding their human rights standard and concept of value, launched a frantic anti-socialist, anti-DPRK human rights campaign to orchestrate what was done in other countries in the DPRK that legally guarantees the independent rights of the popular masses.

The prevailing situation raised as an urgent task the issue of adhering to DPRK sovereignty and the socialist human rights mechanisms by further enhancing the functions and roles of laws to cope with the frantic anti-DPRK and anti-socialist manoeuvres of imperialists and reactionaries.

For this reason, the DPRK conducted the work of further strengthening the functions of people's democratic dictatorship and increasing the nation's defence capabilities in every way.

The important thing here is that the state structure has been turned into the one of attaching importance to national defence.

At the Third Session of the 9th Supreme People's Assembly held in 1992, the Socialist Constitution was amended and supplemented for the first time to separate the national defence commission from the Central People' Committee, and upgraded it to DPRK National Defence Commission and put it before the Central People' Committee.

And the legal status of the National Defence Commission was stipulated to be the top military guidance organization of state power.

Since then, the supreme leadership of national defence exercised by the Central People' Committee has been handed over to the DPRK National Defence Commission.

At the First Session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly held in 1998, the Socialist Constitution was again amended and supplemented to newly readjust and improve the state machinery as required by Songun era, and regulated the status of the national defence commission as the supreme military leading organization and the general national defence management organization.

Therefore, the legal status of the national defence commission has been enhanced as never before and the mechanism that legally guarantees the realization of Songun politics has been established.

After that, the Socialist Constitution was again amended to create the independent chapter "Chairman of the DPRK National Defence Commission" in which his legal status, term of office, duty and authority have been clearly regulated, and to declare that the political guidance system of the DPRK is the state machinery of attaching importance to national defence headed by the chairman of the national defence commission.

Such constitutional regulation of the machinery of attaching importance to the national defence has remained unchanged in the constitutional amendment in April, 2012 which regulated the first chairman of the national defence commission.

The overall regulation of machinery of increasing the national defence capabilities in the Socialist Constitution has provided the firm machinery and legal guarantee which can strengthen the national defence capabilities against the US military manoeuvres to stifle DPRK and maintain and develop the human rights law system.

Along with the establishment of state machinery of attaching importance to the national defence commission through the Socialist Constitution, the DPRK conducted the work of enacting and enforcing the legislation to further strengthen the struggle against anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary crimes and to overcome the non-socialist practices.

The DPRK adopted the "DPRK Criminal Law" as a decision No. 6 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 15, 1990.

New criminal law of the DPRK further strengthened the struggle against the anti-socialist crimes in keeping with the new conditions and environment of prevailing situation and class struggle.

As a result, the DPRK waged an intensive legal struggle against all sorts of hostile elements that were attempting to allure people to the world of degeneration, dissoluteness and crimes, and to overthrow the socialist system in the end.

And it further strengthened the struggle against the non-socialist practices such as illegalities and corruptions, delinquent behaviours, gambling taking place in the country, while thoroughly frustrating the ideological and cultural infiltrations and psychological smear campaign of the US to ideologically disrupt the country from within.

With these legal measures, the DPRK could foil the anti-DPRK, anti-socialist manoeuvres of the US and its followers defend and adhere to the socialist human rights mechanisms and give full play to its advantage.

? Full-fledged Mechanism of the Socialist Human Rights

The DPRK not only defended the socialist human rights mechanisms but also dynamically pushed ahead the work of improving and perfecting according to the people's independent demands and developing reality.

The work of perfecting the socialist human rights system was mainly conducted in the way of enacting the new sectoral human rights laws or revising and supplementing some regulations.

The sectoral laws, the main contents of which were about satisfying the people's material and cultural demands, were enacted in the way of regulating the new human rights fields and enriching the contents of existing human rights law system.

Several laws such as the ***Medical*** Care Law (December 1997) were enacted and enforced so that the people could enjoy ***medical*** treatment of preventing diseases, relieved from the worries of flood and disease, under the free ***medical*** care system, and live in a more hygienic living conditions.

Several laws on the legal protection of the rights of individuals who has contributed to the development of science and technology such as the Invention Law(May, 1998) were enacted and enforced to successfully establish the legal system of guaranteeing the intellectual property rights, one of the main contents in the international guarantee of human rights.

The Law on Work Norms (December, 2009) and the Law on the Labour Protection (July, 2010), further detailed Socialist Labour Law, were enacted and enforced as independent laws so that they could realize exact labour remuneration according to its quality and quantity, provide safer and more hygienic and cultural working conditions to the working people, and creditably protect and promote their life and health.

By adopting the law on the universal 12-year compulsory education system in November 2012 and codifying it in the Socialist Constitution and the related, all students could acquire the general basic knowledge and modern technical knowledge, and the secondary general education could be further completed.

The enactment and enforcement of several laws such as the Law on the Protection of the Elderly (April, 2007) ensured the legal and smooth settlement of the issue of guaranteeing the rights of the specific group, an important component of the human rights mechanisms.

Together with the enactment and enforcement of sectoral human rights laws, the revision and supplement of existing human rights laws was actively pushed forward.

From the mid-1990's, many human rights laws were revised and supplemented in reflection of the changing reality and people's growing demands for human rights under the slogan "Serve the People".

Many human rights laws were revised and supplemented in 1999 alone.

The human rights mechanisms of the DPRK which have been formed and developed in the 70-year-long history is a superior system that thoroughly and practically guarantees the people's human rights in all fields of social life including politics, economy and culture.

The formation and development process of the human rights mechanisms in the DPRK have following characteristics: it has embodied the Juche character and national identity and has been formed and developed in reflection of the people's independent desire and demands, the socialist nature has been strengthened in its composition and whole contents, and it has become more concretized in detail in keeping with the development of social life, and developed in the way of further guaranteeing its realization.

The human rights mechanisms are a great result of the efforts of the Korean people as masters, and at the same time, the precious wealth that cannot be ruined as it has deeply rooted in the life of Korean people as their destinies.

4) Human Rights Mechanisms in the DPRK

Human rights, which are guaranteed and realized in each state as a unit, call for the well-organized legal and organizational guarantee of the state.

The well-regulated legal and organizational system in the DPRK defends guarantees and promotes the human rights, the independent rights of the popular masses, on the basis of Juche idea, the genuine idea of defending human rights.

The human rights mechanisms established in DPRK consist of the Constitution and its human rights law system, the mechanism for the ensurance of human rights, and the system of human rights education at large.

(1) Ensurance of Human Rights by the Constitution

The Socialist Constitution of the DPRK widely regulates the state management principles in the fields of politics, economy, culture to defend and promote the human rights, the independent rights of the people, the basic rights and obligations to be possessed and exercised by the citizens, and the state mechanism that guarantees their realization.

The Constitution serves as the fundamental state law that gives the direction and standards in the framing of laws and regulations related to human rights.

?Adoption and Amendment Procedure of the Socialist Constitution

The first constitution of DPRK was first adopted at the First Session of the Supreme People's Assembly on September 8, 1948, and it was the people's democratic constitution.

The Socialist Constitution of DPRK was adopted at the First Session of the Fifth Supreme People's Assembly on December 27, 1972.

The constitution adopted in 1972 reflected the achievements gained in the DPRK socialist revolution and construction, and formed a system (11 chapters, 149 articles) of regulations on the fundamental principles to be adhered to in the field of politics, economy, and culture, the basic rights and duties of citizens, the composition and missions of state organs in the socialist society.

The constitution adopted in 1972 was amended and supplemented to have seven chapters and 171 articles at the Third Session of the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly on April 9, 1992, to have the preamble, seven chapters and 166 articles at the First Session of the Tenth Supreme People's Assembly on September 5, 1998, and to have the preamble, seven chapters and 172 articles at the First Session of the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly on April 9, 2009.

Afterwards, it was again amended and supplemented at the Second Session of the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly on April 9, 2010, at the Fifth Session of the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly on April 13, 2012, and at the Seventh Session of the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly on April 1, 2013.

The existing DPRK Socialist Constitution, which was amended and supplemented several times in keeping with the requirements of changed circumstance and developing reality, consists of preamble, Chapter 1 Politics (Articles 1-18), Chapter 2 Economy (Articles 19-38),Chapter 3 Culture (Articles 39-57) Chapter4 Defence (Articles 58-61), Chapter 5 Basic rights and duties of citizens (Articles 62-86), Chapter 6 State mechanism(Articles 87-168), Chapter 7 National emblem, flag, anthem, capital(Articles 169-172).

The DPRK Socialist Constitution, as a people-oriented constitution possessed of peculiar system and content, serves as the firm legal guarantee in the work of accelerating the building of socialist thriving nation, realizing the independent and peaceful reunification of the country, developing the state relations, and defending and promoting the people's human rights.

? Contents and Characteristics of Human Rights-related Provisions in the Socialist Constitution

\* The state mechanisms regulated in the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK are on pages 53-56

- Principles for Ensuring Human Rights

The Socialist Constitution, which regulates the state management principles in the field of politics, economy, culture and national defence from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4, basically set the principled matters including the policies, conditions, and measures for the guarantee of human rights in these chapters.

The typical examples in the field of politics are as follows.

The Sovereignty of the DPRK resides in the workers, peasants, working intellectuals and all other working people. The working people exercise power through their representative organs-the Supreme People's Assembly and local People's Assemblies at all levels. (Article 4)

The organs of State power at all levels, from the country People's Assembly to the Supreme People's Assembly, are elected on the principle of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. (Article 6)

The social system of the DPRK is a people-centred system under which the working people are the masters of everything and everything in society serves the working people. The State shall defend and protect the interests of the workers, peasants, working intellectuals. (Article 8)

The DPRK shall champion the democratic national rights, of Koreans overseas and their rights recognized by the international law as well as their interests. (Article 15)

The DPRK shall guarantee the legal rights and interests of foreigners in its region. (Article 16)

The State shall promote unity with the world public defending independence and opposing all forms of aggression and interference. (Article 17, Paragraph 3)

The law of the DPRK reflects the wishes and interests of the working people and is a basic instrument of State administration.

Respect for the law and its strict adherence and execution is the duty of all institutions, enterprises, organizations and citizens.

The State shall perfect the system of socialist law and promote the socialist law-abiding life. (Article 18)

The completion of socialist legal system includes the one of legal system to guarantee human rights.

The typical examples in the field of economy are as follows.

The ownership of the state, social cooperative organizations and the individuals are regulated and protected. (Article 21, 22, 24)

The State shall protect private property and guarantee the right to inherit it by law. (Article 24, Paragraph 4)

The DPRK regards the steady improvement of the material and cultural standards of the people as the supreme principle of its activities.

The increasing material wealth of society in our country, where taxes have been abolished, is used entirely to promote the well-being of the working people.

The State shall provide all working people with every condition for obtaining food, clothing and housing. (Article 25)

Working people should be freed from difficult, tiresome labour and to narrow down the distinctions between physical and mental labour. (Article 27, Paragraph 2).

The State shall undertake, at its own expense, the building of production facilities for the cooperative farms and modern houses in the countryside. (Article 28, Paragraph 2)

Labour in the DPRK is the independent and creative labour of the working people, freed from exploitation and oppression. (Article 29, Paragraph 2)

The working day shall be eight hours. The length of the working day shall be reduced by the State in arduous trades and other special categories of work. (Article 30, Paragraph 1, 2)

In the DPRK, the minimum working age is 16 years (Article 31)

The national economy of the DPRK is a planned economy. The State shall draw up and implement the plans for the development of national economy in accordance with the laws of socialist economic development so that the balance of accumulation and consumption can be maintained correctly, economic construction accelerated, the people's living standards steadily raised and the nation's defence capability strengthened. (Article 34, Paragraph 2)

The typical examples in the field of culture are as follows.

The DPRK shall make the whole of society intellectual. (Article 40)

In building a socialist national culture, the State shall oppose the cultural infiltration of imperialism and any tendency to return to the past, protect its national cultural heritage, and develop it in keeping with the existing socialist situation. (Article 41, Paragraph 2)

The State shall develop universal compulsory 12-year education. (Article 45)

The State shall train competent technicians and experts by enhancing the regular educational system as well as different forms of study while working. (Article 46)

The State shall provide education to all pupils and students free of charge and grant allowances to students of universities and colleges. (Article 47)

The State shall maintain all children of preschool age in creches and kindergartens at State and public expenses. (Article 49)

The State shall provide sufficient modern cultural facilities. (Article 53)

The State shall protect people's lives and improve the working people's health by consolidating and developing the system of universal free ***medical*** service and improving the district doctor system and the system of preventive ***medicine***. (Article 56)

The State shall adopt measures to protect the environment in preference to production, preserve and promote the natural environment and prevent environmental pollution so as to provide the people with a hygienic environment and working conditions. (Article 57)

The mission of the armed forces of the DPRK is to safeguard the interests of the working people, to defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution from aggression and to protect the freedom, independence and peace of the country. (Article 59)

If these constitutional regulations (typical examples were given) are put together, they provide visual evidence how concrete, realistic, and wonderful policies, conditions, and measures (some of them directly regulated the human rights) have been taken by DPRK, the people-centred socialist system.

And the situation of DPRK itself in which the genuine human rights are guaranteed proves the validity and their realization.

- Basic Rights of Citizens Stipulated in the Constitution

The DPRK Socialist Constitution set an independent chapter and regulates the citizen's basic rights.

It is divided into the political and civil rights, socio-economic and cultural rights, and the rights of specific group at large.

The political and civil rights are as follows:

The right to elect and be elected (Article 66)

The right to freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, demonstration and association. (Article 67)

The freedom of religious beliefs (Article 68)

The right of complaints and petitions (Article 69)

Inviolability of personal liberty and home and privacy of correspondence (Article 79)

The right of freedom of residence and travel (Article 75)

The right to protection of marriage and family (Article 78)

The socio-economic and cultural rights are as follows:

The right to work (Article 70)

The right to rest (Article 71)

The right to free ***medical*** care and social security (Article 72)

The right to education (Article 73)

The right to freedom in scientific, literary and artistic pursuits (Article 74)

The rights of specific groups are as follows:

The people who have made contributions to the country and people have the right to special care of the state and society (Article 76)

Equal social status and rights with men (Article 77, Paragraph 1)

The right of mothers and children to get special protection. (Article 77, Paragraph 2)

The DPRK shall grant the right of asylum to foreign nationals persecuted for struggling peace and democracy, national independence and socialism or for the freedom of scientific and cultural pursuits. (Article 80)

- Characteristics of Basic Rights Stipulated in the Constitution

Citizen's basic rights regulated in the Socialist Constitution have its inherent characteristics that are distinguished from the other countries' constitutions.

In the first place, it is the concrete rights that should be possessed and exercised in all fields of state and social life.

As mentioned above, the rights in the Constitution mainly included the rights that should be possessed and exercised by the citizens in all field of social life including politics, economy, and culture.

At the same time, the concrete and principled problems in the guarantee and exercise of every right have been defined.

For example, unlike the constitutions of other countries which gives general definitions to the right to elect, the Article 66 of DPR Korea's constitution regulates as follows: all the citizens who have reached the age of 17 have the right to elect and be elected, irrespective of sex, race, occupation, length of residence, property status, education, party affiliation, political views or religion; the citizens serving in the armed forces also have the right to elect and to be elected. A person who has been disenfranchised by a Court decision and a person legally certified insane do not have the right to elect or to be elected.

For another example, Article 70 of the constitution regulates as follows: the citizens have the right to work; all able-bodied citizens choose occupations in accordance with their wishes and skills and provided with stable jobs and working conditions. Citizens work according to their abilities and are paid in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work.

And these rights are equally and practically provided to every body.

Human rights, in detail, are granted, guaranteed, and protected by the state law.

The regulation of citizen's basic rights by the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK means that the state has granted such rights to all the citizens, and it has the basic legal guarantee to practically provide such rights.

The Socialist Constitution that reflects the independent desire and demand of the entire people, the masters of state and society, is the law adopted by their unanimous will.

Therefore, the basic rights regulated in the Socialist Constitution are equally and practically granted and provided to anybody if he/she is a citizen of DPR Korea.

The Paragraph 1, Article 64 of the DPRK Socialist Constitution clearly regulates that the state shall effectively guarantee genuine democratic rights and liberties as well as the material and cultural well-being of all its citizens.

And in the next place, these rights are constantly extended with the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

The range and content of the citizen's basic rights regulated in the Constitution are further extended by the DPRK government's consistent policy, provision of conditions, and measures to protect and promote the human rights.

For example, the right to enjoy the benefit of social security services is further guaranteed by the free ***medical*** care system and the increasing number of hospitals and sanatoriums, and the citizen's right to get education is further extended thanks to the development of advanced educational system and the people-oriented educational policy.

To mention other examples, the rights of mothers and children to get special protection are further guaranteed and extended by the increasing network of nurseries and kindergartens, and other policies.

Such contents themselves are included in the articles and clauses of the constitution (for example; Article 72, Article 77) that regulate the citizen's basic rights , and the Paragraph 2, Article 64, regulates that in the DPRK, the rights and freedom of citizens shall be amplified with the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

(2) The System of Human Rights Laws

The well-organized law system is established in DPRK to guarantee the people's human rights.

?Laws on the State Power

Included in this group of laws are the election laws of deputies to the people's assembly at all levels, the laws on the local power organs, nationality law, the law on complaints and petition and so on.

The DPRK election law of deputies to the people's assembly at all levels, which regulated the principles, procedures, and methods to be kept in this regard was adopted by Decision No. 24 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on October 7, 1992, and was revised and supplemented in 1998 and in 2010.

This law is the people-oriented election law which contributes to giving free scope to socialist democracy in the election and making people the masters of power organs.

The DPRK law on the local power organs, the purpose of which is to provide people with genuine democratic rights, freedom and happy material and cultural life by strengthening the local power organs and enhancing their functions and roles, was adopted by Decision No. 12 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 19, 1974, and was revised and supplemented 5 times.

The DPRK nationality law, which regulates the terms (acquisition, change and renouncing of nationality) for becoming DPRK Citizen, contributes to guaranteeing the legal status of DPRK citizens, especially those overseas, and protecting and promoting their rights.

This law was adopted by Decree No. 242 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on October 9, 1963, and was revised and supplemented in 1995, and in 1999.

The DPRK law on complaints and petitions, which, on the basis of the relevant article of the Constitution, regulates the submission, acceptance and registration of complaints and petitions of the citizens and state organs, the principles, procedures, and methods to be followed in the inquiry and settlement was adopted by Decision No. 120 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on June 17, 1998 and was revised and supplemented 3 times.

The system of complaints and petitions established in the DPRK by virtue of this law is a democratic system for improving and strengthening the work of state organs and officials by protecting the working people' s rights and actively drawing them into the state administration.

? Criminal laws

Included in the group of laws to guarantee the rights in the field of criminal affairs are the criminal law, criminal procedure law and so on.

The DPRK criminal law (adopted by Decision No. 6 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 15, 1990 and revised and supplemented 5 times contributes to defending the power of the State and the socialist system and guaranteeing human rights by instituting a system of penal responsibility and punishment for crimes.

In the DPRK crimes are punishable, dangerous acts which violate the power of the state, socialist system and law and order whether intentionally or unintentionally. (Criminal law, Article 10)The basic penalties are death penalty, reform through labour for an indefinite period, reform through labour for a definite period and disciplining through labour. And additional penalties are deprivation of the right to vote, confiscation of property, fine, deprivation of a licence and suspension of a license.(Criminal law, Article 27, Paragraph 28)

The DPRK criminal procedure law (adopted by Decision No. 12 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on January 15, 1992 and revised and supplemented 3 times) which contributes to accurately dealing with and disposing of criminal cases by establishing a strict system and order in investigation, preliminary examination, prosecution and trial plays a big role in protecting and guaranteeing human rights in the handling and settlement of cases.

? Civil Laws

The laws to guarantee civil rights are the civil law, civil procedure law, family law, inheritance law, damage compensation law, and so on.

The DPRK civil law (adopted by Decision No. 4 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on September 5, 1990, and revised and supplemented 3 times) which regulates the equal and independent property transactions of the parties concerned (institutions, enterprises, organizations, citizens) provides legal guarantee for consolidating the socialist economic system and material and technical foundations, and satisfying the people's material and cultural demands.

\* In the DPRK, civil matters were, at first, governed by legal documents, which were later developed into provisional civil regulations in December 1982, then into civil regulations in January 1986 and finally into civil law in 1990.

One of the main principles stipulated in this law is that institutions, enterprises and organizations should, when conducting transactions with citizens, pay close attention to ensuring that policies of the State for the promotion of people's welfare reach the working people. (Civil laws, Article 6)

The DPRK civil procedure law (adopted by Decision No. 18 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on January 10, and revised and supplemented 7 times) contributes to protecting the civil rights and interests of the institutions, enterprises, organizations and citizens in.

The DPRK family law (adopted by Decision No. 5 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on October 24, 1990, and revised and supplemented 4 times) contributes to protecting the marriage and family and turning the whole society into a large harmonious and united socialist family.

The family law provides for the main principles for the protection of marriage and family, and regulates the issues of marriage, family, guardianship, inheritance, and sanctions.

The DPRK inheritance law (adopted by Decree No. 2882 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on March 13, 2002) which regulates the principles and orders to be kept in the execution of inheritance and donation guarantees the correct settlement of inheritance issues and the citizen's rights related to inheritance.

It is the consistent policy of the DPRK to protect the individual's properties.

Therefore, the rights to inherit individual's properties are fully guaranteed.

The DPRK damage compensation law (adopted by Decree No. 2513 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on October 22, 2001, and revised and supplemented in 2005) provides for matters related to the protection of civil rights and interests of the institutions, enterprises, organizations, and citizens by establishing strict system and order in the damage compensation caused by infringement upon person or properties.

Compensation for bodily injury is made for the damage caused through injuring the health or life of a person, as well as in case where a person's freedom is restricted or mental anguish is inflicted through impairing his dignity or honour. (Damage Compensation Law, Article 40.)

? Judiciary-related Laws

This group includes such laws as the law on the establishment of tribunals, law of lawyers, and the notary public law.

The DPRK law on the establishment of tribunals, the purpose of which is to ensure proper examination and settlement of criminal and civil cases and guarantee individual's right to fair trial by establishing strict system and order in the establishment of tribunals was adopted by Decision No. 19 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on January 10, 1976, and revised and supplemented four times.

The DPRK lawyers law, the purpose of which is to protect legal rights and interests of the institutions, enterprises, organizations and citizens and guarantee the correct enforcement of laws through the enhancing of the roles of lawyers, was adopted by Decision No. 43 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 23, 1993.

In the DPRK, lawyers protect human rights through defence and legal assistance, as well as the legal system of the state.(Lawyer Law, Article 2)Institutions, enterprises, organizations, and citizens are provided with rights to free choice of defence counsel in carrying out the litigation and legal action.

The DPRK notary public law, which regulates the procedures and methods of providing truthful authentication of facts and documents of legal significance, was adopted by Decision No. 51 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on February 2, 1995, and revised and supplemented in 2004.

By virtue of this law, the civil rights and interests of the institutions, enterprises, organizations and citizens are protected, and the security of civil transactions is guaranteed.

? People's Security Laws

Included in this group of laws are the citizen's registration laws, road traffic law and so on.

DPRK citizen's registration law, which regulates the system and order of tracking and registering the changes in citizen's identities caused by birth, residence, renouncing, death, acquisition or renouncing of nationality on a nationwide scale, serves as a powerful tool in protecting the socialist family relationship, citizen's rights and interests, and strengthening the population administration work.

The Citizens' Registration is Law was adopted by Decision No. 102 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on November 26, 1997, and revised and supplemented 3 times.

The registration of citizens is done by the people's security organs in the residential area concerned. (Citizens' Registration Law, Article 3)

The citizen's certificate (Pyongyang citizenship in case of Pyongyang citizen) is an official identity document that proves the citizenship of DPRK.

If a citizen who has renounced a certain nationality and acquired DPRK nationality wants to reside in the DPRK, citizen's registration must be made. (Article 5)

The DPRK road traffic law, which regulates the principles and orders to be kept in the control of road traffic signals, management of safety arrangements, passing of pedestrians and vehicles, contributes to protecting the people's lives and ensuring safety in the road traffic.

This law was adopted by Decree No. 709 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on October 6, 2004, and revised and supplemented 4 times.

This law is applicable to foreign missions, enterprises, individuals that use the roads in the DPRK. (Road traffic law, Article 6)

Guidance of the road traffic work is provided by the central people's security organs and other relevant organs under the unified guidance of the Cabinet. (Article 69)

Institutions, enterprises and organizations concerned must set up Traffic Safety Education Room and conduct practical education work on the road traffic safety, hold the drivers' meetings, Day of Overhaul and Inspection and Day of Preventive Measure for Accident on a regular basis. (Article 73)

? Labour Laws

Included in this group of laws are the Socialist Labour Law, Labour Protection Law, and the Law on the Work Norms.

The DPRK Socialist Labour Law, which comprehensively systematizes the working people's socialist working life and relations, was adopted by Decree No. 2 of the Supreme People's Assembly on April 18, 1978, and revised in 1986 and in 1999.

This law, the basis of the DPRK's labour-related laws, consists of several chapters, Chapter 1 being" fundamental principles of socialist labour", Chapter 2 "Labour is the citizen's noble duty", Chapter 3 "Socialist Labour Organization", Chapter 4 "Socialist distribution by the work accomplished", Chapter 5 "Labour and technical revolution, improvement of working people's technical skills", Chapter 6 "Labour protection", Chapter 7 "Labour and recreation", and the Chapter 8 "State and social benefits for the working people".

The working people in the DPRK work with enthusiasm and creative initiative for the prosperity of the country, for the people's well-being and for their own welfare. (Socialist Labour Law, Article 1, para. 2)

Labour is based on the high awareness of the working people, the masters of state and society. (Article 6, para 1)

Under this law there has been established such labour-related legal systems as the compulsory labour, work hours , job allocation, labour use , technical skill improvement, labour protection, rest, social insurance, and social security.

The DPRK labour protection law, the purpose of which is to provide the safe, cultural and hygienic working conditions to the working people, protect and promote their lives and health, was adopted by Decree No. 945 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on July 8, 2010.

It is the intrinsic nature of the socialist system and the principled stand of DPRK that the State takes full responsibility for the protection of working people's lives and protection of their health. (Labour Protection Law, Article 3, para. 1)

The DPRK work norms law, which regulates the principles and orders in the work norms, contributes to organizing labour in a scientific and reasonable manner, enhancing efficiency of labour and guaranteeing the working people's right to get fair and equal remuneration for their work done.

This law was adopted by Decree No. 484 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 10, 2009.

? Education and Public Health Laws

The laws concerning the protection and promotion of human rights in the fields of education and public health include the Law on Education, the Law on the Nursing Upbringing of Children, the Law on Public Health, the Law on ***Medical*** Care, the Communicable Diseases Prevention Law, the Food Hygiene Law, and Sanitation Law.

The Law of the DPRK on Education was enacted for the purpose of further improving the socialist education system and fully guaranteeing people's rights to education. It was adopted by Decree No. 847 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on July 14, 1999 and amended and supplemented in 2005 and 2007.

The Law on Education provides for basic principles of education, the system of universal compulsory education, educational institutions and staff, contents and methods of education, provision of conditions for education and guidance and control over educational work.

On the basis of this law the Law on Higher Education was adopted on December 14, 2011 and the Law on Elementary Education on January 19, 2011.

The Law of the DPRK on Nursing and Upbringing of Children regulates the system and order of bringing up children as the future of the country and reserves of builders of socialism. It was adopted by the Decree No.7 of the Supreme People's Assembly on 29 April 1976 and was amended and supplemented in 1999.

Bringing up children at the state and public expense is one of the main policies of the DPRK; it is an educational method based on socialist pedagogy. (Article 2, the Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children)

The DPRK takes every possible care so that all children may grow up happily wanting for nothing under the best, up-to-date conditions for their nursing and upbringing. This benefit is firmly guaranteed by the socialist system, the solid foundations of the independent national economy and the socialist policy, and will further increase with the strengthening of the country's economic foundations.(Article 7, the Law on Educating and Upbringing Children)

The Law of the DPRK on Public Health regulates main principles of the Government in the field of public health such as consolidating and developing the system of preventive ***medicine***, the system of complete and universal free ***medical*** care, protection through prevention, Juche-oriented ***medical*** science and technology, provision of materials to the work of public health, duties of public health institutions and staff and guidance and control over the work of public health. It was adopted by the Decree No.5 of the Supreme People's Assembly on 3 April 1980 and was amended and supplemented four times.

The Law of the DPRK on ***Medical*** Treatment was enacted for the purpose of improving ***medical*** treatment and protecting and promoting people's health by establishing strict system and order in ***medical*** activities. It was adopted by Decision No. 103 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 3 1997 and was amended and supplemented in 1998 and 2000.

The Law of the DPRK on Prevention of Communicable Diseases was adopted by Decision No. 100 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 5 November 1997 and was amended and supplemented on two occasions. It is a legal instrument for establishing a strict order in tracing the source of infection, quarantine, blocking the trace of epidemics and vaccination, and thus eliminates infectious diseases and protects people's life and health.

Food Hygiene Law of the DPRK is a basic law to protect and promote people's health by ensuring food hygiene, which was adopted by the Resolution No. 124 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly and was later amended and supplemented four times.

The DPRK is taking measures to provide material and technical means for food hygiene and modernize them by increasing investment.

Sanitation Law of the DPRK (adopted by Decision No.123 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 15 July 1998, amended in 1998) regulates the system and order in sanitation and contributes to protecting and promoting people's health by providing sanitary living environment and conditions.

? Laws on Public Service

The laws on protection and promotion of human rights in public service sector include Socialist Commerce Law, Food Administration Law and Dwelling Houses Law.

Socialist Commerce Law of the DPRK which was adopted by Decision No.13 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 29 January 1992 and was amended and supplemented five times stipulates principles and order to be followed in commercial activities such as commodity circulation and public welfare

Socialist commerce is, in essence, the work to supply goods to people and satisfy their material and cultural demands.

The characteristics of the socialist commerce lies in that it promotes welfare of working people, accommodates convenience in their lives, narrows the distinctions between urban and rural areas highly organized and systemized and that its profits are accumulated for promoting people's welfare and for socialist expanded reproduction.

Food Administration Law of the DPRK provides for the principles and order of procurement, storage, processing and distribution of grains including food for people's diet and contributes to improving people's livelihood and food administration. It was adopted by Decision No.84 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on February 19, 1997 and was later amended and supplemented three times.

The DPRK ensures that a proper system of food administration is put in place for unified control and planned consumption of grains.

The Dwelling Houses Law of the DPRK regulates issues concerning the construction, transfer, receipt, registration, allocation, usage and maintenance of dwelling houses, providing legal guarantee for stable and civilized living conditions of the people. It was adopted by Decree No.3051 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 21 January 2009 and was amended and supplemented twice.

In the DPRK dwelling houses are categorized into State, Cooperative and private properties according to the type of ownership (Para. 1, Article 2 of Dwelling Houses Law) and the State provides legal protection for the ownership and usage of dwelling houses. (Para. 2, Article 1 of Dwelling Law)

? Laws on Protecting Intellectual Property Rights

Laws on protection and promotion human rights in the field of intellectual properties include the Copyright Law, Invention Law, Industrial Design Law, Trademark Law and the Computer Software Copyright Law.

Copyright Law of the DPRK regulates matters concerning the utilization of literary works and thus protects the rights of the authors and promotes the development of art and literature and science and technology. It was adopted by Decree No.2141 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 21 March 2001 and was amended and supplemented in 2006.

The protection of copyright is a consistent policy of the DPRK. The DPRK ensures that the authorship of the writers is ensured and the rights of the copyright holders are protected. (Article 2 of Copyright Law)

The copyright of a legal person or an individual whose country is a party to a treaty to which the DPRK is also a party is protected by the treaty. However, where a legal person or an individual whose country is not a party to the same treaty makes public his works for the first time in the DPRK, - the works are protected by the above law. (Article 5 of Copyright Law)

The Law of the DPRK on Inventions regulates specific matters concerning the application for the registration of an invention, the examination of an invention for registration and protection of invention and patent rights. It was adopted by Resolution No.112 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 13 May 1998 and was amended and supplemented in 1999 and 2011.

The DPRK takes measures to actively promote inventions and ensure steady increase in the investment for the development and application of new science and technology. (Article 6 of Invention Law)

Institutions, enterprises and organizations and citizens in the DPRK may apply to foreign countries for the patent of a new scientific or technological achievement. (Para. 1, Article 22 of Invention Law)

The Law of the DPRK on Industrial Design (adopted by Decision No.117 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 3 June 1998 and later amended and supplemented three times) regulates issues on the application for the registration of an Industrial design, examination and the protection of the right thereto. The Law of the DPRK on Trademark (adopted by Decision No.106 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on 14 January 1998 and later amended and supplemented five times) regulates issues on the application for the registration of a trademark, examination and protection of the trademark right.

The Law of the DPRK on the Protection of Computer Software (adopted by Decree No.3831 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly) regulates issues on the protection of the rights of a copyright holder of software and the development of the software technology.

?Laws on Social Welfare

Included in this group of laws are Social Security Law, the Law on Protection of the Elderly, the Law on Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Law on Protection of Child's Rights, Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Red Cross Society Law.

The Law of the DPRK on Social Security was adopted by Decree No.2513 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on January 9, 2008 and amended and supplemented twice. The Social Security Law is a powerful legal instrument for protecting people's health and providing them with stable and happy living environment and conditions.

The Law of the DPRK on Protection of the Elderly was adopted by Decree No. 2214 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 26 April 2007 and was amended and supplemented twice. Under this Law, the rights and interests of the elderly are guaranteed and their desire to lead a fruitful and happy life in mentally and physically good health is fully met.

The Law of the DPRK on Protection of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by Decree No.3835 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 18 June 2003 and was amended and supplemented in 2013. It contributes to providing more favourable living environment and conditions to persons with disabilities.

The Law of the DPRK on the Protection of Child's Rights stipulates issues on guaranteeing child's rights and interests to the full in all fields including social life, education, public health, family and administration of justice. It was adopted by Decree No.1307 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 22 December 2010.

The Law of the DPRK on Protection of Women's Rights comprehensively provides for the rights of women. It was adopted by Decree No.1309 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on December 22, 2010 and was amended and supplemented in 2011.

This Law provides for basic principles of protecting women's rights, socio-political rights, rights to education, culture and public health, rights to work, personal and property rights, and rights to marriage and family rights and so on.

The Law of the DPRK on Red Cross Society contributes to protecting people's lives and properties from various kinds of diseases and disasters and promoting their health and welfare. It was adopted by Decree 2113 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on 10 January 2007.

? Laws on the Protection of the Environment

Laws on the Protection of the Environment relating to the protection and promotion of human rights include Environmental Conservation Law, Water Resources Law and Prevention of Radioactive Pollution Law.

The Laws on Environmental regulates issues on the conservation of the environment. It was adopted by Decree No.5 of the Supreme People's Assembly on April 9, 1986 and was amended and supplemented on five occasions.

The State shall always show close concern for protecting and managing the environment so as to provide the people with a healthy environment and hygienic working conditions. (Para. 2, Article 1, Laws on Environment)

The State shall adopt measures to consolidate the success achieved in the protection and management of the environment and to improve environmental protection and management in step with the modernization of industry and of other economic sectors, and shall increase investment systematically as required in implementing the measures. (Article 2, Laws on Environment)

Adopting measures for preventing environmental pollution prior to beginning production and construction is an important requirement for environmental protection. (Article 4)

The Law of the DPRK on Water Resources was enacted to ensure sufficient supply of water necessary for the development of national economy and people's living by establishing a strict system and order in the research, development, conservation and utilization of water resources. It was adopted by Decision No.86 of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly on June 18, 1997 and was amended in 1999.

The Law of the DPRK on Prevention of Radioactive Pollution regulates issues on preventing radioactive pollution and protecting people's lives and health and the environment. It was adopted by Decree No.1837 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly on August 29, 2011.

This Law provides for basic principles for the prevention of radioactive pollution and regulates security management of radioactive substances and nuclear facilities, disposal of radioactive wastes and observation of environmental radioactivity, etc.

Laws on the Protection of the Environment relating to the protection and promotion of human rights also include the Land Law, the Forest Law, the Fluvial Law, Prevention of Sea Pollution Law, Prevention of Pollution of River Taedong Law, Treatment of Wastes Law, Protection of Useful ***Animals*** Law, Law on Disaster Prevention, Relief and Recovery and Law on Earthquake and Volcano Damage Prevention and Relief. The adoption of these laws shows that the DPRK is directing close attention to incorporating into its domestic laws such global issues of sustainable development as the rights to environment and development.

The above mentioned laws are only some of the DPRK's basic laws for the protection and promotion of human rights in the specific fields and there are many more laws, implementing regulations and rules stipulated in more concrete terms..

\* The above categorization of the human rights laws is based on initial study and, by no means, completes to have included the whole of the s the DPRK's human rights laws. Moreover, some laws, though having relevance, were not given separate categorization.

(3) Organs for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

In the DPRK, a well-organized system is established for the protection and promotion of human rights.

?State Organs

The following state mechanisms will be reviewed only in respect of their human rights-related functions.

- The Supreme People's Assembly

The Supreme People's Assembly, the highest power organ of the DPRK holds it as one of its important powers to adopt, amend or supplement the constitution and sector-specific laws, approve laws of major importance adopted by the Presidium, establish basic principles of human rights policy and appoint, elect or recall the Presidents of the Supreme Public Prosecutors Office and the Supreme Court.

The Bills Committee, which is a departmental committee of the Supreme People's Assembly organizes and executes the work of instituting laws related to protection and promotion of human rights

- The National Defence Commission

The National Defence Commission, the highest military leadership body of State power, holds the powers and duties such as establishing major policies to defend the sovereignty of the country and protect and promote human rights and carrying them out through its guidance over the whole armed forces and the work of defence upbuilding.

- The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly

The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, the highest power organ during the recess of the Supreme People's Assembly, has the powers and duties such as conducting deliberations and adoptions of new human rights bills and draft regulations, and proposals for amendment- of existing human rights laws and regulations, supervising and enforcing the observance and execution of human rights laws by State institution and granting amnesty.

- Cabinet, Commissions and Ministries

The Cabinet is the administrative and executive body of the highest State power and organ of overall State administration. The Cabinet Committee and Ministries are departmental executive bodies under the Cabinet and departmental administrative bodies at national level.

The Cabinet performs duties such as instituting or amending and supplementing regulations on State control for protection and promotion of human rights, inspecting and controlling its execution and taking measures for maintaining public order, protecting the properties and interests of social and cooperative organizations and guarantying the rights of citizens.

The Cabinet Committee and Ministries command and guide the work of protecting and promoting people's human rights in their respective sectors (e.g. the Commission of Education in education sector and the Ministry of Public Health in public health sector)

- People's Assembly and People's Committee at Local-level

In the DPRK, the People's Assembly at local-level is a local power organ and the People's Committee at local-level exercises power during the recess of the People's Assembly and is an administrative and executive body of the local power.

The People's Assembly at local-level performs duties such as taking measures for executing laws including the ones related to human rights and electing or recalling judges and people's assessors of the local court. The People's Committee at local-level performs duties such as executing statutes, resolutions and directives related to human rights and taking measures for protecting and promoting rights of citizens.

In this regard, the People's Committee at local-level can be considered as an organ that is directly responsible for protecting and promoting human rights in the DPRK.

- Public Prosecutors Office and Court

The Supreme Public Prosecutors Office of the DPRK, and the Public Prosecutors Offices at the Provincial, City/District County level and Special Prosecutors Office, through monitoring the execution of human rights law and regulation, prosecuting offenders of law including criminals and imposing legal sanctions on them, and the Supreme Court and the court at the Provincial, City/District County level through conducting trials protects the sovereignty of the Republic, the socialist system, State and cooperative properties, people's rights as guaranteed by the Constitution and their lives and properties.

- State Organs for International Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights

? National Coordinating Committee for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The National Coordinating Committee for the implementation of the CRC drafts and submits action plans to carry out State policy for implementing CRC. It was organized on April 28, 1999.

? National Coordinating Committee for UNESCO

The National Coordinating Committee of the DPRK for UNESCO was formed with the purpose of comprehensively developing the cooperation with UNESCO in line with the Constitution of the Republic, UNESCO Charter and the Charter of the National Coordinating Committee adopted at the 20th Session of the UNESCO Conference.

National Coordinating Committee for UNESCO contributes to promoting mutual understanding between countries and peoples and defending peace and security of the world through international cooperation and exchange in the fields of education, science, culture and public information.

? National Committee for UN Food and ***Agricultural*** Organization

National Committee for UN Food and ***Agricultural*** Organization formed on 28 January 1981 organizes and executes works as a member state of the UNFAO in close ties with the Organization.

? The National Coordinating Committee for the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The National Coordinating Committee for the Implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women organizes and executes the works such as writing and presenting the report of the DPRK government for the implementation of the Convention. The National Coordinating Committee was formed on 29 August, 2001 and plays an important role in realizing the international cooperation for protecting and promoting women's rights.

State organs for international cooperation in the field of human rights also include the National Coordinating Committee for UNFPA (founded on December 16, 1992), National Coordinating Committee for WFP (founded on April 26, 2006) and National Coordinating Committee for UNICEF (founded on June 6, 1985).

- Other Human Rights Organs

? Population Centre

The Population Centre was founded on July 11, 1985 as a scientific research institution specializing on population census and data analysis required in formulating population policy and development plan of national economy.

The Population Centre studies and analyses population data to be integrated into the development plan of national economy and provides to relevant state organs. The Centre also develops population study, trains population experts and collaborates with international organizations related to population.

The Centre, from the early days of its foundation, has been receiving UNFPA assistance and became a member of CICRED in 1991. The Centre publishes periodicals including newspaper "Population Information" and the magazine "DPRK Population Centre Bulletin".

? Institute of Child Nutrition

Founded on May 15, 1984, the Institute of Child Nutrition conducts research and develops therapeutic food for children including milk substitutes, surveys the status of children's nutrition and growth, sets the standard for rational caloric intake, assesses the food safety and studies preventive treatment for nutrition-related diseases.

? Social and Non-governmental Human Rights Organizations

Social and Non-Governmental human rights organizations in the DPRK independently perform activities for the study, protection and promotion of human rights of specific group or in certain fields. They can be categorized into human rights organizations of specific group and those of diverse missions.

-Human Rights Organizations of Specific Group

Human rights organizations of specific group are such as Women's Union, Youth League, Trade Union, Union of ***Agricultural*** Working People, the Federation for Protection of Persons with Disabilities and the Federation for Protection of the Elderly.

? Korean Democratic Women's Union

The Korean Democratic Women's Union is an organization for the promotion of women's position and role and protection and promotion of their rights in the socialist construction. It was founded as the Democratic Women's Union of north Korea on November 18, 1945 and was renamed as the Korean Democratic Women's Union as the Unions in the North and the South merged into one on January 20, 1951.

The Democratic Women's Union, from day one till now, has been playing an important role in the work of empowering women to take the position as the masters of the State and the society and exercise their legitimate rights. Thanks to the role of the Union, great successes were made in realizing gender equality, abolishing illiteracy and actively pushing forward cultural enlightenment among women and promoting women's participation in social affairs and socio-political activities.

The Korean Democratic Women's Union publishes its organ "Korean Women". It joined the International Democratic Women's Union in October 1946.

? Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League

Protecting and promoting the rights of youth is one of the major purpose of Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League. The League was founded as the Democratic Youth League of north Korea on January 17, 1946 in Pyongyang and was renamed as the Korean Socialist League of Working Youth on May 12, 1964 and as the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League on 19 January 1996.

The Central Committee of the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League publishes "Chongnyonjonwi", "Saenal" and "Sonyonsinmun" as its organs and "Youth Life", "Student" and "New Generation" as its magazines.

? General Association of Trade Unions of Korea

The General Association of Trade Unions of Korea is an organization one of whose major mandate is protecting and promoting democratic freedom and rights of working class. It actively contributes to making the working class fully perform its role in the socialist construction and protecting and prompting their rights

The General Association of Trade Unions of Korea was founded as the General Federation of Trade Unions of north Korea on November 30, 1945 and was renamed as of present in January 1951 when the Associations of the North and the South was merged into one.

The Central Committee of the General Association of Trade Unions of Korea publishes its organ "Rodongjasinmun" and its magazine "Worker". It joined the World Federation of Trade Unions in May 1947 and is strengthening the international cooperation and solidarity in the field of guarantying the rights of the working class.

? Union of ***Agricultural*** Working People of Korea

The Union of ***Agricultural*** Working People of Korea is an organization of socialist rural working people. Protecting and realizing ***agricultural*** working people's democratic freedom and rights is one of the major purposes of its activities.

The Union was formed in March 1965 and its predecessor is the Federation of Farmers' Union of north Korea founded on January 31, 1946.

The Central Committee of the Union publishes "Nongopguloja" as its organ and "***Agricultural*** Working People" as its magazine.

? Korean Federation for Protection of Persons with Disabilities

Korean Federation for Protection of Persons with Disabilities was founded as the Korean Association for Aiding Persons with Disabilities and its status was raised as of present on 27 July 2005.

The Korean Federation for Protection of Persons with Disabilities as a non-governmental organization for the protection of persons with disabilities has the mission of protecting and advocating every rights and interests of persons with disabilities. Its major mandate is to contribute to restoring the mental and physical abilities of the persons with disabilities, creating the environment of zero-disability, prevention of disabilities and securing social position of the persons with disabilities through activities of supporting and protecting them and publishing and advocating for them, and thus make them fully perform their role as the masters of society and the collective.

The Federation consists of the Assembly and committees at national, Provincial, County, and Institution levels.

The Federation carries out the work of protecting persons with disabilities in cooperative relations with State organs such as the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of City Management and actively engages itself in cooperation with international organizations for protection of persons with disabilities and EU countries as well.

? Korean Federation for Protection of the Elderly

The Korean Federation for Protection of the Elderly was founded on 30 April 2003 as the Korean Association for Assisting the Elderly and was renamed as of today in 2006.

Its mission is to protect and promote the rights and interests of the elderly and make them lead fruitful and happy lives in mentally and physically good health.

The Federation consists of committees at national, provincial, city and county levels.

The important features of the work of the Federation are promoting the elderly's health and their participation in social activities and helping them with the problems in their living through nation-wide protection of the elderly and addressing important issues on protection of the elderly by reflecting them in state policies.

- Human Rights Organizations of Specific Activities

Human Rights Organizations of Diverse Missions include Population Study Association, Education Support Fund, Measure Committee for the Victims of Sexual Slavery of the Japanese Army and Forcible Drafting, Red Cross Society, Lawyers' Society, Democratic Lawyers' Association, Family, Maternity and Infant Health Association.

? DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies

The Association was founded as a non-governmental human rights organization on August 27, 1992 under the approval of the State.

The Association has the mandate of studying overall issues on protecting and promoting human rights in the DPRK, making proposals to government organs on measures to guarantee human rights and carrying out research work on the international system of protecting and promoting human rights.

The important features of its activities are conducting surveys and research on the human rights situation in the DPRK and implementation of international human rights treaties and arousing public opinions to carry out investigations on criminal acts of foreign forces violating Korean people's human rights and take measures against them.

The Association involves one hundred and scores of law persons, lawyers, law enforcers and population experts.

The activities of the Association are carried out according to the system of collective discussion. The Association consists of Assembly, Committee and Executive Committee. Its financial resources are membership dues, supporting contributions from social institutions and donations from individuals.

? Korea Education Fund

The Korea Education Fund (or the Education Fund) was established on 26 January 2005.

The mission of the Education Fund is to strengthen the financial and material support to education to enhance its level in order to actively contribute to providing excellent conditions for the education of coming generations to meet the requirements of the developing era of today.

Voluntary contributions of good faith out of respect for the mission of the Education Fund can be made in any form or method regardless of the contributor's nationality, race, political view and religious faith.

Education Fund is channelled into covering the shortage of stationeries and materials and instruments for education, improving the infra-structure of educational facilities and conditions for lecture and training able and competent personnel.

? Korean Measure Committee for the Victims of Sexual Slavery of the Japanese Army and Forcible Drafting

The Korean Measure Committee for the Victims of Sexual Slavery of the Japanese Army and Forcible Drafting (KMC) was established in 1992 with the mission of probing the detailed truth of the barbarous criminal acts committed by Japan against Korean people and carrying out activities in demand of complete apology and reparation.

The Committee investigates the victims and the scope of damage of all the immoral crimes committed by the Japanese Imperialism when they illegally occupied Korea by force of arms including forcible drafting and forced labour, sexual slavery for the Japanese army, mass killing and so on.

It wages activities to let the coming generations and the whole society know about the truth of the barbarous crimes committed by Japan in the past and correct the history.

It also carries out works to identify the abandoned remains of Korean victims of forcible drafting in Japan, look for their bereaved families and support the victims of Japan's crime of forcible drafting, forced labour and sexual slavery.

The Committee is vigorously conducting international solidarity action in league with human rights organizations around the world and organizations and individuals of countries that suffered from the past crimes of Japan to arouse the public opinion and demand for the proper settlement of the past by Japan.

? The DPRK Red Cross Society

The DPRK Red Cross Society (founded on 18 October 1946 as the Red Cross Society of north Korea and renamed as Korea Red Cross Society in December, 1948) conducts activities, not only at the time of armed conflicts, but also at the time of peace such as protecting human life and health from the natural disasters.

The Korea Red Cross Society consists of committees at Central, provincial, city and county levels. The Korea Red Cross Society actively engages itself in cooperation with International Committee of Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent and national Red Cross organizations of several countries.

? Korean Lawyers' Society

The Korean Lawyers' Society founded on 19 November 1945 is an organization of lawyers and has sub-committees at the national, provincial and relevant sector level.

The committee consists of the Chairperson, Secretary General and members.

The Committees work includes explaining the laws and regulation of the country to the people and providing assistance to them in law observance, supporting the court to make a fair judgment and protect the legal rights and interests of the examinee or the accused when presenting itself as a defence counsel in a criminal case at the request of the examinee or the accused by probing the truth and providing accurate analysis and assessment on the case.

At the same time, the Committee performs the duties of process attorney, civil procedure attorney and legal adviser upon the authorization of an organ, a firm, an organization or a citizen, conducts legal consultation and formulation and deliberation of the document of legal nature at the request of an organ, a firm, an organization or a citizen. It also works to develop the cooperation and exchange with lawyers' organization of other countries.

? Democratic Lawyers' Association of Korea

The Democratic Lawyers' Association of Korea was founded on 30 November 1954 with the mission of defending and implementing the DPRK Government's ideology and policy on law and strengthening and developing the law system of the Republic including the Human Rights Law System.

It also keeps contact and mutually cooperates with other international and national organization of lawyers of progressive nature including the international Democratic Lawyers' Association.

? Family Plan, Maternity and Infant Health Association of Korea

The mission of the Family Plan, Maternity and Infant Health Association of Korea is to advocate the DPRK's policy on protection of family, maternity and infant and strengthen cooperation with several international organizations including the International Federation of Family Plan. The Association was established on 25 January 1990.

(4) System of Human Rights Education and Dissemination

A fine system of education and dissemination to raise public awareness and knowledge on human rights law is well established in the DPRK.

?Education on the Theory and Law on Human Rights through Formal Education System

In the DPRK the education on the government's human rights policies has been carried on in regular education networks through various methods including special lectures from the early days of the foundation of the Republic. It was further intensified in close combination with the education on the Juche Idea which is a scientific idea centred on human being and a true ideology defending human rights.

Of course, in the past, the education on human rights was carried out within the boundary of professional training on law to raise human rights experts. However, along with the development of the socialist society and the elevation of working people's legal awareness, the human rights theory and law became compulsory subjects, not only in professional law education units, but also in regular universities and colleges, and even in middle schools and primary schools and the education has been carried on.

Hence, a fine system of education on human rights theory and law is established throughout all curriculums starting from the primary schools to universities in the DPRK at present.

In primary schools and middle schools basic knowledge on the Juche oriented human rights ideology, theory and law is taught and in universities and colleges the education is further intensified and includes international human rights law.

The level of the education on human rights law at the professional law education units such as the law school of the Kim Il Sung University was markedly enhanced and strengthened compared to the past.

As the graduates who acquired the Juche oriented human rights ideology, theory and law and the international human rights law in the regular education networks advanced to various fields of the state and society, the work of protecting and promoting human rights in the DPRK is being carried forward evermore splendidly.

? Dissemination of Human Rights Laws by Social Education Facilities and Media

In the DPRK, the education to enhance people's knowledge on human rights law is actively conducted, not only in regular education networks, but in social education establishments and through various media as well.

Starting with the Grand People's Study House located at the centre of Pyongyang City, the modern libraries built in every province, city/district, county keeps large numbers of original texts of law (national and international human rights laws), books and electronic publications that help the working people and youth raise their awareness of law and acquire knowledge on human rights law.

In the DPRK the demand for books on human rights is very high among people and, to meet the demand, books and multimedia products giving legal knowledge and common sense (including human rights law) are produced in greater numbers compared to the past.

TV and Radio networks and publications such as Korea Central TV, Korea Central Radio, Rodong Sinmun, Kuloja and Youth Life also widely introduces and advocates the human rights policy of the Republic and achievements made in its application.

Especially, the popular newspaper Rodong Sinmun, regularly carries articles and writings on major international human rights documents on anniversaries of their adoption including the day of adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At the same time, Rodong Sinmun and other publications allocates a lot of space for analysis on the situation and the reactionary nature of human rights violations by imperialists in the international arena and serious human rights issues around the world.

? Enhancing Judicial and Social Workers' Knowledge of Human Rights Law

The work of protecting and promoting human rights is closely related to the stand and attitude of the law enforcers and social workers who are directly responsible for the work and their level of knowledge on human rights law.

No matter how good the human rights policy and law that the DPRK Government formulates are, we cannot expect to achieve successes in the protection and promotion of human rights unless the officials responsible for its implementation and enforcement possess sound view and attitude towards people and high level of legal knowledge.

That is why the DPRK Government forms the rank of law enforcers and social workers including government officials, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, people's security officers with truly faithful servants of people and regularly organizes events for them such as short-courses, in-service training, forum, seminar and meeting for exchanging experiences.

In the events such as short-courses and in-service trainings emphasis is given to eliminating abuse of power and bureaucracy with the view and attitude of respecting and loving people, carrying out the work of protecting and promoting human rights according to the requirements of legal provisions and regulations and so on.

\* The contents, form, method and the system of the education on law observance in the DPRK are given below for reference.

The contents of the education is making officials and working people possess proper view and attitude towards the socialist law and making them clearly understand legal provisions and regulations, what are the instances of violations of law and their harmfulness.

The education on law observance is carried out in various forms and methods. For example, informing the people of legal provisions, rules and regulations in time, explaining and advocating the law in association with the actual situation of socialist law observance life, widely advertising and disseminating positive examples in socialist law observance life and so on. (Socialist law observance life means every member of society works and lives in line with the requirements of the legal provisions and regulations instituted by the Socialist State.)

The system of education on law observance is the system in which the Socialist Law Observance Life Guidance Committee and the People's Committee organizes and gives unified guidance over the education on law observance in respective areas and every organ, firm and organization forms law observance education units and carries out the education through the role of law explainer. Law observance education units are formed in every unit where a DPRK citizen works and lives. The law observance education unit is formed with an organ, a firm, or an organization as a standard unit.

2. Enjoyment of Human Rights by the DPRK Citizens

This part of the report shows how the major rights regulated by international human rights laws are actually being secured in the DPRK.

1) Political Rights

Political rights are the most important rights that a State is obliged to guarantee by the international human rights laws.

The views on the political rights defined in the international human rights laws are different from one State to the other and so are the levels of its realization. However, it is a common view of all states that the political rights are the most important rights to be given priority by the national and international laws

Thanks to the policy and legal and systematic measures of the DPRK Government which regards the political rights as the main rights, people are enjoying genuine political freedom and rights as the masters of the state and society.

(1) Right to Vote or to be Elected

The right to vote or to be elected is one of the most important basic human rights and major form of exercise of sovereignty of a state.

In the international arena of today where the democracy is advocated, the state provision of the citizens' right to vote or to be elected becomes a decisive factor in the evaluation of human rights situation of the state.

It is an obligation of each and every state to provide legal guarantee for unhindered and unconditional participation and free expression of one's opinion in the election. Of course, those who were deprived of the right to vote by the judgment of the court and mentally deranged persons are generally not given the right to vote or to be elected and many countries accepts this exception.

In the DPRK, all the citizens exercise their right to vote or to be elected regardless of their sex, nationality, occupation, period of stay in the country, wealth, education, party affiliation, political view and religious belief. Exercise of such a right is guaranteed by the Article 66 of Socialist Constitution and several laws and regulations including the law on election of the deputy to the Supreme People's Assembly.

The election of the deputy to the People's Assembly at various levels is carried out under the principle of universal, equitable and direct election and in the method of secret ballots.

All the citizens who have reached the feasible age for election exercise the right to vote or to be elected without any limitations and all the voters can participate in the election with equal rights and can be elected as a deputy to the power organ. Voters elect the deputies to the People's Assemblies at various levels with their own hands according to their own will and the casts remain anonymous even after voting.

When electing the State power organ, the whole country is divided by the same population group and one deputy is elected in each constituency. The Election Committee is formed as an ad-hoc organization to organize and hold the election of the deputies to People's Assemblies at various levels and for every election, the list of voters are made and announced to public with each polling station (constituency) as a unit.

The candidates are nominated by the voters themselves or by a political party and a social organization jointly or independently. Soon after the results of the election are confirmed (by opening the ballot boxes and counting the ballots), the elected deputies to the Supreme People's Assembly are announced by the Central Election Committee, those to the Provincial People's Assembly by relevant Provincial Election Committee and those to the City/District People's Assembly by the relevant City/District Election Committee.

Currently in the DPRK, 100 percent of the voters cast their ballots for the nominated candidates for deputies to People's Assemblies. This has long been quite usual in the DPRK. The main reason behind the unanimous support of the voters to the candidates is that the voters themselves have nominated as candidates the working people including workers, farmers and intellectuals who devote themselves for the independent rights and interests of the voters.

In the election of the deputies to the 13th Supreme People's Assembly held on March 9, 2014, 99.97 percent of voters registered on the lists of voters took part in the election and 100 percent of them voted for the candidates for deputies to the Supreme People's Assembly registered in the relevant constituencies. This is an expression of absolute support and trust of all voters in the DPRK Government, which relies on them and serves to defend and realize people's rights and interests; it is a manifestation of the steadfast will and faith of the people to strengthen and further develop the people's power.

In the DPRK, a citizen currently serving in the army also has the right to vote or to be elected and exercises the right. With the exception of those who were deprived of the right to vote by the judgment of the court and mentally deranged persons, there is no limitation in the election.

(2) Freedom of Speech and Press

The freedom of speech and press is an indispensable factor of democracy and one of the important issues of political rights.

The freedom of speech and press includes the rights to search for information, freely express one's idea and opinion and receive and convey that of others whether it is through speech, writing, printing, radio, TV, movie, electronic means, music, chart or whatsoever.

The DPRK has more than 480 kinds of newspapers published at national and provincial level and factories, firms, and universities, hundreds of magazines printed by scores of publishing houses and several TV and radio channels.

All the citizens are freely exercising their rights to express their view and will anywhere through publications including various kinds of newspapers, magazines and books and TV and radio.

The rights to free writing and creation of works are legally guaranteed (by the constitution and Laws on Protecting Intellectual Property Rights) and according to the Law on Appeals and Petitions the rights to making appeals and proposals to improve the work of State organs, firms, organizations and officials.

Making appeals and petitions reflecting their wills and demands is a legitimate right of citizens as the masters of the State. A citizen, given just reasons and grounds, may make an appeal or a petition to an individual official, an organization, a firm and an organ including that of the supreme power.

In the DPRK an appeal and a petition is the voice of the popular masses and the reflection of public sentiment, and therefore, evaluation and processing of the appeal and the petition is regarded as an important work of meeting the needs and protecting the interests of the popular masses.

Citizens are fully provided with the rights to access information, process and manage information, convey the information and so on by the laws on information.

\* The laws of the DPRK on information are categorized into the Law on Protecting Information Property Rights and the Law on Protecting Intellectual Property Rights according to the subject and method of regulation.

Freedom of speech and press can be fully enjoyed only when the conditions for speech and press are provided.

The DPRK modernized printing means and technologies to boost the quality of publications and develop culture of publishing. It also promotes the development of information technology so that people can swiftly acquire accurate information and utilize it with convenience and freely convey their ideas and opinion through up-to-date facilities.

Thanks to the policies and efforts of the DPRK Government, greater improvements shall be made in of promoting people's rights to freedom of speech and press.

All kinds of advocacy of war of aggression, discrimination and violence, acts of instilling national, racial and religious antagonism and propaganda to threaten or harm the security of the state and social order are absolutely prohibited. Such acts are also prohibited by the articles 19 and 20 of the international treaty on citizens and their political rights.

(3) Freedom of Assembly and Association

First of all, the DPRK citizens are fully provided with the freedom of assembly and demonstration.

Freedom of assembly and demonstration is the right to freely hold gatherings to realize certain purposes and conduct collective acts to express their assertions or manifest their might that include national and international assemblies, street march, demonstrations, religious meetings, talks and so on.

According to the regulation on facilitating assemblies and demonstrations, a notification is made to the People's Committee and People's Security Organ of the corresponding area three days prior to holding the assembly or the demonstration. The written notification should mention the purpose, date and time, location, organizer and the size of the demonstration. The notified organ (People's Committee and People's Security Organ) provides assistance to ensure necessary conditions, safety and order for the assembly and demonstration.

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. Assemblies and demonstrations that harm the security of the State, violate social stability, order, soundness of society and morality and encroach upon other people's rights and freedom are prohibited. It is also regulated in the Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The US and Western countries' bloody suppression on peaceful assemblies and demonstrations by mobilizing military and police and the arrests and imprisonments against the participants are the infringement upon human rights and violation of international human rights law.

The DPRK citizens are fully provided with the freedom of association.

The freedom of association is the right to establish various kinds of organizations to realize certain purpose or to join such an organization. Such organizations include political party, socio-economic and cultural organizations and human rights organizations. State organs, organizations and the court organized by the law or administrative measures of the State are excluded from such organizations.

The State provides conditions for all citizens to freely organize political parties and social organizations of democratic nature in line with the socialist constitution and legal provisions and ensure unhindered activities of such organizations.

In order to organize a political party or a social organization of democratic nature, an application for registration has to be sent to the Cabinet 30 days prior to the organization of the party or the organization. The application should mention the purpose of the association, number of members, organizational structure, date of establishment and the name of the head and the constitution of the association should be enclosed with.

At present, several political parties and social organizations such as the Workers' Party of Korea, the Korean Social Democratic Party, the Chondoist Chongu Party, the General Association of Trade Unions of Korea, the Korean Democratic Women's Union, Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League and the Union of ***Agricultural*** Working People of Korea are organized and operate.

Associations with the purpose of committing hostile acts against the State are absolutely prohibited. This is an exercise of the legitimate sovereignty of the Republic, just measure to protect and realize people's human rights and fulfillment of the responsibility of a sovereign State which is in line with the international human rights laws.

Prohibition of anti-government associations is a matter of vital importance related to the destiny of the Republic and the prospect of the protection and promotion of people's human rights under the situation where the US and Western countries are attempting to undermine the socialist system of the DPRK by creating and instigating such associations.

(4) The Right to Freely Participate in State Governing

The State power of the DPRK is the people's power owned by people and serves in the interest of the people.

The DPRK provides ample opportunity and favourable conditions to everybody to hold public office of the State and display their ability.

Anybody with certain level of knowledge and capacity can become a government official.

The DPRK takes measures to make the government officials work with devotion being aware of their mission and mandate to serve for the people.

In the DPRK a government official is a person who works in a State organ with certain administrative obligations and rights.

The State regularly conducts competency assessment tests of government officials according to laws and regulations with the purpose of correctly assessing and enhancing competency.

The criteria of the competency assessment test are correct understanding on the State policies and legal provisions on relevant field, professional knowledge on relevant field, the capacity to organize and direct certain works, achievements in the past, law observance and possession of noble morality and traits.

The officials who did not participate in the competency assessment test of government officials or failed to pass the test shall lose their qualification.

Such measures do not limit or exclude them from freely participating in the management of State affairs.

In the DPRK where the gender equality is fully realized, the rate of women's participation in the State affairs at power organs ranging from the Supreme Power Organ down to local People's Committees is very high.

(5) Freedom of Religion and Thought

It is the freedom of a person to choose his or her religion and thought. That is why the international human rights laws require the issues of religion and thought to be solved according to every individual's free will, not by coercion of the state or others.

In the DPRK everybody is fully provided with the rights to choose and follow their own religion and thought according to their own free will.

Every citizen has chosen to follow the Juche Idea which is the world outlook centred on human being, an ideology for the realization of independence of the popular masses and is firmly believing in Juche Idea thinking and acting according to its requirement.

This is not forced by the state or anybody else. It is the faith and will of all DPRK citizens they have acquired through their everyday life and experience and history that the Juche idea is an ideology which defends and realizes people's independence and truly guarantees human rights and that when they advance along the road indicated by the Juche idea genuine happiness and prosperity will be achieved.

The Korean people take great pride in having and following the Juche idea and living as required by it. They do not allow on any account the acts of promoting and spreading reactionary and anti-human rights ideas such as racism and national chauvinism.

The moves of the US and Western countries to instil reactionary and degenerated ideas and culture into our people who believe and follow only the Juche idea is a wanton violation of the rights to ideology that all states are obliged to provide and as explicitly regulated by the international human rights laws.

The US and the Western countries are touting about so called "freedom" of religion, but in the DPRK the church and the state are clearly separated and everybody is fully provide with the freedom of religion.

According to the socialist constitution people are choosing and following any religion or thought on their own conviction. They are officially or personally, privately or jointly with others carrying out religious service, ritual and ceremony. They are free to build religious structures or conduct religious education.

The DPRK Government has never forced or influenced people either to believe or not to believe any kind of religion, and moreover, she has never opposed, tormented, oppressed or restricted religion or religious people.

At present we have the Korean Christians' Federation, the Korean Buddhists Federation, the Korean Catholic Association, the Korean Chondoist Society and the Korean Association of Religionists in the DPRK. These religious organizations have well-organized structural system (Central Committee at national level, sub-committees at provincial, city and county level and sub-units under them) and their own church, publication, educational organ and so on. They are also conducting cooperation and exchanges with several religious organizations of the world. (Such as World Religionists Peace Conference, World Council of Churches and Asia Religionists Peace Conference)

Recently the Pongsu Christian Church and Changchung Catholic Sanctuary in Pyongyang city and the Ryongtong Buddhist Temple were refurbished and expanded, and the Singye Temple in Mt. Kumgang and the Pobun temple in Mt. Ryongak was newly restored.

\* The construction of Changchung Church began in March 1988 was completed only in 6 months of time. On 2 October 1988, the special envoy of the Pope of Rome visited the church to conduct the opening ceremony and presented the Mass.

Foreigners and expatriates resident in the DPRK are also given complete freedom of religion. A Russian Orthodox church was built in Pyongyang city in August 2006 and Russian Orthodoxies resident in or visiting the DPRK hold religious rituals there.

Publications of religious organizations in the DPRK include "Chondoist Scriptures", "Chondoist Epitome", "The Old Testament", "Hymns", "Selection and Practice", "Let's Know about Chonjugyo", "Steps of Religious Life" and "Catholic Prayers".

Freedom of religion is allowed and provided by the State law within the limit necessary for securing social order, health, social security, morality and other human rights. Especially, the Government prevents the religion from being used to draw in foreign forces or harm the state and social order.

2) Civil Rights

Civil rights constitute an important element of the rights, which the states are obliged to ensure according to the international laws and regulations.

In the DPRK, people's rights to existence, freedom and fair justice including their physical, mental, legal and property rights are fully ensured under the state's legal guarantee.

(1) Right to Life

The right to life, among other things, is the inherent right of a human being and ensuring of this right stands as one of prime issues in ensuring human rights.

Human beings have a physical life, without which they cannot exist. Only when they are physically strong and healthy and their physical life continues, they can lead a social and political life as well as a cultural and aesthetic life.

Hence, paragraph 2, Article 1 of International Covenant on Civil and Political rights clearly stipulates that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its Article 3, provides that everyone has the right to life.

In the DPRK, life and health of human being are most highly valued and any act of violating them is never tolerated.

Man's life is fully protected from arbitrary arrest and execution by state institutions, organizations and individuals as well as from diseases and natural disasters.

In recent years, the US is kicking up a row about "arbitrary imprisonment", "extrajudicial execution", "torture" and "abduction" by using riffraff of all kinds. This is nothing but a farce designed to distort the realities of the DPRK and tarnish its image.

As far as those riffraffs that the US is using as "witnesses" are concerned, they are fugitives that committed extremely serious crimes against the country and people. They are terrorists that opposed the social system of the DPRK where people enjoy a genuine life and happiness and they are the objects of punishment by the criminal law of the DPRK

In the DPRK, no one is, without recourse to the law, deprived of their rights to life, which is guaranteed by the criminal law and regulations.

The death penalty is the harshest punishment that deprives criminals of their physical life, which is imposed for the most serious crime on an extremely limited basis.

The subjects of death penalty are the criminals that committed extremely serious crimes of plotting to overthrow the government, terrorist acts, treason, sabotage and subversion, intentional murder, drug trafficking and smuggling,.

According to Paragraph 1, Article 1 of the criminal law, death penalty is not imposed on those who were under 18 years of age at the time they committed crimes, nor is it executed against pregnant women.

Capital punishment does not constitute a violation of the right to life.

Capital punishment, according to the International Covenant on civil and political rights as well other the international human rights instruments, is imposed for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime.

The issue of administering death penalty is an issue, which is related to the sovereignty of the state. Maintaining or abolishing of death penalty in a country cannot be a criterion by which to judge whether or not the country protects human rights. This is not just and fair from a viewpoint of principles of international human rights law as well as practices of law enforcement.

Moreover, slandering and abusing countries, which are not state parties to the International Human Rights Instruments concerning the abolition of capital punishment, connecting the issue of administering death penalty with human rights issues, are the violation of sovereignty of the state.

The DPRK guarantees by law the inviolability of every part of human body.

Those who sell or buy organs of human body and disable any part of organ are subject to severe legal punishment. Acts of buying or selling organs of human body, fetus or blood for the purpose of ***medical*** treatment also constitute a crime.

Such numerous laws and regulations as the constitution, criminal law and other laws related with prosecution, judgment, public security, labour and public health firmly guarantee the ensuring of rights to health.

The Government of the DPRK, in order to ensure the rights of the people to life, has invested an enormous amount of its funds in developing vaccines, as well as importing necessary ***medicines*** to prevent damages from contagious diseases. At the same time, the Government is taking positive steps to minimize the damages likely to be caused by natural disasters.

(2) Right not to be subject to Torture

It is strictly prohibited to intentionally torture, that is, to inflict pain upon humans and to treat and punish them in an inhuman and degrading manner, whether physical or mental.

Torture is an act that forces humans to confess or make a statement by inflicting physical or mental pain upon them. This is the most barbaric act that violates personal rights of humans.

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 7 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, convention against torture and other international conventions on human rights defined such acts as crimes and strictly prohibited them.

According to the criminal law of the DPRK, it is regarded as a crime when criminals are interrogated in an inhumane manner including torture and a criminal case was decided in an unjust manner by exaggeration and fabrication.

Serious punishment is inflicted upon any one if he inflicts a serious injury or causes death upon a person.

In case anyone injures a person's health or life or gives mental pain to him responsibilities of compensating for damages lie with them.

It is prohibited to make criminal suspects admit their facts constituting an offense and lead them to make a statement by torturing and beating as well as by other inhumane methods.

Students in the institutes of training officials of law enforcements are educated in such a way that they fully ensure scientific accuracy objectivity and prudence in dealing with a case based on proper understanding of illegality and harmfulness of inhumane and degrading methods of interrogation and that they strictly abide by the principles of "Evidence First".

Law enforcement organs, on their part, take proper steps such as strict control, correction and punishment so that the inhuman treatments including torture may not be committed.

Institutions of investigation and prosecution have important roles to play in prohibiting inhumane treatment or punishment including torture.

Institutions of investigation, preliminary examination and reformation conduct regular supervision so that rights not to be subject to torture are ensured. If such cases as inhumane treatments and punishment including torture are brought to light strong legal punishment is placed on them. If appeals are made by examinees, defence counsels and others, the relevant institutions conduct inquiry in a timely manner and take necessary legal measures.

(3) Right not to be subject to Slavery

Human beings have the rights not to be subject to slavery, which are inalienable and inviolable rights.

Slavery is the state of being a slave who has no rights and whose independence is ruthlessly infringed upon.

Enslavement is the most extreme expression of power that a man exercises over the other. It is also a direct act of hostility against personality and dignity of human beings.

Enslavement includes selling and buying slaves, prostitution, human trafficking, forced labour and child labour.

In the DPRK, independence of human being is regarded as his/her life and soul, and no slavery is tolerated as it deprives human beings of their independence.

In the DPRK there exists no act of selling and buying slaves, prostitution, human trafficking and forced labour. In case such acts should be committed, severe punishment are to be meted out in accordance with the law.

Child labour is, according to the article 15 of the law on socialist labour and article 19 of law on children's rights, strictly prohibited and institutions, enterprises, entities and individuals cannot employ children. Those who employ minors under working age are subject to criminal responsibility, according to article 181 of the criminal law.

It is in 1983 when the slavery was officially abolished on the earth.

However, many countries in the world still practice slavery or similar systems and customs, the forms of which are getting ever more diversified.

What should be noted here is the slavery forced upon the Korean people by Japan in the past. Such acts were committed with the approval of the Japanese government in an organized way.

The world history does not record barbarians like Japanese that forcibly drafted or kidnapped such a great number of women (among them were 2 00 000 Koreans) and took them to war sites like ***animals*** and forced sexual slavery.

Subjecting Koreans to a miserable status where they had no rights and were treated worse than a dog in a house of mourning and forced slavery- this is the result of the review of history of colonial rule enforced by Japan against Korea in the past.

Japan is the country that negates its history of slavery in Korea and does not make apology and compensation for them in a proper manner. Even today in Japan, selling and buying of slaves, forced labour, human trafficking and child labour are rampant.

Without apologies and compensation for the past crimes of slavery, the current issue of slavery cannot be solved properly. For this reason, Japan's crime of slavery is by no means an issue of the past and statutory limitations cannot be applied to this matter.

Since its liberation, the DPRK has made strenuous efforts to educate all people to shape their own destiny independently as the masters of their own destiny, with heightened consciousness independence. As a result, all the citizens in the DPRK firmly defend their dignity and sovereignty, free from slavish mentality and flunkeyism

(4) Right to Personal Liberty and Security

Without legal ground, these rights include the rights not to be arrested or imprisoned. It also includes the rights of a person, who was deprived of freedom, to be treated, enjoying dignity as a human being.

The DPRK strictly prohibits arresting and imprisoning a person without a legal warrant.

The DPRK guarantees the inviolability of the person and the home and his or her privacy of correspondence. No citizen can be placed under control or be arrested nor can their homes be searched with legal grounds.

In accordance with article 241 of the criminal law of the DPRK, a law officer who illegally arrests, detains or confines an individual, searches his or her body or house, or seizes or confiscates his or her property is subject to criminal responsibility.

No one is deprived of his personal freedom if he acts in accordance with the conditions and procedures provided by the criminal law, the criminal procedure law and regulations.

Anyone who is arrested is informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and any charges against him.

A person, who was arrested or imprisoned for having committed a crime, have rights to stand trial within a prescribed period as well as to be released.

A person who is deprived of freedom in accordance with the law is treated, with respect for human dignity. A suspect is kept separate from those who are declared guilty and treated like innocent persons.

Those who suffer injury from illegal arrest and imprisonment have rights to demand compensation.

(5) Right to Fair Trial

All the people in the DPRK are equal before the law and have the rights to legal protection on an equal footing and without any distinctions. They, in accordance with the law, also have the rights to a fair trial in competent and independent courts organized by law in determining suspicion of any crime.

The state has set up an adequate number of competent and independent courts to ensure the rights to a fair trial and empower them to settle criminal and civil cases in a fair and just manner.

In the DPRK, there are the Supreme Court, provincial (municipal) court, city (district) court, people's court at county level, special court (military court, railway court). The courts are independent in administering justice and their judicial proceedings are carried out in strict accordance with the law. Justice is administered by a court(court of first instance) consisting of a presiding judge and two people's assessors elected at the people's committee concerned.

All the suspects are presumed innocent until proved guilty in accordance with the law. Once the suspected criminals are found guilty, they are informed promptly of the charges and given enough time for defence. At the same time, they have the right to be tried without undue delay.

They also have the right to be provided with legal and translation assistance free of charge and call and examine witnessed. They are not forced to give a statement against themselves or to confess. They also have the rights to appeal (within 10 days after judgement) against conviction as well as to receive compensation in case of miscarriage of justice.

Under no circumstances, he or she is punished retroactively. He or she is not punished more severely than the one that is applied at the time of committing a crime.

Court cases, in principle are heard in public. Even if court cases are held behind closed doors, the verdict is made public.

Ensuring independence in justice is an important work for a fair and just judgement.

The state has taken strong measures to prevent institutions from conducting any act that may violate independence of the courts that were established for the settlement of criminal cases at hand. The state ensures that judgments and decisions rendered by the courts lacking independence do not have legal effect.

Public prosecutors and lawyers are required to enhance their roles in ensuring rights to fair trial.

Public prosecutors observe on a regular basis whether or not cases are dealt with and settled in a just and accurate manner in accordance with the law, and take relevant measures.

Prosecutors work hard so that the rights of the accused to rights to legal procedures are ensured and truth of a case is revealed, analysed, understood and decided in the examination and trial. In case a misjudgement of a case, which leads to violation of interests of the accused (making an innocent person as a guilty one and giving a heavy criminal punishment in comparison to the crime he committed), an appeal is made to put things right. Especially, acts of infringing upon human rights and abusing of power by the law enforcement officials in dealing with a case are referred to the courts so that relevant measures are taken.

3) Socio-economic Rights

Social and economic rights hold an important position in the issue of human rights, as it is related with creative and material life of the people aimed at taming the nature.

The entire people of the DPRK are fully provided with rights to economic activities and life and enjoy a genuine material and economic life.

(1) Right to Work

Working is the activity of human beings to create life and improve their living conditions. Right to work constitutes an important element in the socio-economic rights.

Right to work is the right to employment which includes the right to a job, stable working conditions and fair compensation to the amount of the work.

The working people in the DPRK become genuine masters of work and beneficiaries of the results of the work.

All the citizens who reach the working age, irrespective of their genders, nationalities, social affiliation, choose their jobs according to their hopes and talents. They are provided with stable jobs and working conditions. In this connection, the problem of unemployment does not exist.

Workers can leave off when they reach the retirement age (60 years old for men, 55 years old for women) and they are entitled to enjoy the benefits of the social security services. Child labour is prohibited.

The daily working hours in the DPRK differ according to characteristics of the working sectors with 8 hours, 7 hours and 6 hours respectively.

In case of short working hours such as 7 hours and 6 hours, it is considered same as the 8 hours work and workers get the same wages.

The short working hour is applied to the workers in difficult and special conditions of labour and to female workers with several children; it is the special benefits by the state to the working people.

Right to work in the DPRK is exercised under safe, cultural and hygienic conditions according to the principles of the state to give priority to labour protection in production and to continuously improve and furnish the labour protection facilities.

The state makes it a rule to provide labour safety education as a first step to the workers who exercise the right to work.

Newly enrolled workers, workers who shift to new occupations and workers who violate and do not abide by labour safety rules and regulations receive intense labour safety education for five to twenty days. As for those posted to very harmful, dangerous jobs and heavy labour sectors get three-month training and receive education in labour safety.

Rewarding according to the quality and quantity of work done is the economic principle of socialism. This is a powerful means that inspire the enthusiasm of workers for production, and raise their level of technology and skills and increase productivity.

The DPRK is strictly enforcing the socialist principle of rewarding according to the quality and quantity of work done, while continuously raising political and ideological consciousness of the workers.

Workers are rewarded equally for the same amount of work, irrespective of their gender, age and nationality.

The basic forms of pay for labour workers, office workers and cooperative farmers are piece rates and fixed rates. The supplementary forms of pay are extra allowance and bonus system.

The state assesses accurately the production plan in terms of production indices and the implementation of cost plan according to the cost-accounting system. Based on this, the state distributes wages to factories and enterprises. The factories and enterprises properly assess the implementation of production plan, quality of the products, utilization of equipments and materials and offer additional bonus to the workers who worked well.

Farmers and workers in cooperative farms are rewarded according to the amount of work they did in working days.

The working people in the DPRK fully exercise their right to rest.

Right to rest is exercised through such systems as rest after the 8 hour work, rest on Sundays and holidays, annual paid leave, supplementary leave, maternity leave, recuperation and recreation at state expense.

Such systems of rest help workers to recover energy consumed during their work and fully ensure their active participation to working life.

Working in the DPRK is considered as noble and honourable, as the right to work is fully ensured. Workers display voluntary enthusiasm and creativity to work for prosperity of the country as well as for the well-being of the people and their own happiness.

(2) Right to Social Security

Right to social security is the right whereby the aged people, people disabled due to ailment or physical dysfunction, the aged people and children without caretakers receive material support from the state.

People who are under social security have the right to receive necessary pension and allowance from the state in order to maintain their living.

The DPRK gives preferential treatment to the people who are under the social security. The country also steadily increases investments in social security sector and takes every step to improve the material and technical means for the social security services.

Relevant state organs make a thorough registration of the people under the social security and regularly pay them pension and allowance. They regularly look at the living conditions of the people under the social security and take necessary measures and make arrangements to provide them with preferential treatment on several occasions.

In particular, the state establishes a proper system of managing and operating facilities for social security services including home for the aged and recuperation centres and continuously improve the conditions of the facilities, thus ensuring fully the living conditions of the social security beneficiaries.

Thanks to such measures taken by the state, the beneficiaries are fully provided with conditions and atmosphere of living without any inconvenience.

The beneficiaries are supplied with daily necessities on a regular basis and receive service in modernized facilities with study rooms, bedrooms, dining rooms, ***medical*** clinics, saloon, washrooms and bathrooms. Regular health check up is carried out on them. Should they need special ***medical*** care, they are taken to hospitals in time.

State provides labour, funds, materials and equipments necessary for social security in a responsible manner.

(3) Right to Adequate Standard of Living

Right to adequate standard of living is important in the socio-economic rights of the people.

Only when the people have the right to adequate standard of living, can they have the dignity and value as human beings and successfully conduct creative activities for transformation of nature and society.

Rewarding according to the quantity and quality of the work done is the main form of compensation in the socialist society and serves as an important tool for improving people's living.

As a form of compensation that is set on the basis of the quality and quantity of the work done, reward is deemed fair and just.

However, this type of reward alone, cannot overcome the differences of living standards of workers, farmers and office workers, especially the differences between the families with more workers and the families with less workers. This cannot ensure the right of the people to an equal and adequate standard of living.

Right to adequate standard of living defined by the international human rights instruments includes one's own and the family's right to adequate standard of living and conditions including food, clothes and dwelling houses.

In the DPRK, additional benefits by the state and society in the new form of compensation are given, apart from the reward for the work done, fully ensuring the right to adequate standard of living.

Every person in the DPRK, since birth, has right to food and is supplied with food at a price next to nothing.

In the DPRK, dwelling houses for people are built at state's expense and house utility fee are paid at a price next to nothing and farmers are excluded from the utility fee.

Thanks to the people-oriented policy, they have no worries of paying for food and house fee.

At present, people in capitalist countries are in deep agony under the heavy burdens of living expenses. People in the DPRK, thanks to its people-oriented policy, are living with no worries of paying for food and house fee from the moment of their birth. This fact alone proves that the socialist system of the DPRK is the land of bliss for the people.

Efforts are made in the DPRK to ensure the right of people to adequate standard of living by increasing ***agricultural*** production, developing light industry and effecting a turning point in construction.

4) Social and Cultural Rights

Social and cultural rights are the rights of the people for enhancing their creativity and satisfying their cultural requirements.

Only when people enjoy their rights to scientific and technical knowledge - the spiritual assets accumulated by them - as well as a cultural life, ***medical*** assistance, can they maintain their own dignity and value and enjoy a worthwhile life.

People in the DPRK are enjoying to their hearts' content the social and cultural rights including the right to education.

(1) Right to Education

People acquire profound knowledge of nature and society through education and develop the power of cognition and the practical ability to transform the nature and society. It is in this connection that the right to education is the right of the people, as the independent and creative beings which must be ensured.

International human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulate that the right to education constitutes an integral part of human rights and lay down in detail the norms with regards to the right to education.

However, the international human rights instruments, at its very most, limited the right to education only to free and compulsory primary education. They also only referred to the contents related to school education.

The DPRK, surpassing the requirement of international human rights instruments, introduced a policy of free education for all to ensure the right to education to all the working people.

The DPRK put forward educational policy that meets the realistic demands of the educational development of the knowledge-based economy and world trend. It is aimed at training talented technicians and experts by developing onto a higher stage the universal 12-year compulsory education as well as the educational system of such various forms as full-time education, part-time education and enhancing the scientific and theoretical level of education of technology, social science and basic science.

At the same time, it is the policy that provides the free education to all students and grants university and college students the scholarship. In particular, children of preschool age are brought up in kindergartens and nurseries at the expense by the state and the society.

All the citizens in the DPRK receive the compulsory secondary education until they reach the working age.

The governmental and educational bodies at local levels are obliged to enlist all the children at school age in the relevant areas to admit them to schools. All the parents and guardians of the school-age children are also obliged to admit them to schools.

The local government bodies take necessary measures to ensure all children get access to secondary education including those with disabilities and those in remote mountain areas and isolated islands.

In the DPRK, education is free and the school institutions are strictly prohibited from charging parents or guardians of children with fees for admission, lessons, study tour, school training and field trips.

The state grants scholarships to the students in universities and colleges of higher education system as well as the students under the genius education systems and of the schools for the deaf, dumb and blind. The state also provides special scholarship to excellent students and preferential scholarship of post-graduate students and in-service wages to the students who are learning, while working.

The state provides food to students at various educational levels and ensures the provision of school supplies and daily necessities at low price. The honorary disabled soldiers and those students with no one to rely upon are provided with the same supplies for free.

The state gives special attention to meeting the educational conditions through good staffing of educational bodies and improving the curricula and methods of education, all of which are aimed at providing all the working people with full right to education.

The state is making an investment to build and modernize more school education establishments such as primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and post-graduate schools as well as social education institutions including study house, library, schoolchildren's palace, students' hall, and children's camp and indoor stadiums, befitting educational purposes. It is also making investment in renovating service facilities including dormitory, dining-room and ***medical*** clinic in educational bodies. The state takes necessary measures for creating educational atmosphere and maintaining the school building and campus in a cultural and sanitary manner in conformity with the pedagogical requirements.

The state takes steps to make sure that educational bodies have the right contents of education in accordance with educational purpose and characteristics of subjects and they apply advanced education methods combined with various teaching methods including the heuristic ones to increase the effectiveness of instruction and edification, thus raising the level of independence and creativity of the students.

The state makes it as a plan to produce and supply educational equipments and materials before a new school year begins. The state sees to it that public transportation bodies, relevant organs, enterprises and establishments provide, before anything else, the conditions for practical training, study tour and field trip.

Comprehensive and universal free education, regular education that offers everybody high education, correspondence education, developed social education system and educational conditions under which one can learn to his heart's contents in any place and in any position are the main educational systems of the DPRK.

This clearly shows that the DPRK has the most advanced educational system and gives all the people the right to education at high level.

(2) Right to Participate in Scientific and Cultural Activities

Providing conditions for active and free participation in activities of scientific and cultural life and ensuring the legal protection on the creations in the scientific and cultural activities will help people to raise their intellectual abilities and enjoy the cultural and emotional life.

Ensuring the participation of popular masses in the work of science and technology and the full display of their creative thinking and wisdom is the consistent stand of the DPRK Government which attaches a great deal of importance to the development of science and technology.

The state encourages all the working people to learn science and technology and actively participate in developing them, providing every necessary possible condition.

The state encourages more inventions, innovations and rational schemes, properly evaluating them.

In particular, scientific and technical successes, achieved in the development of production and modernization, are quickly applied to the field to prove effectiveness.

In case a person makes outstanding contributions in science and technology sectors, he or she receives commendation including honorary titles, even if he or she is a worker. Bonus is also given, if the successes brought economic benefits to the state.

The DPRK fully provides the working people with right to cultural life.

In the building of national culture under socialism, the DPRK adheres to the principles of building of genuine popular and revolutionary culture that serves the people, struggling against cultural infiltration by dominationist forces and tendency of restorationism, protecting national cultural heritage to succeed and develop in conformity with the realities of socialism and removing out-dated way of life to establish a new way of living of socialism in an all-round way.

Any citizen in the DPRK can either write or create literary work.

Thanks to the people-oriented policy, writers and artists produce many cultural pieces of high ideological and artistic value, which are national in genre and socialist in content, thus letting people take part in literary and cultural activities.

The state provides sure legal guarantee for the property rights of the people, who created cultural products in the fields of literature and art and science and technology, and the intellectual property rights of those, who achieved scientific and technological successes of a new, developed and high economic effectiveness, including patent rights, industrial design rights and trademark.

Sports became popular and part of daily life in the DPRK, further promoting the right to cultural and emotional life.

Every organ, enterprise and institution has non-permanent mass sports organization, which is under regular operation. Non-permanent mass sports organizations organize mass sporting activities and provide necessary sporting facilities and apparatus.

Sporting month and day has been set for different sporting events throughout the country.

Such places as parks and recreation centres are furnished with facilities and apparatuses for mass sporting activities. Facilities are maintained on regular basis. As a result, all the working people feel comfortable to participate in sporting activities.

(3) Right to Health

The right of entire DPRK citizens to health is fully ensured by complete and universal free ***medical*** service and preventive ***medical*** care system.

- Right to Health Ensured by Free ***Medical*** Care System

In the DPRK, all the ***medical*** services such as medication, diagnosis, experimental test, treatment, operation, sick call, hospitalization, meals are free for all patients including outpatients. Preventive ***medical*** care including recuperation, delivery, health check-up, ***medical*** consultation and vaccination are also free of charge.

The state sees to it that hospitals and clinics are set up in modern way and located evenly in cities, rural areas, factories, enterprises, fishing villages and remote mountainous villages. Specialized hospitals and sanatoriums such as maternity and infant hospitals have been built in all parts of the country and necessary steps are taken to continuously improve the quality of ***medical*** services for the people to get easy access to healthcare services anywhere and anytime.

The state puts emphasis on Koryo therapy, an indigenous treatment method of the Korean nation, and expands the network of such treatment. It also encourages health institutions to widely introduce the traditional Koryo treatment method based on accurate diagnosis by modern facilities.

Many sanatoriums, equipped with modern facilities, are set up at the places of hot springs and mineral waters and other places of favourable climate so that people could enjoy the benefits of ***medical*** treatment by natural agents.

- Right to Health Ensured by Preventive Healthcare System

Right of the working people to health, along with the free ***medical*** system is realized through preventive ***medical*** treatment, aimed at taking preventive steps against diseases.

The DPRK let organs, enterprises and institutions including the public health organizations to promote hygiene-related dissemination and education so that people voluntarily keep sanitary environment, protect and preserve their good health in a scientific way and take preventive steps against diseases.

In order to protect healthy life environment, measures are taken to prevent the pollution through planting trees and increasing green areas, and protect air, rivers and streams and soil from harmful gas and hazardous materials.

The state supplies to workers items for labor protection including nutrients as well as hygienic and protective tools to prevent occurrence of industrial diseases.

Hygiene regulations set by the state are strictly observed in the production and handling of goods including foodstuff and preventive measures are taken against epidemics.

The household doctors care service system in the DPRK is an advanced system where ***medical*** doctors are in charge of certain communities to regularly visit residents and monitor their health for preventive ***medical*** service.

The household doctors care service system is the people-oriented system only to be found in the DPRK, as the state takes full responsibility for life and health of the people.

In the DPRK where the household doctors care service system is in effect, hospitals concerned prepare parthograph for every birth to record in detail the health conditions and preventive treatment. In case a resident moves his or her residence to other place, his or her parthograph is transferred to the hospital in the place. This shows that the people in the DPRK are under the meticulous care of the state from the moment of their birth to death.

Public health organs and health service providers in the DPRK are educated to do their best in protecting people's life and improving their health with a high sense of honour and responsibility for their tasks, so that people are enjoying a happy life and actively participate in social activities.

In addition, social and cultural rights including the right to international cultural cooperation, the right to information, academic freedom and the right to cultural heritage are fully ensured in the DPRK.

5) Rights of Special Group

The issue how the rights of a special group are ensured is an important index indicating human rights situation of a certain country.

In the DPRK, due attention is paid to rights of special group including women, children and the elderly to ensure their full exercise of rights.

(1) Rights of Women

Women in the DPRK have equal rights with men and fully enjoy their independent and creative life in all sectors of society.

The following are the realities showing how women are enjoying their rights.

- Political Life

Women in the DPRK freely take part in election activities as they have the right to elect and be elected. As they are also masters of state power, they are actively participating in its activities.

Since the election of the members of the people's committees at provincial, city and county level, the first of its kind in the history of the DPRK, held on November 3, 1946, women have been exercising the equal election rights with men.

Women in the DPRK enjoy freedom and right to all socio-political activities like speech, publication, assembly and demonstration.

Every woman belongs to political organizations guided by the party and the state and works hard to implement the line and policy of the DPRK Government.

Many women work as officials of the party and state organs and social organizations.

- Education

Completely free education is enforced in the DPRK where every woman enjoys equal right with man in learning without any payment.

The 12-year education system and higher education system fully established in the DPRK enable every person to be educated.

Today, the DPRK has millions of intellectuals. Among them, the number of women technicians and experts reaches more than one million.

The DPRK is the only country where all people, irrespective of gender, have access to free education in their lifetime.

- Public Health

The issue of ensuring the rights of women in the public health sector is an important one to lay a solid foundation for not only protecting their health but further improving the health conditions of the humankind in general.

Only when mothers are healthy, can they give birth to healthy babies and bring them up healthily.

From this point of view, protection and improvement of women's life and health come to be an important matter, which is decided on the public health services for women.

Not only female workers but also housewives and children in the DPRK are the beneficiaries of free ***medical*** care.

Especially, special benefits are granted to nursing mothers as well as to new-born babies.

The Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, equipped with sophisticated and modern ***medical*** facilities, assists women in giving safe birth on the basis of latest scientific and technological successes. The maternity hospital, at the same time, completely cures the diseases of nursing mothers during their life in hospital.

The Breast Tumour Institute of the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, which was completed on October 8, 2012, has 1,974 square meters of building area with 8,500 square meters of total floor space, has diagnosis and treatment rooms and sick-rooms including mammographic rooms, X-ray rooms, cancer treatment rooms, physio-therapy rooms, body weight and temperature measuring rooms, ultrasonography rooms and operation rooms. The institute is making great contributions to improving health conditions of women.

Besides the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, the people's hospitals at provinces, cities (districts), counties and towns have obstetrical departments. The hospitals register every pregnant woman in relevant regions and provide ***medical*** assistance and help in delivery. The hospitals take good care of women's health after the delivery and take every possible measure to prevent diseases.

Thanks to the advantageous health system centered on people, the average life expectancy of women is steadily increasing.

- Labour

Proper selection and allocation of jobs and labor for women are an important condition that enables them to work creatively according to their physical conditions and capacities.

For this, the DPRK takes preferential measures to specially protect and treat women in the field of their working life.

It is strictly prohibited to allocate women to the working places that are harmful to their health and inappropriate for their physical conditions. Night-time work is not allowed for nursing mothers and pregnant women. No one can let married women to work overtime or work on holidays and send women in over four month of pregnancy for itinerant work or official trip.

When triplets are born, the state provides them with clothes, blankets, milk products, etc. free of charge and gives subsidy to their parents until they reach the school age. The state also assigns a doctor to every triplet and their mother to take care of their health.

Female workers with babies before their first birthday are allowed to have enough time for breast-***feeding*** within working hours. Six-month pregnant workers are given easy works before their maternity leave.

The state assigns to organs, enterprises and institutions a duty to set up separate toilets for women as defined by the state's regulation and necessary service facilities like nurseries, kindergartens and ***medical*** ward for children.

Public health institutions should regularly check up the health conditions of female workers, especially pregnant women, in order to protect and improve their health.

(2) Rights of the Child

To ensure the rights of children is an issue of weighty importance, which decides the future of the country and nation as well as with the humankind.

In the DPRK where children are regarded as the king of the country, every child enjoys equal rights, irrespective of their gender, jobs of their parents or guardians, property status and physical conditions.

- Nationality

Every child in the DPRK is entitled to having a name and receiving care from the state and society and their parents.

In acquiring nationality by birth, every child has the right to acquire the nationality of the DPRK as follows:

- The child born between the DPRK citizens

- The child born between a DPRK citizen and a foreigner who is residing in the domain of the DPRK

- The child born between a citizen of the DPRK and a stateless citizen who is residing in the domain of the DPRK

- The child born between stateless citizens who are residing in the domain of the DPRK

- The child born in the domain of the DPRK without the identification of parents.

Children have the right to preserve their identity like nationality, name and family relationship.

Children can join the children's organizations including the Children's Union.

And they are free to express their views and opinions through speeches, writings, publications and works of art.

Their privacy, family, correspondence, honor and character are protected by law.

Kidnapping and trafficking of children as well as child labour are strictly prohibited.

The child can make complaints and petitions.

- Education and Healthcare

Children in the DPRK have the right to receive the universal 12-year free compulsory education as well as the right to developing their talents and fulfilling their hopes.

Children who are not under the care of their parents or guardians are brought up in baby homes, orphanages and boarding schools at state expenses.

Children in the DPRK have the right to receive the benefits of complete and universal free ***medical*** care. All expenses including ***medical*** consultation, sample test, medication, inpatient treatment, recuperation and travel expenses, ***medical*** check-up, vaccination, utilization of fixing ***medical*** apparatus are paid by the state.

- Civil Rights

Children in the DPRK have the right to education and nurture by their parents under the family environment favorable for their growth and development.

Parents or guardians pay special attention to education and edification of the children of physical defects and take good care of their life and health.

Families are encouraged to respect children's will to the full. Such acts as ill-treatment, indifference, cursing, reprehension and beating against them are not allowed.

Guardians can be selected for children without the care of their parents. Guardians should be their grandparents and brothers and sisters.

Anyone can foster or adopt children of other people. In this case, foster parents should nurture and educate them like their true children. The rights to fostering and adoption are legally protected.

Following persons cannot foster or adopt children.

- Person deprived of the right to vote

- Person with diseases harmful to the child's health

- Person incapable of nurture and education

Children are granted the right to inherit. Violation of this right for the reason that he/she is a child is considered to be illegal.

- Administration of Justice

Every child in the DPRK has the right to be treated as a child in all legal procedures.

Punishment can be imposed only on those over 14 years old when he or she commits a crime and death penalty can never be imposed on those under 18 years old.

Child criminal above 14 years old has the right to get help from a counsel. The law organs, in any case, are not allowed to force children to admit offenses or lead their statements. The law enforcement organs should examine a child as a witness in the presence of his or her protectors like parents, guardian and teacher. The law organs cannot examine child as a witness without the presence of his or her protectors.

In case the law enforcement organs arrest or detain parents of a child, they inform the child of the reasons for their arrest or detention, the place of detention, etc., unless it gives harm to the child.

It is the consistent policy of the DPRK to attach importance to children and ensure their rights and interests ahead of others. The DPRK government continues to pay deep attention to their growth and development. Under the principle of "Best Things to the Children!" it is taking every necessary measure, so that the children fully exercise their rights and enjoy a happy life with nothing to envy in the world.

(3) Rights of the Aged Persons

The aged people are the old generation, who dedicated all their wisdom and enthusiasm to development of the state and society as well as to the creation of economic and cultural wealth.

It is the DPRK policy to treat the aged people with respect and look after their life and health in a responsible manner. The state makes a steady investment in protecting the aged people and makes efforts to provide them with a civilized and happy life. It also puts emphasis on education in socialist ethics and fine traits, so that assist, respect and care for the aged people become the trend of the society.

In the DPRK, the obligation of supporting the aged people is assigned to their spouses and also to their sons or daughters and grandchildren who live together or not. Their brothers or sisters can be supporters.

The aged people regularly receive pension and state aids of various kinds. Even if they have their supporters, they can receive the state support according to their requests.

The aged people have the right to possess and dispose their personal properties as well as the right to receive health check-up and treatment on a regular basis from the health institutions in-charge and ***medical*** institutions. The aged people are entitled to be supplied with nutritional foodstuffs and tonics rich in micronutrients like vitamin and calcium on a preferential basis and according to their physiological characteristics.

They can participate in different popular sports activities for them and have the right to be provided with conditions necessary for normal exercises including rhythimic gymnastics and Taekwondo.

Macrobians over 100 years old receive the social benefits specified by the state. The old people, according to their hopes, can go for vacation, sightseeing, tourism and excursion in the days of spring or autumn. They, according to their will and ability, can participate in various social activities and organize and operate workteams or associations for the merited workers or the old people.

Government organs at all levels have non-permanent protection committee for the aged people in order to accurately carry out policy of protecting the old people. The Korea Federation for Care of the Aged and other relevant institutions are handling practical matters.

The DPRK has established the Fund for Protecting the Aged People to reserve and expend the fund for protecting the aged people.

Fine traits and optimistic way of life of the aged people as well as exemplary deeds in protecting them are introduced by mass media. Commercial, public service and transport institutions treat the old people preferentially after setting Seats for the old people and Day for the old people and provide good services to them.

As shown above, the DPRK provides every condition to the old people so that they can perform the role of old generation and elders of society and family.

(4) Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The handicapped are the people who should be specially protected by the state and society, as they lost or have limited physical and mental functions.

The DPRK respects the personalities of the people with disabilities in order to provide favourable environment and conditions to them for their recovery, education, cultural life and working. The state gives them the same social and political rights, freedom and interests as those of healthy people.

The state increases investments in the sector of protecting the disabled people and modernizes its materialistic and technical means in order to fully ensure their rights. It also set it as a principle to find and cure in time the diseases, which cause disabling, as well as to take preventive steps against traffic accidents and labour disasters, which produce disabled people.

The state strengthens the educational work among people to kindly treat and help the disabled people with noble consciousness and obligation. The state also set it as a principle to treat in a preferential manner the disabled people including honorary disabled soldiers who made devotion to the motherland and people.

According to such principles of protecting the disabled people, following rights are given to the disabled people in the DPRK.

- Healthcare Service

The disabled people can receive ***medical*** care in the special or integrated recovery centers for them. They can be treated in organs, enterprises, entities and families under the assistance of ***medical*** workers.

In recovery and treatment of the disabled, western ***medicine*** and traditional Koryo ***medicine*** are combined to take effect, together with the utilization of natural factors. Modern treatment equipments and curing methods are applied for the treatment of the disabled.

- Education

To strengthen the education of the disabled persons is a major method that enables them to possess profound knowledge and qualifications.

In the DPRK, the disabled persons, who are under school age, are entitled to receiving nursing and education in nurseries, kindergartens and recovery and treatment organs. Nursing and education fees are paid by the state or organs, enterprises and organizations.

The disabled people who are at schooling age can learn in a special class organized in ordinary schools as well as in special schools for the blind, the deaf and dumb and intellectual development schools according to their physical and mental characters and disabled types.

The disabled people have the rights to be provided with special educational materials and educational tools and facilities of special schools from the state.

They, according to their hopes, can enter colleges and universities. In this case, main stress is put on their real ability.

They have the rights to learn in trade schools of massaging, computer typing, painting and designing. In this case, considerations are given to their scholastic ability, age and the degree of disabilities.

- Labour

The disabled people have the right to select jobs according to their gender, age and physical ability. They can also work in special enterprises or organizations for the disabled people, if necessary.

Working time for the disabled people is shorter than 8 hours according to the degree of their disabilities.

It is not allowed to let the disabled people work in the labour environment of not enough working conditions.

- Cultural Life and Others

The people with disabilities can take part in sports good for keeping their health and improving their physical abilities. They can enjoy their lives at cultural and recreation centres for them built by the state.

The people with disabilities, who engage in physical and mental labour, have the right to adequate rest. Preference is given to them in terms of recuperation, rest and ***medical*** treatment.

The people with disabilities who rendered distinguished service to the state are awarded medals, orders and honorary titles. Allowance is provided to those who completely lost the ability to work.

Convenience is fully offered to the people with disabilities in the utilization of communication and transport means, convenience facilities. Atmosphere of treating them in a preferential manner is encouraged throughout the society.

The physically handicapped who cannot support himself including the blind are entitled to use public transportation means such as bus, trolley bus, commuting train and ferry with no charge.

The DPRK has set every June 18 as the Day of Persons with Disabilities and, on the day, conducts a wide campaign for protecting and supporting the handicapped to create an atmosphere of protecting and supporting them throughout the society.

3. DPRK Position and Its Efforts for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights at the International Level

This part clarifies the view and principled stand of the DPRK on ensuring human rights at the international level and describes the implementation of international conventions on human rights and international cooperation in the field of the human rights.

1) Principled Stand of the DPRK on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights at the International Level

Human rights are universal ideal and justice, common to humankind. It is a common obligation of every country to protect and promote human rights on a global scale.

The DPRK, as a member of the international community, is faithfully implementing its obligations to ensure human rights based on its correct views and stand on ensuring human rights at the international level.

?Views on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights at the International Level

- Why Did the Issue of Human Rights Promotion at the International Level Come up?

The imperialist powers intensified war and aggression from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, all of which were aimed at dividing the world. This gave birth to numerous human rights issues in imperialist countries.

The progressive people made great efforts to address the human rights issues both locally and internationally.

Such efforts resulted in signing of international treaties on human rights including Geneva Convention in 1864, Treaty on Banning Sales of Slaves, Treaty on Protecting Minorities as well as in formation of International Red Cross Committee and International Labour Organization.

However such efforts were limited to a few countries, regions and field. At that time, there was neither a clear idea nor standard for ensuring human rights at the international level.

It was since the mid-1940s of the last century when the protection of human rights became global issue and the great efforts to solve it were made.

Lessons drawn from World War II highlighted the issue of promoting human rights at international level.

World War II, provoked by fascist Germany and its allies, was aimed at enslaving all people and dominating the whole world. This brought untold misfortunes, pains and disasters to the humankind.

The Hitlerites occupied numerous countries including Poland to indiscriminately massacre innocent people, infringed upon the people's basic democratic freedom and rights and enforced an unprecedented, fascist rule over the countries.

Joining in World War II, the Japanese imperialists occupied most parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific region and committed atrocities including plundering and killing people. They massacred almost two million people in Vietnam and Indonesia and 1.1 million people in the Philippines.

From the moment of its occupation until defeat, the Japanese imperialists committed barbaric atrocities in Korea such as killing of more than one million people, forcible drafting and kidnapping of about 8.4 million people and taking away 200 000 women as sex slaves for the Japanese army.

The international community, while experiencing bloody tragedy in World War II, keenly felt the need to check and foil war and aggression as well as the violation of human rights by the imperialists both internally and externally.

At the same time, there were strong voices from the international community that if the international human rights instruments or mechanisms that bind every country to obligation had existed, such violations of human rights as Holocaust of Jews and mass-killing of civilians could have been prevented, though it was hard to check the outbreak of the world war.

Such lessons led to the birth of the United Nations and the issue of ensuring human rights at international level came up as main agenda for discussion in the international arena.

Another factor that triggered the human rights issue at international level was the struggle for human rights and democracy staged worldwide.

After World War II, the growth of socialism and the ever more serious contradictions of capitalism clearly revealed the fact that capitalist society is a system that violates human rights.

Consequently, many people in Asia, Africa and Latin America overthrew social systems that went against people's rights. They unfolded vigorous struggles to build a new society that fully defends the independent rights of the people and finally achieved national independence.

These countries worked hard to defend sovereignty and resources of their nations as well as to ensure the rights to socio-economic development.

At the same time, people in capitalist countries took an active part in the movement to ensure their rights including the right to existence.

Such global trend for human rights and democracy made it possible for the issue of ensuring human rights at international level to emerge as the most important matter in the world.

Another factor that triggered the human rights issue at international level was the severe violation of human rights on a global scale.

With the end of the World War II, mankind believed that peace settled in the world.

However, the beginning of the Cold War by the U.S. put an end to such dreams.

The U.S., under the pretext of protecting the "Free World" from "communist threats", declared a Cold War aimed at obliterating socialism. The U.S., at the same time, became undisguised in their moves to invade and unleash wars against other countries as well as to interfere in their internal affairs.

The U.S. and its followers toppled the regimes of various countries and severely infringed upon the rights of their peoples. Accordingly, the sovereignty and human rights of many countries and nations came under serious threat.

Violation of human rights including racial discrimination became ever more blatant in the capitalist countries such as the U.S. and Apartheid South Africa.

Human rights abuses were getting serious in imperialist colonies like south Korea, which is still under the occupation of the U.S.

Grave human rights situations on a global scale called for the settlement of this issue by common efforts of the world people and raised the issue of ensuring human rights at international level.

- Seriousness and Complication of Human Rights Promotion at International Level

At present, the issue of ensuring human rights at international level becomes more serious with each passing day, as the U.S. and other Western countries violate human rights of their own people and infringe on the human rights of the people of other countries.

The U.S. and other Western countries ruthlessly trample down political freedom and rights as well as socio-economic and cultural rights of their own people. By doing so, they intensify the violation of the people's human rights.

The U.S., with only 5 percent of the entire world population, accounts for 25 percent of the total number of prisoners around the world. It is reported that the majority of those prisoners are the people who demanded their political freedom and rights.

Evil acts of all kinds including mediaeval and decadent tortures are under way in the U.S. prisons even at this time, when the world is on its way to reach a new level of human civilization. The U.S., which is called an "exemplar of human rights", is prevalent with racial discrimination deeds, all of which are at its administration's connivance and instigation.

EU nations boast of material civilization. However, as the people in these countries are not adequately provided with the rights to work, food and housing, a huge number of unemployed are wandering the streets. In Germany alone, the unemployment amounts to 2.92 million in June this year.

Japan has 2.33 million jobless as of May this year.

People are in constant anxiety and horror with extreme individualism, misanthropy, degenerated ways of life and superstition rampant in the U.S. and other western countries. In addition, those countries are prevalent with such crimes as murder, robbery, rape, prostitution, racial discrimination, chauvinism of other nations, torture and ill-treatment of indigenous people and immigrants. This is today's reality.

The U.S. and other Western countries, under the signboard of "protecting human rights", unleash a war against other countries to enslave people, openly interfere in their internal affairs and severely infringe upon the rights of the people.

The aggressive wars trample down the sovereignty of countries, take the lives of a great number of innocent people and threaten their rights to existence and hold back the socio-economic and cultural development.

The U.S. made an armed invasion against Grenada, conducted indiscriminate air raids on the former Yugoslavia and ignited wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, all of which were carried out under the pretext of "protecting the human rights".

The U.S. has set up secret prisons in different parts of the world and kidnaps people on a worldwide scale and conducts torture against them. At least 160 prisoners are now experiencing all sorts of hardships in secret prisons in Guantanamo Bay, run by the U.S. Navy.

Its indiscriminate drone attacks take the lives of innocent civilians in various countries including Pakistan and Yemen.

The U.S. has committed such indiscriminate atrocities as wiretapping and intercepting e-mails, targeting many countries and people. This is not only an illegal and outrageous act of espionage but also a disgraceful act that violates human rights.

The U.S. has, up to now, installed wiretapping facilities in almost 80 places of the world and mobilized intelligence agencies including CIA to wiretap conversations of not only senior officials including Presidents of its allied nations but also ordinary people.

The U.S. and other Western countries capitalize on "human rights issue" to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries aspiring after independence and topple their regimes. They also instigate the reactionary forces to suppress the human rights of the people.

They are clamoring about "human rights issue" in the DPRK, abusing the power of international human rights organizations. This is an act of interfering in other's internal affairs and a violation of human rights aimed at bringing down the regime.

The continuation of global conflicts and domestic rebellions result in violation of human rights including people's rights to life. The main reason lies in the motives of the U.S. and other Western countries to interfere and gain profits from the escalated tensions and the conflicts of others.

Many countries undergo economic difficulties and people's rights to existence are threatened. This is entirely attributable to the economic blockade and sanctions imposed by the U.S. and other Western countries.

The issue of ensuring human rights at international level becomes ever more complicated with each passing day due to the high-handed and arbitrary practices and doubled standards of the U.S. and other Western countries.

Today, dialogues and cooperation for the protection and promotion of human rights diminished in the international field of human rights. Instead, high-handed and arbitrary practices and double-standards based on political interests of some countries are becoming ever more pronounced.

The U.S. and other Western countries turn a blind eye to the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference, trust and mutual benefits and make unilateral demands to "cooperate" and "collaborate" in the sector of human rights.

It is true that collaboration and exchanges are needed in order to ensure the human rights on an international level.

Such collaboration and exchanges, to all intents and purposes, should be made according to the accepted principles of international law. This should not be set as conditions to interfere in internal affairs of other countries.

The U.S. and other Western countries create complexities in such a way that they refer the issue of human rights not only to the international political organizations including the United Nations but also to the international economic and trade organizations. Human rights issues, which have nothing to do with economy and trade, are discussed at the forums of international economic and trade organizations and, consequently, the countries are sharply divided over their opinions. This is entirely attributable to the moves of the U.S. and other Western countries against human rights.

It is none other than the U.S. and other Western countries that take advantage of international organizations for their own interests; they ignore international organizations and act on their own, in case their interests are threatened.

The U.S. publishes "Report on Human Rights" on an annual basis and adopts bills targeting other countries. This fact clearly shows to what extent the arbitrary practices, high-handedness and double-standards of the U.S. have gone.

The U.S., in its"2013 Report on Human Rights" published this year, asserted that such countries as China, Russia, Cuba and Iran infringe upon the human rights of their own people, impudently claiming that no other country exerts much efforts to defend human rights than the U.S. does.

As far as the annual "Report on Human Rights" by the U.S. State Department is concerned, it is a document of vicious political provocation, aimed at slandering and insulting the sovereign states with the "human rights standards" based on the American value. This is a prelude of aggression and intervention against sovereign states by the U.S., which poses as a "human rights judge" of the world.

- Ways to Promote Human Rights at the International Level

Out of the noble aspiration and desire of humankind and efforts of international society to protect and promote human rights, considerable number of human rights-related international conventions were adopted and organizations established and numerous successes have been achieved so far.

Promoting the human rights at international level, however, remains one of the global issues that require urgent solution.

In order to properly address the human rights issue, independent development and prosperity of each country and nation should be secured in the first place.

Each country and nation, rather than foreign country, nation or any international organizations, should be responsible for addressing the human rights issues, and accordingly it is urgent to achieve the independent development and prosperity of each country and nation.

In the absence of independent principle, a country and nation can not develop; without its strong national power, it has no choice but to rely on foreign forces and it would eventually become slaves of imperialism, let alone the promotion of human rights of its people. This is the truth proven by the history and reality.

Only when independent development and prosperity of each country and nation is secured, it is possible to fully ensure its people's human rights and further promote and reliably protect them.

What is important in achieving the independent development and prosperity of each country and nation is to thoroughly maintain independence in politics, self-support in the economy and self-reliance in national defence.

Secondly, it is needed to foil the moves conducted by the U.S. and other Western countries under the pretext of "human rights protection".

The issue of international protection and promotion of human rights was brought up by the very forces that infringed upon independence of other countries. The main obstacles to the international promotion of human rights at present are the moves of the U.S. and other Western countries for "human rights protection".

Without frustrating such moves, it is impossible to expect a solution to the issue of ensuring human rights at the international level and build a free and prosperous, new world.

Each country should reject the manoeuvres of the U.S. and other Western countries for "protection of human rights" as an act of severely violating the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference and firmly defend its sovereignty.

Unity of the anti-imperialist independent forces and close cooperation among countries are required to oppose and reject the high-handed and arbitrary practices and double-standard of the U.S. and other Western countries in the international field of human rights.

Thirdly, increasing the role of international human rights organizations is vital to properly settling the issue of human rights at the international level.

Currently, there exist many international organizations dealing human rights issue such as UNGA and UN Human Rights Council whose efforts resulted in some progress in promoting human rights at the international level.

However, most of these organizations have a series of shortcomings in activities, in view of their objective and mission and, consequently, serious issues remain unresolved in the international field of human rights.

The role of UNGA is important before anything else in increasing the role of the international human rights organizations.

The UNGA should make due contribution to the promotion of human rights at the international level in conformity with the basic spirit of the UN Charter which sets the respect for and provision of human rights as one of its key objectives.

The conspiratorial, interventional and bellicose attempts by the U.S. and other western countries in the name of international organizations such as UNGA should never be tolerated.

In particular, UN Human Rights Council, one of the subsidiary bodies of the UNGA, should never be abused as a tool to serve for the interests of certain countries while human rights situation in each country should be reviewed in an objective and impartial manner.

\* The "Commission of Inquiry (COI)" on human rights situation in the DPRK, a marionette of the U.S. and its satellite forces, fabricated and circulated its "report" based on "testimonies" of human scum who betrayed their homeland and people.

Members of the "COI" are despicable human rights abusers bribed by the U.S. and its allies to distort the facts and deliberately tarnish the image of a sovereign state.

The HRC makes a fuss about fictitious "human rights situation" based on false documents fabricated by those criminals and attempts to put political pressure. This arouses doubt on whether the HRC is an international body serving for the promotion of human rights.

UN Human Rights Council should, in conformity with its objective and mission, make a substantial contribution to preventing the human rights violations and improving the human rights situation in the world.

It is also important to constantly revise, supplement and adopt the international human rights conventions that respect the sovereignty of a nation and reflect noble aspiration, desire of humankind and requirements of the present times. Strictly maintaining objectivity, prudence and impartiality by the international human rights organizations in their activities is of importance.

In particular, the existing mechanisms such as periodic review of national report, inter-state communications and individual communication procedures, set up by the international conventions, should never be abused to serve for interference and other sinister purposes.

? Views and Principled Stand on International Human Rights Instruments

- Assessment on International Human Rights Instruments

International human rights instrument is a part of the international laws which reflect the unanimous desire of countries and nations demanding uniform criteria and rules of conduct for the universal promotion of human rights and lawful requirements for the development of international relations.

International human rights instruments are adopted through agreement of countries. They stipulate provisions on obligations of each country, cooperation among countries, establishment of human rights-related organization and its principle and method of activities for the protection and promotion of human rights.

International human rights instruments are in other words "junior international law" for their immense scope and context and are divided into several categories according to the content and subject of application, coverage and specific theme, etc.

International human rights instruments are distinguished from other international laws as they cover all issues concerning human rights and lay down principles for its promotion.

International human rights instruments set forth as their basic principles the respect for dignity and value of person, prohibition of all forms of discrimination, ensurance of freedom and equality.

They play an important role for promoting human rights both at the national and international level.

Every country assumes obligation to respect for international human rights instruments and observe their requirements.

However, the international human rights instruments have shortcomings in the view of aspiration of humankind for defending and realizing independence and in the light of the developing reality.

Firstly, there are practices of reflecting dominationist demand and interests, pursuant to the western value, in formulation and adoption of the international human rights instruments and their contents, etc.

Due to the assertion and manoeuvres by the U.S. and other Western countries, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which are the main human rights instruments, did not mention several rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

Even though the trusteeship itself is a violation of human rights, some international human rights-related conventions pointed out so-called "promotion of human rights" under the trusteeship.

Apart from this, some conventions allow the application of the convention as a tool for interference in internal affairs of a sovereign state.

At present, in many cases the U.S. and other western countries abuse the international human rights instruments as a means to justify the suppression of their people as well as invasion, interference and human rights violations against other countries and nations.

The international human rights instruments were adopted, driven by unanimous desire and demand of mankind aspiring the promotion of human rights. Therefore, they must reflect the interests of popular masses and respect the sovereignty of each state.

So-called "cooperation" between the U.S. and other Western countries in the field of human rights is nothing but collaboration to infringe upon the sovereignty and interfere in internal affairs of other countries and put the world under their control.

Therefore, "treaty" or "agreement" on the promotion of human rights, agreed among these countries, cannot constitute, in essence, an international human rights instrument.

Secondly, the shortcoming of international human rights instruments is manifested in its failure to respond more effectively to expression of human rights abuses in all their forms and their catastrophic consequences.

Typical example is a crime of genocide.

The genocide is a crime aimed at cleansing the whole and some of national, ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted as one the first international human rights conventions after the foundation of the UN.

Nevertheless, perpetration of genocide continued due to the aggression, domination policy, xenophobia, discard of other religions by the U.S. and other Western countries; which became one of serious international agenda and human rights issues.

Under such circumstances, the convention needs to be amended in such was as to detail various forms of genocide and take preventive measures.

In addition to this, it is necessary to adopt new international law and regulations which include strict punishment of perpetrators of genocide, combined with UN efforts.

In 1993, UN Security Council set up a provisional tribunal to investigate so-called "genocide" committed in former Yugoslavia and in 1994 expanded its jurisdiction to deal with the "genocide" in Rwanda.

What should be called in question is that UN, influenced by the U.S. and other Western countries, has failed to take steps to punish the crimes of genocide committed by these countries against other national, religious and racial groups on a worldwide scale.

It is none other than the U.S. and other Western countries who are prime perpetrators of human rights violations around the world including the crime of genocide; thus, they should be held accountable under international law.

- Views on the Parties to the International Human Rights Instruments

Each state becomes a party to the international human rights instruments.

The reason why every state becomes a party to the international human rights instruments is that their regulations consist of agreements among countries and all issues arising among them are to be solved by themselves.

Sovereignty is basic factor which ensures the ability to exercise the right and fulfill obligation to the international human rights instruments and is a fundamental condition for defending dignity and equal rights of a state in the international field of human rights.

Only when state exercises sovereignty, can it resolve all issues related to human rights according to its own decision and judgment.

At present, since the U.S. and other Western countries intensify their attempt to interfere and rule other sovereign states, national independence is of very importance for each country to properly address human rights issues as a full-fledged party to the international human rights instruments.

The DPRK, as a sovereign state maintaining firm national independence, fully exercises its sovereignty in the international field of human rights and faithfully discharges its obligations to the international human rights instruments upon its own will.

Every nation is equal and has a legitimate right to self-determination to decide its destiny. Each nation deserves such right whether or not it founded its own sovereign state.

For the nation without a sovereign state, external relations in pursuit of protection and promotion of human rights fall under responsibility of an organization representing the nation. Therefore, an organization fighting for national liberation is also a party to the international human rights instruments.

In order for such organization to become a party to international human rights instruments, it should have a legitimate representation of the whole nation with leading organ and certain structure.

- Fundamental Principles in the Interpretation of the International Human Rights Instruments

As international human rights conventions are adopted upon the agreement among states with different social systems, countries differ in their interpretation and application of the conventions.

Any of international human rights conventions can be interpreted and applied either properly or wrongly depending on the position of a given country.

As mentioned above, there are many irrational and outdated aspects in existing international human rights instruments that do not fully meet the aspiration of humankind for independence and fall behind the current development.

Under these conditions, setting a proper principle for the interpretation and application of the international human rights instruments and fully observing it is one of the very important theoretical and practical issues in ensuring the human rights at the international level.

The basic principle of the DPRK in the interpretation and application of the international human rights instruments is to adhere to the independent standpoint.

Each nation applies an international human rights convention based on its approval and ratification of the convention.

However, provisions set forth in the convention should not be applied without any consideration.

As the situation, condition and standard on human rights vary according to each country, it is necessary to consider the will and requirement of the country concerned in interpreting and applying the international human rights instruments.

Thus, countries make certain reservations in approving and ratifying an international human rights convention; apply the legal provisions under the convention according to its own requirements for promoting human rights and specific conditions of the country.

Each nation should not allow any pressure or interference by outside forces in the interpretation and application of the international human rights instruments.

Failing to resolve on its own the issues related to human rights under the pressure and influence of others means the deprivation of the right as a party to the international human rights instruments. Likewise, following others' intention and acting against the interests of its people mean the abandonment of independent right.

Developments in many countries prove this fact. Under the pressure and coercion of the U.S. and other Western countries, these countries approved and applied several international human rights instruments against the demand of their people and in ignorance of domestic situation, resulting in social confusion and disorder, further aggravation of inequality.

As human rights abuses becomes ever more serious throughout the world, developing the cooperation in the international field of human rights to oppose human rights violations and establish a new international relations that ensures genuine human rights is no contradiction to independent standpoint.

However, what is utmost important in this case is to maintain a stance to resolve human rights issues on its own efforts.

As the international human rights instruments are applied in detail to the reality of each nation, preset viewpoint and dogmatic way of thinking restrict the creativity in the solution of the issues related to human rights and make it impossible to understand correctly the current situation and find proper solution to the human rights issues.

Thus, every nation should solve the issues for ensuring human rights by discarding dogmatic attitude toward the application of international human rights instruments and adopting the human rights policy, formulating its own law and taking other necessary measures on the basis of clear understanding of reality.

2) Faithful Implementation of the International Human Rights Conventions

?DPRK-acceded International Human Rights Instruments

Numerous international human rights instruments had been adopted so far for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Of these, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR - Covenant A), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Covenant B) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and some others form key international human right instruments.

International human rights conventions to which the DPRK is a party are as follows:

o International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The DPRK acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on July 30, 1981 and it took effect as from September 1981.

o International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

ICCPR, one of the comprehensive and core international human rights instruments, has been abused as a tool for the U.S. and other Western countries after the cold war to raise an issue of human rights situation in developing countries, impose their "human rights standards" and interfere in internal affairs.

Especially, on the 49th Session of the UN Human Rights Subcommittee, the U.S. and other Western countries openly attempted to slander and criticize the DPRK and interfere in its internal affairs by abusing the international human rights conventions such as ICCPR.

In this regard, the DPRK announced its decision to quit the ICCPR in August 1997, followed by written notification to the secretary-general of the United Nations.

? Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The DPRK acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women on February 8, 2001 and it took effect as from March 29, 2001.

? Convention on the Rights of the Child

The DPRK signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on August 23, 1990 and ratified it on September 21, 1990.

? Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPRK signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and examination on its ratification is underway.

? Implementation of the International Human Rights Instruments to Which the DPRK is a Party

- Submission of Periodic Reports and Participation in the Reviews

o International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The DPRK's initial national report was submitted in November 1991, followed by its review. Its second report was submitted in November 2003 and reviewed.

o Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Its first report was submitted in July 2005 and reviewed.

o Convention on the Rights of the Child

First report was submitted in June 1998, second report in June 2004 and 3rd and 4th report in January 2009 and reviewed.

\*Mechanism on periodic review of national reports is a process through which each state regularly submits report on its implementation of the obligation to the relevant human rights convention and participates in the review of the report.

Such mechanism plays key role in protecting human rights and developing relations between member states and treaty bodies concerned.

However, some recommendations and comments raised during review and interactive dialog between the treaty body secretariat and state under review contain several issues including the ones that infringe upon sovereignty and interfere in other's internal affairs.

o Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under the UN Human Rights Council

On December 2009, DPRK had its first cycle of the UPR, followed by its second review on May 2014. It has been sincerely implementing the recommendations made in these reviews.

At present, the DPRK is carrying out preparations for the ratification of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities such as incorporating components of the Convention into domestic law regarding people with disabilities.

And possibility of acceding to some other international conventions such as Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography is under discussion with institutions concerned.

- Adoption and Amendment of National Laws and Other Measures

All the rights set out in the international human rights instruments are fully provided by the Socialist Constitution and human rights laws, thanks to the human rights policy and efforts of the Government of the popular and democratic socialist DPRK.

The rights provided by domestic human rights laws cover all the sectors of social life including politics, economy and culture and many of the rights are at the higher level compared with requirements set by international conventions and these rights are also realized at high level.

As a party to international human rights instruments, the DPRK specifies the requirements and contents of the international human rights conventions in text of domestic human rights-related laws and regulations, and applies them. Or components of international conventions are directly applied.

Since latter half of the 1990s, numerous local laws were either newly adopted or amended taking into account of the principles, fundamental idea and basic components of international human rights conventions while considering the demand of people, current situation of the country and the requirements of the developing era.

In the recent years, new laws including law on enforcement of universal 12-year compulsory education, law on child rights, law on women's rights, law on protection of person with disabilities, law on labour protection, law on general secondary education and law on higher education were adopted and the laws on public health, copyright and dwelling houses were either amended or supplemented.

Other measures were taken for the promotion of rights in several sectors including legal and practical measures to reduce the ratio of penalty of reform through labour and the term of penalty of disciplining through labour by and large.

In January 2012, general amnesty was granted to the convicted persons and lenient policy was enforced such as exemption and reduction of penalties to the persons who have confessed their crime. This is the example of the provision of civil and political rights.

Criminal Procedure Law was amended and supplemented in 2011 to fully ensure the independence of justice and fair trial and measures were taken to punish or prevent human rights violations and abuse of power by law enforcement officials during the process of handling cases.

Law on complaints and petitions was amended and supplemented and increased the function and role of complaints-handling machinery set up in the institutions at all levels including people's power organs so that they could settle complaints and petitions in a quick and fair manner.

With a view to further qualitative improvement of education and provide more effective guidance to the educational work, organization measures are being taken, including restructuring Ministry of Education to be Education Commission comprising Ministries of Higher Education and General Secondary Education.

On the occasion of Day of Human Rights, International Women's Day, June 1st International Children's Day, International Day of Old Persons, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, dissemination activities are carried out by TV, media and the press to introduce principles, requirements and contents of international human rights conventions highlighting those conventions to which the DPRK is a party. Several popular policies and measures are being taken to provide the peoples with adequate conditions for material and cultural life.

Research work on interrelations of the laws of international and internal human rights is being intensified in several organs including college of law in

Kim Il Sung University, law research institute in Academy of Social Science, Association for Human Rights Studies in DPRK and Association of Lawyers in DPRK.

The DPRK gives serious consideration to suggestions and recommendation by human rights treaty bodies for their implementation and takes measures to honour them in accordance with the realities of the country.

All these facts are showing firm willingness and sincere efforts of the DPRK to faithfully implement the international human rights instruments.

3) International Cooperation in the Field of Human rights

The DPRK attaches its due attention to the cooperation and exchange between international organizations and countries in the field of human rights.

- The DPRK has maintained cooperation with the Amnesty International, International Association against Torture, Commission on the Rights of Child and Commission on Human Rights (UN Human Rights Council) and etc.

It provided convenience to members of Amnesty International, International Association against Torture, Commission on Rights of Child, and Special Rapporteur on violence against women of the then UN Commission on Human Rights to organize the meeting with law enforcement officials, meeting with persons at reform institution, and visit to reform institution and detention room to help their understanding of real situation of the country.

? From 29th April to 4th May 1991, members of Amnesty International visited Pyongyang Municipal Court and met with the officials from the Supreme People's Assembly, Research Institute of Law of the Academy of Social Science (now Research Institute for Legal Affairs) and director of Ministry of Social Security (now Ministry of People's Security) and visited the security department of central district (now department of people's security of central district)

In April 1995, on the occasion of Pyongyang international Sports and Cultural Festival, every convenience was provided to the members of Amnesty International who visited the DPRK.

? From 23rd May to 6th June 1995, members of International Association against Torture visited many places in DPRK and had meetings with law enforcement officials.

? From 15th to 18th July 1995, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women visited DPRK and met with the chairman of investigation committee on damage during Japanese occupation of Korea and had discussion with officials responsible for the issue of sexual slavery for Japanese Army, listening testimonies by the victims, and collected data concerning sexual slavery.

- Broad dialogue and cooperation on human rights were held between DPRK and European Union.

After establishment of diplomatic relationship between DPRK and European Union, human rights experts participated in all bilateral political discussions to give clarifications to questions raised by the EU.

? In June 2001, the preliminary contact took place for human rights dialogue between the DPRK and EU in Brussels, Belgium.

? In September 2001, French parliamentarians from different political parties visited the reform institution and met the officials concerned.

? In October 2001, political dialogue was held between the DPRK and EU.

? In May 2002, head of division for Eastern Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Federal Republic of Germany visited the DPRK and met officials concerned and persons who served their term at the reform institution.

? In June 2002, another round of political dialogue was held between DPRK and EU in Pyongyang.

? On 13th June 2004, Minister of State for Asia-Pacific and Human rights at Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK had talk on human rights with DPRK vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in Pyongyang.

The DPRK human rights experts had regular contacts with officials concerned of member states of the EU to inform the DPRK activities and position on human rights including submission of national reports on the implementation of international conventions.

In spite of our government's sincere efforts and cooperation, in 2003 at the 59th meeting of UN Commission on Human Rights the EU unexpectedly tabled a "draft resolution" on the human rights situation in the DPRK and pursued hostile policy against the DPRK.

Since then, every year the EU forcibly adopted "draft resolutions" against the DPRK at the UN Commission on Human rights, at the UN Human Rights Council which replaced the Commission and at the UNGA, resulting in interruption of human rights dialogue between the DPRK and EU.

- Recently DPRK makes its every effort to promote cooperation with international human rights treaty bodies and other countries in the field of human rights.

The DPRK responded with good faith and tolerance to the questions raised by UN human rights organizations including treaty bodies and NGOs.

The DPRK is fully committed to cooperation such as meeting delegations from other countries including the EU at their request and informing them of the government's principled position on human rights so as to remove doubts.

Since 2003, adoption of "resolution" on human rights against the DPRK every year, followed by the setup of the "Commission of Inquiry" and fabrication of its "report," has nothing to do with international cooperation for promotion of human rights but is a product of political confrontation and plot by the US and its satellite forces.

Political confrontation in international field of human rights can never be compatible with genuine dialogue and cooperation on human rights. If these were tolerated, this would only produce distrust and enmity between countries and international promotion of human rights would never be addressed.

It is DPRK's constant standpoint to reject politicization, selectivity and double standards of human rights and to promote dialogue and cooperation under the principles of respecting for sovereignty, non-interference in other's internal affairs, and maintaining impartiality and objectivity.

Adhering to these principles, the DPRK is committed to fulfil its obligation to international human rights conventions and promote genuine cooperation and dialogue.

4. Main Obstacles to the Promotion of Human Rights in the DPRK

This part describes about hostile policies of the US and western countries towards the DPRK and anti-DPRK human rights campaign which is the main obstacle to the protection and promotion of human rights in the DPRK.

1) Hostile Policy of the United States and Its Attempts to Stifle the DPRK

(1) Hostile Policy of the United States

The US hostile policy against DPRK since its foundation is the most serious external factor and the biggest obstacle which hampers earnest desire of the people for genuine human rights, independent development of the country and efforts for peaceful construction.

The US hostile policy against the DPRK is tantamount to aggression policy and war policy to take over Korean peninsula at all costs out of criminal purpose.

- Geographically, Korean peninsula is the gateway for maritime powers to the continent and for continental powers an exit to the ocean.

For this reason, the US regarded take over and control of the Korean peninsula as a vital link in its policy of realizing its strategy to dominate the world. After occupying south Korea, the US more openly revealed his ambition to dominate the whole Korean peninsula.

In August 1945, right after liberation of Korea, MacArthur, commander of the US Army in Far East who practically controlled the US policy towards Korea, said that in case of occupation of whole Korea, "We will be able to break the only supply line which connects Siberia of Soviet Union to the southern part into pieces. We can control whole territory between Vladivostok and Singapore". (Modern History of USA, page 140).

Dulles, the former US Secretary of State told that Korea is a "dagger" which cuts "lump meat of Asia".

From the first day of the US invasion in south Korea, with the criminal purpose of taking over Korean peninsula, the US has never wanted establishment of independent sovereign state by Korean people and targeted northern half of Korean peninsula as the enemy and put the hostile policy against the DPRK into practice.

The US established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries which had different social systems and ideologies, but far from establishing the diplomatic relations with DPRK, it refused even to use official name of DPRK.

Despite the fact that the sovereignty of the DPRK was recognized with its membership to the United Nations in 1991 and it has diplomatic relations with 166 countries representing 86 percent of member countries of the United Nations, only the US refuses to recognize DPRK as a partner to coexist in international community.

Out of 193 member states of UN, there are only few states including DPRK which have no diplomatic relations with the US. These countries are subject to the extreme hostile policy of the United States, unprecedented in contemporary international relation.

One could also see concentrated expression of the US hostile policy against the DPRK through the US turning away its face to the demand of DPRK to replace the armistice agreement with peace treaty.

In modern history, there are no such countries like the DPRK and the United States that are still in belligerent state in such a long period of over 60 years. Korean Armistice Agreement which was concluded on 27th July 1953 is not the treaty ending the war, to say nothing of the peace treaty.

Armistice agreement was the temporary measure aimed at withdrawing all foreign troops from Korean peninsula and securing the durable peace.

But the US intentionally took the road of prolonging armistice state.

In November 1953, US formulated its final goal as preventing "communism" on Korean peninsula by making south Korea as its military alliance and maintaining armistice system until realization of "Pro-US reunification" (Decision No.170 National Security Council)

According to this goal, in June 1954, US intentionally broke down the Geneva conference on peaceful solution of Korean issue and steadily aggravated situation of Korean peninsula while nullifying systematically key articles of armistice agreement through introduction of latest war hardware including nuclear weapons and conducting all kinds of aggressive war exercises.

There are innumerable cases like "Pueblo incident", "Panmunjom incident" that the US escalated tension to wage a war on Korean peninsula.

("Pueblo incident" is the incident that US intruded armed spyship "Pueblo" deep into the territorial waters of DPRK and perpetrated espionage acts against DPRK. When the spy ship was captured by KPA navy force, the US pushed the situation to the brink of war.

\* "Panmunjom incident" is the incident provoked by the US according to pre-arranged plan on August 18, 1976 in the joint security area in Panmunjom with a view of making excuse to wage a war.)

The US denied all peace proposals and initiatives such as proposal for establishment of peace treaty between DPRK and US (1970s), proposal to let south Korea participate in DPRK-US dialogue (1980s) and new proposal for establishment of peace building system(1990s) initiated by DPRK.

In the second half of 1990s, four party talks (DPRK, PRC, US and south Korea) had been held without any result due to the insincere attitude of US.

In a new century, US also turned away its face from the proposal of DPRK to announce the end of war with participation of all parties related to armistice agreement and proposal to start talks, at the earliest possible moment, in order to change armistice agreement into peace treaty on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Korean War.

In a word, the United States position remains unchanged, that is, it considers any peace treaty between DPRK and US as premature and wants to maintain the armistice state.

Maintenance of armistice situation is the main obstacle in creation of peaceful atmosphere for the promotion of Human rights.

Due to the persistent manoeuvres of the United States, which escalates tension on Korean peninsula taking DPRK as enemy and violating the armistice agreement, rights of the people for peace and development have been seriously jeopardized and Korean people have been living in constant danger of war.

The intention and unchanged policy of the United States is that it will continue to regard the DPRK as a belligerent party and enemy and it will take over the whole Korean peninsula by means of military invasion at any time.

- The hostile policy of the United States against DPRK is a vicious system subversion and anti-socialist policy, starting from constitutional physical negative feeling toward the Republic that advances holding high banner of anti-imperialism and independence.

The reason why the US adheres frantically to the hostile policy against the DPRK lies in that it will not recognize political and economic system of the Republic but destroy the social system of the country and the socialism through international sanctions and pressure, and obliterate socialism on earth in the long run.

The ratio between the DPRK and the US in terms of size of the territory is 1:78 and 1:10 in terms of population size.

This United States, with its followers, was on a rampage for a long time to obliterate the socialist Korea at a go, but Korea kept walking straight road of socialism.

In particular, even after the collapse of socialism in former USSR and the Eastern Europe, DPR Korea held high the red flag as before and launched a dynamic march to pioneer brilliant future of socialism.

Dr. Bill Cranel, senior researcher of the International Relations Institute, Georgetown University, US, said, "North Korea is a military entity that can challenge most toughly to the Unites States in today's world," and stressed, "The socialist entity of North Korea is the most dangerous existence that can make a breakthrough in the international order of new age led by the United States."

VOA of the US indicated, "It cannot be denied that, on this earth, the only one that challenges directly and speak up as they wish to the United States is North Korea. In 1960s - 70s when the communist movement existed, North Korea was virtually the only one that threatened and challenged the United States. Even today when nobody dares to comment on the US, it is none other than North Korea who tries to subdue Washington."

The US regards the mass-centred Korean-style socialism as the greatest "cancer" since the DPRK is struggling actively to safeguard justice and truth in international arena by holding high the banner of independence, challenging the US who clamours about "unipolar world" relying on its military power,

Hence, it is clinging more eagerly to the hostile policy against the DPRK to undermine and obliterate the socialism of the DPRK at all costs.

The United States at one point stated that "The United States does not have hostile attitude toward the DPRK and is ready to take measures to improve the bilateral relations in the spirit of mutual respect on sovereignty and equality."(DPRK-US High-Level Talks, 29th Feb, 2012), and at other times stated that "The United States will not use forces including the nuclear weapons and will not threaten with these forces."(DPRK-US Joint Statement, 11th June, 1993)

However, these are nothing more than hypocrisy to hide the hostile policy of the US toward DPRK, and on the contrary, after the proclamation of these declarations and stands, the level of US hostility toward the Republic did not go down but further intensified.

Recently, it even unveiled the hypocritical mask of "We have no hostile intention," and is now threatening and blackmailing openly with the remark of "Iraqi-style collapse" and "Libya-style victory" and also saying that it will keep pressure until the DPRK chooses another road and that it will cooperate gladly if the DPRK changes its road.

With these, it is misleading the public opinion to put a check on the road of our Republic with government-controlled press who bluster about so-called "change".

It is also continuously committing the extra-large provocations that violate and infringe upon the independent rights of the sovereign state and rights for peaceful development of the Korean people, picking on unjustly the launch of peaceful satellites of the Republic.

(2) War and Aggressive Manoeuvres

Korean people love peace and desire happy life and genuine human rights, but Korean people's desire has not yet been realized owing to U.S. manoeuvres.

The Korean War and the continuous military war drills afterwards are the crimes against human rights as they trample upon the rights of people to live and develop independently in a peaceful environment.

-Provocation of the Korean War and violations of Human Rights by the US

The US provoked Korean War on June 25, 1950 and drew troops of 15 different satellite forces under the name of UN. During the war period, it violated war laws and customs blatantly to bring unimaginable pains and misfortunes to the Korean people.

There are customs and laws which ban assault on and destruction of civilians and civilian targets in any war. Nevertheless, uttering that it would wipe 78 cities of DPRK off the earth surface, US bombarded and shelled in tremendous scale and even used weapons which were banned by the international convention without hesitation to turn the whole territory of northern half of the Republic into ashes.

It bombarded and shelled nearly 428,000 bombs in Pyongyang only, more than its population and 18 bombs per 1 ? in DPRK.

Bombardment and shelling done by US were the most barbarous, unprecedented in the world war history in terms of their targets, scale, form and ways.

Due to the US barbarous bombardment and shelling, 50,941 factories and enterprises buildings, 28,632 buildings of education facilities, 4,534 buildings of health service like hospital and clinics, 8,163 buildings of press and cultural service, and 2,077,226 dwelling houses were completely destroyed.

4,897km of railway, 4,009km of road, 1,109km of bridge, 1,715 reservoirs and its facilities were destroyed and damaged causing tremendous human, material and environmental damage, and 563,755 hectares of arable land were devastated and 155,500 hectares of paddy field vanished.

Furthermore, precious cultural assets of Korean nation, national assets which cannot be compensated by tremendous wealth, were brutally destroyed and robbed.

During 3-year war, US troops massacred innocent and peaceful civilians in the most brutal and cruel manner in human history.

Massacres were committed in every region of the northern half of the DPRK occupied by US troops; they used every sort of the most brutal and cruel means beyond imagination of humankind like shooting, burying alive, burning, skinning off, quartering and so on, regardless of sex and age.

In particular, in Sinchon county, South Hwanghae Province alone, they killed 35 383 men, one fourth of its population.

US launched full-scale germ warfare which was banned by international law, and even used large number of chemical weapons, a kind of WMD.

From early January to March, 1952, they airdropped germ bombs for 804 times over 169 regions in northern half of the DPRK. Those bombs contained many kinds of harmful insects like flies, mosquitoes, fleas that had terrible infectious bacteria like pest, cholera and typhoid. From February 1951 to July 1953, they used chemical weapons to northern and frontier regions like South Phyongan Province, Kangwon Province, and South Hwanghae Province for tens of times. These notorious germ and chemical warfare killed many people.

In the northern half of the Republic, more than 1, 230,000 innocent men were killed mercilessly by the US beasts in the wartime.

As mentioned above, during the war US gave Korean people untold misfortune and pain which became wounds of grudge, unhealed up to now.

-Aggressive War Exercises continued for more than Half a Century

After the Korean War, the US has continuously perpetrated on aggressive war drill racket against DPRK and hindered realization of our people's independence.

Even before the ink was dry on the armistice agreement, US insanely practiced aggressive war drills against DPRK and increased its scale and duration systematically.

In the past 60-odd years, the constant war drills staged by US and south Korea warmongers were the largest ones in scale and the extremely dangerous ones in its contents.

"RIMPAC", "Cobra Gold" and "Cope North" are well known as the world large-scale military drills which take a week or a month for long and they are conducted once every 2 years or after more than 2 years.

In terms of the context and mode of drills, they do not target specific state but put main emphasis on normal military exchange, exercises aimed at strengthening the ability of cooperative operation, exercises by military forces and services, marine rescue and "anti-terrorism" disaster relief and so on.

In comparison with those, tens of thousands of massive US forces from the US mainland, Pacific region and Japan as well as US aggressive forces in south Korea and south Korean puppet forces take part in "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle" joint military exercises in Korean Peninsula. Even satellite forces such as UK, Australia, Columbia, Canada and Denmark participate in military exercises.

Even though, "Ulji Freedom Guardian" Joint Military Exercise includes four hundred thousand or five hundred thousand of huge forces including US military troops in south Korea, US reinforcement troop, ground, navy, air forces of south Korea and government organs and county and self-governing bodies, etc.

The fact proves that huge troops involved in drills are more than enough to wage a war.

Since the armistice agreement has been signed, the number of various war drills and joint military exercises staged by US and south Korean puppet forces revealed to the public are more than 18,000.

In terms of content of the war manoeuvres, target of war exercises is DPRK, "Pyongyang occupation" is openly cried out and war exercises include aggressive and provocative manoeuvres such as precision strike to command and strategic places, removal of nuclear weapons, landing and surprise attacks, urban warfare and maintenance of public peace after occupation.

Entering into new 2010s, the US openly said the operational plan of joint military exercise against the DPRK is to change "North Korean government" including operation targeted to impair dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and even practices simulation training.

All these facts self explains that joint military exercises by US and south Korean war maniacs are nothing but a preliminary war and trial war targeting DPRK.

The US and south Korean puppet forces have been continuously practicing aggressive war drills while strengthening war capability of south Korean puppet forces through systematic handover of the large quantity of latest war hardware and weapons.

In the past 60 years, due to the US reckless aggressive war rackets, Korean Peninsula turned into the most dangerous hotspot zone where it can smell the heaviest gun powders in the world.

This situation becomes grave challenge to the enjoyment of human rights of the people and forces the DPRK to make more efforts to defend the country and independent rights of its people.

(3) Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions and blockades are one of the manoeuvres of interference that the arrogant US is employing against other countries to interfere in their internal affairs and method of strangling.

For decades, economic sanctions and blockades by US and its satellite forces against DPRK are extremely persistent and wicked.

In a word, US-sponsored economic sanctions and blockades against DPRK are intended to economically stifle the DPRK and destabilize the country to topple the government.

The world-scale economic sanctions and blockades against DPRK were not started because of US revenge to the DPRK after its defeat in the Korean War. Sanctions were imposed after the Korea was liberated from the Japanese imperialist colonial rule.

Sanctions were imposed viciously through domestic law, international convention and international economic organizations.

- Economic Sanctions through Federal Legislation

After the end of World War II, the US imposed same economic sanctions against DPRK which were applied against other socialist countries and fabricated its national laws aimed at economic sanctions during the Korean War.

The US fabricated many laws such as "Export Control Law" (June 28, 1950), "Trading with the Enemy Act" (December 17, 1950), "Trade Convention Extension Law" (September 1, 1951) and prohibited export, commerce and trade exchange as well as treatment of the most favoured nation.

After defeat in Korean War, US committed persistent and wicked economic sanctions and blockade towards the DPRK through twenty different kinds of laws such as "Export Control Law", "External Aid Law", and "Export and Import Banking Law" and so on.

Through the US economic sanction laws against the DPRK, any US goods and technical services except official bulletins were not allowed to export to the DPRK in neither direct nor indirect way through third state without permission of US State Department. They also prohibited any help as regards to goods of export and import for the DPRK as well as service export.

No matter whether he/she lives either in home country or in other countries, he/she is not allowed to commerce with the DPRK citizens.

Properties of the DPRK citizens in US were all frozen and if DPRK banks have settled accounts by USD, US banks had to block all money related.

Compatriots in US are not allowed to transfer money, even 1 USD to relatives in DPRK or for other purposes.

The US prohibits credit loan, external aid and investment from individual investor and if successor or bereaved family member is a citizen of DPRK, not only the properties in US are blocked but it also does not provide the life insurance fee.

In case, citizen of US visits DPRK, he can only pay accommodation, food and personnel consumers for travel but cannot pay even 1 USD for other purposes.

Additionally, US visitors going home after visit to Korea are allowed to buy goods in DPRK below the amount of USD 100.

Here is simple example that shows how persistent and wicked economic sanction of the US is. The US government fines 500,000USD and enforces up to 12 years prison sentence to US citizen, organ and organization that trades or undergoes financial transactions with DPRK.

- Economic Sanctions through International Organizations and Treaties

In November 1949, US set up "The Coordinating Committee for Export to Communist Area"(COCOM) and included DPRK as its target. US and its satellite countries committed collective economic sanction and blockade against DPRK.

Through this committee, US made a list of prohibited export items such as strategic materials, hi-tech machines, electronic devices and semiconductor devices and strictly controlled export to DPRK.

If a member of this committee is going to export any products to DPRK, he should have to get approval from all other members. Without corresponding procedure, he would receive heavy economic sanction.

On 12th July 1996, the US fabricated new Wassenar Arrangement of Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies which as many as 33 states joined in place of COCOM in order to strengthen the collective economic sanction and blockade by gathering all sorts of good-for-nothings more. The US was ever more frantic in its control of export of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies to the independent countries including DPRK.

In particular, instead of apologizing to DPRK for infringing upon the right of peaceful use of outer space, the US tried to adopt "resolution of sanction with teeth" in UN Security Council and turn economic sanction into "eternal international sanction" against DPRK like a thief crying "stop thief!"

Consequently, in UN Security Council the sanctions resolution had been changed for the worse in many occasions, which denied independent right of DPRK as sovereignty state, ignoring international practices concerned with satellite launching.

The sanctions resolution did not limit items and extent of goods to be sanctioned and intends to put barriers to everything helpful to enjoyment of human rights by DPRK citizens and bring about humanitarian crisis in DPRK.

Sanctions resolution is composed of vague and dubious words and expressions with high political colure far from high frequency terminologies used in UN meetings such as "transparency" and "responsibility"

The US economic sanctions and blockades towards DPRK by stirring up its followers, obstruct the right of development of sovereign state and impose negative influence to enjoyment of human rights. They are anti-human rights and anti-popular in character and crime of genocide far surpassing the war-time mass slaughter.

(4) Nuclear Issue

- Origin of Nuclear Issue on the Korean Peninsula

No nation in the world has been exposed to the nuclear threat so directly and for so long time as the Korean nation. As far as Korean nation is concerned, the threat by nuclear weapons is, by no means, an abstract notion but practical problem as well as concrete experience.

Koreans suffered directly from the US nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the death toll of Koreans resulting from the abovementioned attacks is the second largest in the world behind only that of Japanese.

Since Koreans had already had the first-hand experience of the calamities caused by atom bombs, the nuclear blackmail by the US in the days of the Korean War was perceived as a recurring nightmare.

On November 30, 1950, the then US President Truman publicly mentioned about the use of atom bombs in the Korean War. Subsequently, on the next day, an order was issued to the US Strategic Air Command, requesting it to "put bombers on stand-by for an immediate atom bomb attack in the Far East".

In December 1950, McArthur, the then Commander of the US Forces in the Far East, made a sabre-rattling remark, saying that "radioactive corridor will be set up in the northern part of Korea covering the area between the east coast and the west coast. No living thing will be found in this area for 60 or 120 years."

This nuclear blackmail resulted in the mass exodus of "atom bomb-driven refugees" from the north to the south of the Korean Peninsula.

Many families who found it impossible to move to the south had, at least, their husbands or sons take refuge in the south for the purpose of preserving the family line. This was how millions of "separated families" came into being; they now live scattered in the north and south of the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean people are not only the direct victims of the US nuclear weapons but also the objectives of the continued nuclear threats by the US today.

In the latter half of the 1950s, the rise of anti-nuclear movement in Japan jeopardized the fate of the pro-US government. The US, in an attempt to buttress the then Japanese government, transferred its nuclear weapons from Japan to south Korea.

With the open declaration of arming the US forces in south with nuclear weapons in July, 1957, the US dispatched the nuclear missile "Honest John" and 280mm atomic cannons on January 29, 1958.

It means that the US "denuclearized" Japan at the sacrifice of the Korean Peninsula.

Since then the number of nuclear weapons the US deployed in south Korea steadily increased. In the middle of 1970s, more than 1,000 pieces of US nuclear weapons found their way into south Korea.

Today, south Korea turned into the US nuclear frontline base in the Far East and frontline military base where tens of thousands of US military forces and various types of 1720 nuclear weapons are deployed.

Nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula has been raised since the US dispatchment of nuclear weapons to south Korea.

-Persistent Nuclear Threats

The US is the ringleader which incurred nuclear issues on Korean Peninsula. It is also the nuclear fanatics that directly threatened the lives of Korean nation through the persistent nuclear threat campaign.

The US began to stage joint military exercises with south Korea for the purpose of using nuclear weapons in an actual war of aggression against the DPRK.

In 1969, the first US-south Korea joint military exercise for a nuclear war, labeled "Operation Focus Retina", was staged. Ever since, the joint military exercises for nuclear war have been conducted on an annual basis for more than 40 years and up to this date, changing its label from time to time - "Freedom Vault", "Team Spirit", "RSOI", "Key Resolve", "Foal Eagle", "Ulji Freedom Guardian", etc.

As a result, even the post-war generation of the DPRK had to live under the threat of US nuclear weapons deployed in south Korea for action that targeted them; they had to spend their lifetime, exposed to the danger of a nuclear war. This is the grim reality of the Korean Peninsula, stemming from the nuclear threat.

Since the end of cold war, the US, posing as the "World's Superpower", made no attempt to disguise their manoeuvres of disarming the DPRK, employing the power of IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and UNSC while conducting the nuclear war exercises in south Korea.

The US nuclear threats towards the DPRK were further intensified with the start of Bush administration in a new century.

In March 2002, the Bush administration published the "Nuclear Posture Review" that included the DPRK on the list of "Targets for Nuclear Pre-emptive Strike", endangering the security of the DPRK with the extreme nuclear threats.

The nuclear weapons, deployed in increasing numbers in south Korea by the US every year, are more than enough to bring nuclear catastrophe to the Korean Peninsula.

The density of nuclear weapons deployed in south Korea exceeds that of the NATO region by five times and all kinds of nuclear weapons ranging from the "first generation" atomic bombs to the "third generation" neutron bombs are deployed - each with its own mission.

What should be concerned here is that the US is free to use nuclear weapons in south Korea. In order to use nuclear weapons in Europe, it should have prior consultation with NATO members. On the contrary, no such consultation is needed in south Korea and instead, the decision of the US commander is regarded as the final.

The US ever increases the intensity of nuclear threats to the DPRK by dint of its military bases around the Korean Peninsula including the US and Japan.

The US owns hundreds of military bases in Japan, especially in Okinawa, nuclear strike units and mobile striking forces are concentrated. All the US forces and military bases in East Asian Region including Japan are fully prepared to launch nuclear strikes on any region or target in the DPRK.

The current situation brings obstacles to clearing away dark clouds of nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula and constantly threatens the Korean people's rights to live.

- DPRK's Counter-Measures

The DPRK Government made all the strenuous efforts to ease the tensed situation on the Korean Peninsula, setting the removal of nuclear threats by US as its precondition.

The efforts of the government of the DPRK aimed at removing the nuclear threat posed by the US went through three distinct phases.

In the first phase of its efforts, the government of the DPRK endeavored to eliminate the US nuclear threat by establishing a nuclear-free zone through peaceful dialogue and negotiations.

In 1959, the government of the DPRK proposed that an atomic weapon-free peace zone be set up in Asia. In 1981, it put forward the proposal of establishing a nuclear-free zone in North East Asia. In 1986, it proposed that the Korean Peninsula be denuclearized and made active efforts to this end.

On January 10, 1984, the government of the DPRK offered to include south Korean authorities in the DPRK-US talks aimed at removing the danger of nuclear war. On June 23, 1986, it released a government statement and solemnly declared that it would not test, produce, store and bring in nuclear weapons, that it would not tolerate installation of any foreign military bases including bases for nuclear weapons and that it would not allow the passage of foreign nuclear weapons through its territory, territorial air and waters.

However, the US turned a blind eye to our efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and posed increasing nuclear threat to the DPRK.

In the second phase of its efforts, the government of the DPRK strengthened its endeavor to eliminate the nuclear threat posed by the US by relying on international law.

In 1978, the US, the then Soviet Union and the UK, depositories of the NPT, announced a statement on "negative security assurance" - albeit de bene esse - stating that they would not use nuclear weapons against the non-nuclear states that are parties to the NPT. The government of the DPRK acceded to the NPT in December, 1985, with expectation that this would help remove the nuclear threat posed by the US against the DPRK.

When the US promised to suspend the "Team Spirit," joint military exercise for nuclear war, the DPRK, pursuant to relevant provisions of the NPT, actively cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in six ad hoc inspections during the period of May 1992 to February 1993.

However, the US began to voice the so-called "suspicion on nuclear development" even before the completion of these ad hoc inspections and rigged up the "Resolution on special inspection" that targeted not only nuclear facilities but also our military installations of sensitive nature by instigating foul forces within the IAEA.

In an attempt to force "special inspection" on the DPRK, the US openly threatened the DPRK with nuclear weapons by resuming the "Team Spirit" it had temporarily suspended.

On March 12, 1993, the DPRK declared that it would, pursuant to Article 10 of the NPT, withdraw from the NPT in order to safeguard national sovereignty and security and duly notified its decision to the depositories of the NPT.

The government of the DPRK took unilateral measures to temporarily suspend the entry into force of our decision to withdraw from the NPT as the US consented to hold the DPRK-US talks.

The DPRK-US Agreed Framework was signed on October 21, 1994 in the days of the Clinton administration. However, the Bush administration that later came to power unilaterally scrapped the Agreed Framework. The Bush administration even accused the DPRK of forming "an axis of evil" in the State of the Union Address dated January 30, 2002. Besides, the administration conducted frenzied nuclear military exercises, revealing its inveterate rejection towards the DPRK.

It was clear, at this point, that all our efforts, be it through dialogue or reliance on the international law, failed.

The only choice left for the DPRK was to "counter the threat of nuclear weapons with nuclear weapons".

On January 10, 2003, the government of the DPRK took a resolute measure for self-defense by lifting the 10 year-long moratorium on its decision to withdraw from the NPT, and thus finally pulled out of the NPT.

No longer bound by the NPT, the DPRK changed its policy direction, on an utterly legitimate basis, by weaponizing the entire portion of plutonium extracted from the pilot nuclear power station that had been generating electricity.

In October, 2006, three years after its withdrawal from the NPT, the DPRK conducted the first nuclear test which was followed by the second test in May 2009.

Therefore, an end was put to the nuclear imbalance in Northeast Asia where the DPRK had been the only "blank" with neither nuclear weapons nor the protection of nuclear umbrella.

The mounting nuclear threats imposed by the US pushed the DPRK to possess nuclear weapons.

It was the inevitable choice for the DPRK to possess the nuclear weapons as its last counter-measures in the fight to denuclearize and ease the tension on the Korean Peninsula. The nuclear deterrence also serves as means to deter the US aggression to the country and nation until the world and the whole Korean Peninsula is free from the nuclear weapons.

2) Anti-DPRK Human Rights Campaign by the US and its Followers

(1) Reactionary Nature of the Anti-DPRK Human Rights Campaign

The US and its followers conduct the smear campaign against the DPRK over the human rights issues with its intention to mislead the public opinion and raise the non-existent "human rights issues" in the DPRK as the international issue. They also intend to defame the image of the DPRK in the international arena and dismantle the socialist system under the pretext of "protection of human rights".

What they have learned is that the military threats were helpless to dismantle the system and this is the another reason that they formed a group to raise the "human rights issues" as the international one.

The smear campaign conducted by the US is none other than the fascist manoeuvres to change the political mode and social system of the DPRK into their own way, pursuing the policy of internatinalizing the "human rights issues" in the DPRK. It is also the brigandish act of destroying the international human rights mechanisms.

It is regarded that the promotion and protection of human rights is the matter that belongs to state's sovereignty and internal affairs for the reason that it mainly affected by the social system, economic development and cultural traditions.

Human rights issue is completely the matter of a state in achieving the international cooperation in the field of human rights, according to the UN Charter. Therefore respect of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs should be ensured in the protection of human rights.

"Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty" was adopted at the 20th UN General Assembly in December 1965 and it says that "No State has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements, are condemned".

In order to fulfil the unanimous desire and demand of all the countries for independence, the principle of securing the world peace and developing the friendship and cooperation between countries should be maintained.

The US smear campaign under the banner of "protection of human rights" can be characterized as the moves to infringe and stamp out the sovereign rights by misusing international cooperation and collaboration and finally overthrow the socialist system.

(2) The Criminal Moves by the US and its followers to internationalize "the DPRK Human Rights Issue"

?United States

In the confrontation between the DPRK and US, the US learned that it was impossible to overthrow the people-centred system by means of political and military threats and pressure as well as the economic blockade. What they found next was the human rights issue.

Even in the past period, the US made several attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the DPRK and change its political system under the pretext of "Protection of Human Rights".

"North Korean Human Rights Acts" enacted by US Congress in 2004 is a typical example. This abnormal "Act" aims, under the pretext of promoting "human rights", "democracy" and "market economy" in the DPRK, at inciting dissatisfaction among the citizens with their Government and thus let them to change their system and overthrow their Government. The "Act" calls for 12-hour-per-day radio broadcasting in Korean language against the DPRK, massive input of mini-radios tuned to its broadcasting, inciting the citizens to "defection" and "immigration" to and "asylum" in the United States, as well as financial and material support for these programs.

\* The US administration appropriated 24 million US$ for this "Act".

Non-governmental "human rights" organizations are being mobilized to fulfil this task with the financial support from the US administration.

But currently they are not getting successes that they expected due to the powerful counter-measures taken by the DPRK.

This is the main factor that pushed the US to make international of the "human rights issues" in the DPRK under the name of "protection of human rights". The US wants to seize initiative in the offense of the DPRK's human rights issues, creating the international and collective pressure.

The "Human Rights Reports" released annually by the US is spread widely to the world, full of distorted data on human rights situation in the DPRK.

The US formed a group with its followers to forcibly invent the "Commission of Inquiry" on the human rights situation in the DPRK and release the "COI report".

This "report" is dedicated to bringing harm to the image of the DPRK and creating international pressure on the DPRK so as to dismantle the socialist system and satisfy the US interests.

That is why many countries including a number of western press expressed their concerns over the "report" due to the lack of fairness and credibility, saying how this "report" can be circulated in UN.

On several occasions, the DPRK made its stand clear that it doesn't and will not acknowledge or accept the anti-DPRK "resolution" and the "Special Rapporteur" and "Commission of Inquiry" - the outcome of the "resolution" - and their reports.

? European Union (EU)

After the formation of diplomatic relations between the DPRK and EU, the Government maintained extensive dialogue and cooperation with the EU, giving importance to the cooperation and exchange in the field of promoting the human rights.

The replies by the DPRK to the EU's written questions prove the sincere attitudes of the Government towards the dialogue and cooperation; the written questions were characterized with the interference in the internal affairs.

The EU tries to use the human rights dialogue as the opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of the DPRK, ignoring its sincere attitudes and efforts towards the protection and promotion of human rights. As the EU could not make their goals because of the DPRK's principled stand, they shut down the dialogue with us and brought the "human rights issues" of the DPRK to the UN.

The anti-DPRK "resolution" brought up by EU in the 59th Commission on Human Rights held in 2003 is the live example.

Every country has its own history and traditions of human rights as well as its own values.

The DPRK makes no comment on the EU's viewpoint on the human rights and their human rights mechanisms because the above mentioned viewpoint reflects the views of their own people and the DPRK respects it.

Nevertheless, the EU pushed the DPRK to change its own human rights mechanisms into the Western style, putting them as the preconditions for dialogue and cooperation. The EU also forcibly adopts the anti-DPRK "resolution" on human rights in the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly to achieve their goal.

All the "resolutions" are filled with the contents of eliminating the ideology and system that has been chosen and maintained by the Korean people and defaming the DPRK instead of protecting and promoting the genuine human rights.

Despite of this fact, the EU and US, the co-sponsors, argue that they are aimed at promoting "cooperation" and "collaboration" for the "protection and promotion of human rights".

The interference in internal affairs and "collaboration" and "cooperation" are incompatible.

? Japan

Japan still remains as the criminal state for the reason that the crimes they have committed against the Korean people matches as the crimes against the humanity. They still have the responsibility of making apologies and compensations towards the Korean people in the human rights mechanisms.

Although 70 years have passed since its defeat, Japan's crimes against humanity still remain in the memory of the Korean people today as it was unprecedented in all ages and countries.

Since its defeat, Japan never made sincere apologies for their evil crimes and instead, they ran amuck to deny their past crimes and flee from responsibility.

Some forces of Japan are branding the DPRK as the human rights abuser by misusing the "abduction issue."

Japanese authorities make desperate efforts to implicate other states into the anti-DPRK campaign in UN human rights fields and participate in the invention of the mentioned "human rights resolution".

The human rights racket against the DPRK is yet another criminal act to calm down the international accusations and condemnation on the past human rights crimes committed by the Japan and make harm to the DPRK's image as well as to realize the old dream of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" under the pretext of "human rights issues".

? south Korea

The south Korean authorities go mad to defame the dignity and system of the DPRK, taking part in the US smear campaign against the DPRK's human rights.

The Intelligence Service and all other plot-breeding organizations guide the people to south Korea and bribe them to talk evil about the DPRK in international arena. They also play the role of "witness" in the slanderous propaganda, completely forgetting that they are the people who committed crimes in the DPRK and fled to other countries, leaving their family.

The south Korean authorities used the dirty and worthless human scums as the "witness" in fabricating the anti-DPRK human rights report and instigated them to slander the socialist system of the DPRK in parliaments and debates held in US, UK, Switzerland and etc. Furthermore, they made films and published books, full of the testimonies given by these scums.

The south Korean authorities showed "Hana Centre" to several ambassadors in south Korea to mislead the public opinion against the DPRK over the world; the "Hana Centre" is devoted to brainwash the human scums and train them as the brigade in the malicious propaganda against the DPRK.

Under the protection of the south Korean authorities, hundreds of thousands of leaflets, defaming the system and dignity of the DPRK, were spread around the areas of the demarcation line from Cholwon in Kangwon Province of south Korea, Ryonchon and Paju in Kyonggi Province and etc. Meanwhile, the authorities flocked together with the outside forces to intensify the smear campaign against the DPRK on the human rights in UN and cosponsored with them in the UN Human Rights Council to prepare falsified document on the DPRK's human rights, claiming that "evidence is needed for the international community to take military action concerning with the human rights of the north".

What's more, south Korean authorities volunteered for the installment of "field-based structure of north Korean human rights" and tried desperately for its installment in south Korea.

Whatever the US and its followers slander the human rights situation in the DPRK, they can't fabricate the actual situation in the DPRK and what's more, they can't dismantle the socialist system that ensures the protection and promotion of the genuine human rights of the Korean people.

5. Prospects for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the DPRK

This part shows how the Government makes efforts to make policy, perfect the human rights legal mechanisms as well as to create peaceful environment for the promotion of human rights.

1) Policies and Measures for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights of the Korean People

Despite of the continued campaign by the US and its hostile forces to stifle the DPRK, the Government directs all the efforts to enforce policies for the protection and promotion of human rights and to bring them into practice.

An explanation will be given in the following paragraphs of the particular concerned policies to which the Government attaches more importance.

?Economic Development and Improvement of People's Living Standards

The DPRK keeps up ***agriculture*** as a major thrust of our effort in the struggle for economic construction and improving the people's standard of living, and concentrates all the efforts on farming.

With the aim to fundamentally increase the ***agricultural*** production, the Government directs efforts to carry out the seed revolution, make new innovations in the farming methods and develop science and technology of ***agriculture*** while expanding the farmland and transform the production system into the one which gives great yield production.

The Government directs efforts to improve ***animal*** husbandry and do greenhouse vegetable and mushroom farming on an extensive scale so as to ensure that larger quantities of meat, vegetables and mushroom are supplied to the people. It also plans to build large-scale 50,000 ha breeding farm on Sepho tableland in Kangwon province by 2015.

A vigorous campaign was launched for boosting production in metallurgical and chemical industries by relying on our own raw material and fuels and on the latest science and technology, holding high the slogan of making them Juche-oriented and modern.

The Government gives definite priority to electric-power and coal-mining industries while attaching importance to the development of light industry.

Several measures were taken to increase the power output and make light-industry factories to put production on a normal footing. Efforts are being made by all the cities and counties to produce various kinds of quality consumer goods in larger amounts by developing local industry in conformity with their specific conditions.

The State took measures to bolster up the fishing sector and protect and increase the country's priceless natural resources including underground, forest and marine resources while conducting shallow-sea farming on an extensive scale. It conducted an energetic mass-based tree-planting drive to cover all the mountains with thick forests.

The Government tries to improve the guidance and management on economy, tightening the unified guidance of the economy by the State, enhancing the sense of responsibility and creativity of enterprises and encouraging all the working people to discharge their responsibility and role as masters of production and management.

? Healthcare

The Government, while invariable practicing the complete and universal free ***medical*** care, endeavours to put in place material and technical foundations to enable all people throughout the country receive good quality health service on time whenever necessary.

In order to reach the world level in major health indicators like life expectancy, births attended by skilled health workers, infant mortality rate and communicable diseases, a new goal is set up and attempts are being made for their implementation.

State budgetary expenditure on public health was increased systematically to facilitate the use of hi-tech telemedicine service and build modern ***medical*** service facilities in great number.

The Government also takes measures for the modernization of pharmaceutical factories, normalization of drug production, scientification and industrialization of the production of traditional Koryo ***medicine***.

It is the plan and intention of the Government to give people more benefits of the socialist healthcare system through the improvement of preventive and curative ***medical*** care.

? Education

Upholding the slogan of making all the people well versed in science and technology, the Government work on several projects.

Universal 12-year compulsory education system was introduced in secondary education and it is expected to take 2 - 3 years to be fully introduced in the whole country.

Branch schools were set up, trains, buses or boats provided for students in remote mountainous villages and islets, and school material and fixtures supplied to them that they could have equal schooling with urban children.

In sectors of high education, the Government strives to create the better educational environment and enhance its quality in all the universities.

TV channel for education is expected to help students improve their abilities through the televising of more educational achievements at different universities, results of national software contests and exhibitions, lectures of renowned professors and latest news in science and technology.

Tele-education system for the working people across the country was set up which makes it possible for scientists, technicians, officials and students to have, through the libraries and scientific and educational establishments in their localities, immediate access to the latest scientific and technical information helpful to solving problems arising in their practical activities.

Favourable conditions are created one by one to achieve the Government proposed goal of making all the people versed in science and technology.

? Construction

It is the State's policy of providing people with more sufficient and civilized life, laying firm basis for self-reliance national economy through the construction of world standard buildings and grounds for improved cultural life.

Construction of power stations in tiers on the Chongchon River, livestock farming bases in the Sepho area, the Kosan Fruit Farm and a waterway in South Hwanghae Province and other major projects come closer for the completion on schedule.

Brisk are the building of modern apartments and dormitories and constructions to improve the educational conditions and environment.

Modern cultural areas and grounds for emotional and cultural life including the world-class pleasure ground, sports park, national fork park, water park, skiing ground and firing range were built in recent years to provide people and youngsters with better environment for emotional and cultural life.

? Protection on Special Group

The DPRK government regards the protection and promotion of the rights for Special Group including children, women, elders and people with disabilities as the important subject and make strenuous efforts for its implementation.

In order to help students develop intellectually, morally and physically, students' halls, schoolchildren's palace and Children's Union Camps were renovated while the curriculums and educational environments were improved as required by the new era.

Soya milk factories were built in Pyongyang and farming villages to improve the health and nutrition of children and students and the Government took responsibilities for the supply of raw materials and the distribution of the milk.

Maintaining the policy of taking responsibility especially for the orphans, the State pays attention to the growth, health and education of the children in orphan's primary and secondary schools and takes necessary measures for the construction of baby homes and orphanages and improvement of diets together with the provision of nutrition food, clothes and school supplies and etc.

November 16 was instituted as "Mother's Day" in 2012 and soon after, the fourth National Meeting of Mothers was held in Pyongyang. It was the important occasion to give high credit to the contributions made by mothers for the social developments and happiness of family, and encourage the traits of respecting women and protecting their rights in the society.

The Government intends to take several measures to provide adequate working and living conditions to women with its full respect of women.

The Government helps the Korean Federation for the Care of the Aged strengthen its functions. At the same time, it pays more attention to the aged people with no caretakers in order to encourage the social traits of respecting the old people and providing them with material aid and moral support.

At the same time, a number of measures are taken to strengthen the activities of the Korean Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities. Early detection of disabilities and early recovery among disabled children and program for the development of art and sports, and vocational education are also included.

It is the firm determination and strong will of the Government to ensure the people, who had to tighten their belts due to the smear campaign of the hostile forces against the DPRK and its socialist system, enjoy all the benefits of socialism.

On the basis of self-reliance economy, the Government will normalize the production on high-level and fully satisfy the material and cultural demands of the people.

2) Continued Efforts for Perfect Human Rights Legal Mechanisms

The Government will make constant efforts to perfect the human rights legal mechanisms to enhance the supremacy of Korean-style socialism - the people-centred socialism - based on the experiences and lessons gained from the establishment of human rights mechanism.

Human rights laws will be adopted and amended to raise the effectiveness of the enactment and reflect the demand of the international human rights laws, modelling the socialist human rights legal system.

The DPRK will continue to make efforts for the perfection of human rights legal mechanism.

Measures will be taken for the legal organizations to adopt and amend new laws, considering which one is to give priority, so that the laws can contribute to the promotion of human rights, raising their efficiency.

The Government will continue to perfect the human rights legal mechanism, fully reflecting the people's demands and interests and lead people to actively participate in this work.

Officials in the human rights legal mechanisms will be encouraged to discuss the concerned matters with public and listen to their words carefully. Communication system will be used more effectively so that every people can give their views on the new or amending human rights laws.

The way of adopting the laws will be improved in order to enact laws that meet the requirements of state policy and the situation.

Understanding of International Human Rights Instruments and other books on human rights will be published, divided into several sectors, and distribute them on regular basis to help the people have a broad range of knowledge about the nature of human rights and demonstrate their rights in their life.

3) Safeguard of National Sovereignty and Creation of Peaceful Environment

The safeguard of national sovereignty is the precondition and indispensable necessity for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Once the state's sovereignty has been infringed, human rights of its people can't be protected. This has been proven right by the human rights situations in several countries where the US triggered wars under the pretext of establishing new order based on "human rights" and "democracy".

State's sovereignty can only be secured by arms.

The UNSC was born to ensure international peace and security. It is, however, turned into the place, derailing from the track of justice and principles of the universal international law, to cover up the US high-handedness and arbitrariness against the legitimate and righteous exercise of DPRK's sovereign rights instead of preventing it. This is the world we live today.

Any neither big powers nor international organizations can, in these circumstances, secure one's sovereign rights.

From the confrontation between the DPRK and the US, the DPRK concluded that only the powerful self-reliance capabilities can defend the destiny of the country and its people and ensure the people's human rights.

The DPRK has already built its own powerful self-reliance capabilities, equipped with the nuclear arms.

The ceaseless build-up of its capabilities, pivotal to nuclear arms, is the firm guarantee on the safeguard of state's sovereignty, right to live and national prosperity.

As long as the US nuclear threats and aggression towards the DPRK persist on, it's obvious that the DPRK have no choice but to continue its build up of defence capabilities until the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the world in order to deter and repel the US intrusion and attack on the DPRK and the nation.

The DPRK will continue to strengthen its capabilities and make sincere efforts to secure the peaceful environment of the Korean Peninsula.

The DPRK will remain true to the main principles of independence, peace and friendship that underlie the foreign policy of the DPRK.

The DPRK didn't take any hostile attitudes towards other countries with different ideology and political system and never stopped making efforts to prevent the outbreak of war and ensure lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula for 60-years long since the ceasefire agreement was signed.

The DPRK's urgent and passionate call for national reunification and peace was amplified on the planet for years and just and fair proposals were followed by the practical measures for their implementation.

The US never hesitated to completely reject, without any reason, all the proposals made by the DPRK, concerning with ensuring the peaceful environment.

The past history witnesses the reiteration of dialogue for peace by the DPRK and the US pretentious rejection on the peaceful dialogue.

Currently the DPRK make endurable efforts to ease the tensions on the Korean Peninsula and secure peace, making constructive and peaceful proposals for negotiations regardless of any assertions.

The DPRK remains invariable in its stand to protect and promote the human rights through genuine dialogue and cooperation, opposing high-handedness and arbitrariness.

The DPRK Government never opposed the dialogue on human rights with any country.

What we have opposed was the human rights dialogue which was used by some states as a means to infringe the sovereignty of other countries and interfere in their internal affairs and disguise their crimes as "legitimate" act to topple governments.

The DPRK, in future also, will sincerely participate in the implementation of its obligation in the human rights fields and continue to develop friendly and cooperative relationship with the countries which respect our sovereignty and are friendly to us.

The DPRK attaches importance to the international cooperation in the field of human rights. However, it strongly opposes the use of "human rights" as means to infringe the sovereignty of other countries, interfere in the internal affairs and cover up the criminal acts of toppling other governments as the "legitimate one".

Conclusion

This Report just showed the glimpse of the reality. How to accept the truth here depends on the views of people. What's clear here is that truth always remains as it is and it won't lose its nature even though it is sometimes denied or fabricated.

This Report is based on the objective truth. Due to limited space and lack of ability of the writers, some information in the Report might not have adequate bases.

The Association, in future also, will intensify its studies on human rights mechanisms in the DPRK and make great contributions and offer constructive ideas for the protection and promotion of human rights.

The Association will continue to release the outcome of its research on human rights in order to help people understand in detail and on a full scale the human rights situation of the DPRK.

Appendix

Review of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies

There have been different forms of research activities on human rights since a long time ago in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Coming into 1990s, it witnessed the efforts of the officials in the legal world to systematize the research work that had been done in a dispersed way and on August 27, 1992 the "DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies" was formed as a non-governmental organization with the approval of the State.

The main mission of the Association is to conduct researches and take measures in order to meet the ever-increasing demands of people for human rights under the socialist system of the DPRK.

According to the mission, the Association conducts the following activities.

First of all, it finds in detail and comprehensive manner on how the promotion of people's human rights have been ensured in all aspects of life and how much the people's demand in human rights are reflected in the legislation and its executions. In overall, the Association makes recommendations to competent state's organs.

It also makes analysis and research the promotion of human rights in international field through the exchange of information and delegations with not only state's organs but also the international and national human rights organizations. It investigates and studies the implementation of the international human rights conventions which the DPRK joined.

The Association investigates the violations of the human rights of our people by foreign forces and tries to draw the attention of international society for taking measures for its solution.

It also makes reports and documents and holds various forms of public activities including symposium, lectures, and photo exhibitions.

Hundreds of legal experts and scholars, professionals and lawyers as well as legal executioners and human rights experts are included in this Association.

Anyone who wants to be a member of the Institute, he/she should recognize its mission and go through the deliberation which is to test the applicant's knowledge on human rights.

The Conference is the highest organ of the Association and the Committee and the Executive Committee assumes the work between the Conferences.

The Association convenes Conferences more than once every 3 years and special conferences upon the request of the Committee and the Executive Committee.

The Conference is entitled to examine and decide the measures for the guarantee of the human rights of citizens to be presented to the competent State's organs.

The Committee of the Association meets every six months.

The Committee is entitled to elect chairperson, vice chairpersons and the members of the Executive Committee. It also sums up the annual work of the Institute, discuss and decide the next year's plan of work and the measures for the realization. The Committee is entitled to take steps to carry out the decisions adopted at and the tasks assigned by the Conference and examine and decide the applications for the membership of the Association.

The Executive Committee of the Association meets every quarter.

It is entitled;

1) To draft and present to the Committee the report on the annual work and the plan of next year's work of the Association,

2) To discuss and take measures for the questions either assigned by or arising between sessions of the Committee,

3) To take over, examine and submit to the Committee the applications for membership.

September 13, Juche 103 (2014)

Pyongyang, DPR Korea

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**Section:** COMMERCIAL REPORTS

**Length:** 5201 words

**Body**

Abbey Tours

About: ''Abbey Tours, now 35 years in business, is one of Ireland's longest-established destination management companies. A B2B company, we work with the international travel trade, providing them with the complete range of services in Ireland & Scotland for groups, individuals, conferences, corporate, incentive and events.

\*\*Executive chairman:\*\*Brian McColgan

\*\*Web:\*\*abbeytours.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-6486100

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\*\*Ace Express Freight\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Ace Express Freight are the leading suppliers of warehousing and International Freight and Transport services by road, sea and air to and from any location Worldwide to or from Ireland or globally. Ace Express in conjunction with their worldwide partners have a network of over 450 offices in more than 150 countries Worldwide ready to meet and solve your logistical requirements.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Philip Treacy

\*\*Web:\*\*aceexpressfreight.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8702600

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\*\*Altobridge\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Altobridge develops wireless network solutions that reduce network operating costs in delivering mobile voice, mobile broadband and big data services. Altobridge solutions are commercially deployed in more than 30 countries worldwide. Its shareholders include Intel Capital, IFC and Enterprise Ireland.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Mike Fitzgerald

\*\*Web:\*\*altobridge.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*066-7190210

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\*\*Barry Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Barry Group is one of Ireland's leading wholesale and distribution groups. Operating from state-of-the-art headquarters in Mallow, the company employs more than 240 people that provide services ranging from delivery to a dedicated sales and marketing team for more than 1,000 customers. Under the dynamic leadership of Managing Director Jim Barry, the company is responsible for the franchises Costcutter (supermarket and convenience retailer), carry out (specialist off-licence) and Quik Pick (smaller grocery offering). Barry Group also supplies the pub trade, the off licence and the catering sectors. The company trades internationally in over 20 countries, both importing and exporting.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Jim Barry

\*\*Web:\*\*barrys.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*022-301000

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\*\*Blackbourne Integrated M&E\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Blackbourne Integrated M&E have been trading since 1958 and are experts in the delivery of mechanical and electrical contracting, contract maintenance and innovative energy solutions. Blackbourne operate throughout Britain and Ireland delivering complex projects on time and on budget.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Morris Cairns

\*\*Web:\*\*blackbourne.co.uk

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2894464231

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\*\*Blue Insurances\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Blue Insurances is the leading supplier of online travel insurance and other niche insurance products including pet, gadget, wedding, car hire excess and motor breakdown, in the Irish market. The Company also operates in Britain, and with travel Insurance in the Australian market under their brand multitrip.com.au.

\*\*Joint managing directors:\*\*Ciaran Mulligan and Rowan Devereux

\*\*Web:\*\*blueinsurance.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*0818-444449

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\*\*Callan Bacon Company\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Callan Bacon is a family-owned, industry leading pork and bacon processing specialist established in 1924. Based in Kilkenny it is renowned for its award winning bacon and innovative products. It's a high-tech facility in one of the most modern in Ireland and Britain.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*John Walshe

\*\*Web:\*\*callanbacon.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*056-7725144

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\*\*Cara Pharmacy\*\*\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Cara Pharmacy is a progressive, innovative company which has grown both organically and through acquisition over the last 13 years since its incorporation. The company employs a team of more than 170 people and their mission is to Provide the Ultimate Experience for all our Customers through Passion in People, Performance and Price'. The company's head office and online business is in Ballyshannon, Co Donegal. It recently expanded into Longford and Galway in 2013 and the company now comprises 13 pharmacies and two home lifestyle stores.

\*\*Joint managing director\*\*Ramona Nicholas

\*\*Web:\*\*carapharmacy.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*071-9822002

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\*\*CarTrawler\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The CarTrawler technology platform enables aviation, travel, hospitality and leisure travel retailers to add car rental to their portfolio of products and services. It delivers direct connection to over 800 car rental agents at over 30,000 airport and city locations in 174 countries.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Mike McGearty

\*\*Web:\*\*cartrawler.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*023 8883011

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\*\*Castlecool\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Castlecool is one of Ireland's leading providers of temperature controlled supply chain solutions. Established in 1994, Castlecool works with some of the leading companies in Ireland's booming food and beverage industry.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Paul Shortt

\*\*Web:\*\*castlecool.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*042-9749100

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\*\*Cavanaghs of Charleville\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Main Ford sales and after sales dealer situated on the border between Limerick and Cork, employing 47 full-time staff. Awarded SIMI National Franchised Dealer of the Year in 2011. Multiple winner of Ford Chairman's Award for Outstanding Customer Satisfaction in Sales and After sales in the Ford Dealer network seven years in a row from 1997 to 2003 and again from 2008 to 2013 (six consecutive years). The company has been a Deloitte Best Managed company since 2011.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Martin Condon

\*\*Web:\*\*cavanaghs.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*063-30300

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\*\*CDE Global\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''CDE Global is the world's leading materials washing company, having sold, installed and commissioned more compact washing plants than any other company in the world for use in quarries and mines.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Brendan McGurgan

\*\*Web:\*\*cdeglobal.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2886767900

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\*\*Clontarf Castle Hotel\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Clontarf Castle is a deluxe hotel, located close to the city centre, in historic Clontarf. Originally a 12th century castle, the historic exterior combines beautifully with a contemporary, rich interior design. Amenities include restaurants, bars and extensive conference facilities for up to 600 delegates.

\*\*General manager:\*\*Mark Long

\*\*Web:\*\*clontarfcastle.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8332321

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\*\*Combilift\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Established in 1998 to provide space saving, safe and more productive handling and storage procedures for long and bulky loads, specialist ***manufacturer*** Combilift has been at the forefront of innovation in the materials handling sector ever since. Now the acknowledged leading global supplier of customised four-way handling solutions, Combilift has a worldwide network of dealerships, sells to around 75 countries and has produced over 20,000 units of its ever expanding product portfolio which operates across a wide range of industry sectors.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Martin McVicar

\*\*Web:\*\*combilift.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*047-80500

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\*\*Core Media\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Core Media is Ireland's largest media agency, specialising in communications planning and media buying.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Alan Cox

\*\*Web:\*\*coremedia.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-6496316

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\*\*Demesne Electrical\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Demesne Electrical is the leading Irish owned independent electrical supplier and energy saving specialist. Led by managing director Michael Devins since a management buyout in 2008, Demesne Electrical continues to grow and demonstrate its expertise in the market.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Michael Devins

\*\*Web:\*\*demesne.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4047710

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\*\*Designer Group Engineering Contractors\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Designer Group is a market leading electrical and mechanical engineering company in Ireland and Britain. Established in 1992, the company has worked on some of the most prestigious projects in both markets. In Ireland the recent completion of the new Diageo brewhouse facilities, and in Britain, the previous completion of the Olympic Broadcasting Centre rank among some of our high profile projects. Designer Group continues to be a driving force in all areas of Health and Safety which is a core value.

\*\*Group chief executive:\*\*Michael Stone

\*\*Web:\*\*designergrp.com

\*\*Tel: \*\*01-8822715

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\*\*DFPF Ltd t/a People 1st\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''DFPF Ltd is a training organisation, providing vocational and corporate training and consultancy. We are a major contract holder for the Department for Employment & Learning (DEL), offering a range of occupational training and qualifications to more than 2,500 learners annually.

\*\*Director:\*\*Bernadette Daly

\*\*Web:\*\*people-1st.co.uk/

\*\*Tel:\*\*028-90875875

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\*\*Fitzers Catering\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Fitzers Catering are Ireland's leading event catering company, with a wide range of catering skills and experience at managing all aspects of Hospitality service delivery. Fitzers Catering's venues include The Convention Centre Dublin, Titanic Belfast, Slane Castle and numerous off-site venues.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Barry Storey

\*\*Web:\*\*fitzerscatering.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8192364

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\*\*FreeFlow\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''FreeFlow helps the world's leading consumer electronics and wireless brands, remarket retail, returned or obsolete stock, profitably and responsibly. FreeFlow's services and technology allows their clients to scale the remarketing process while protecting their brands and availing of the deep industry knowledge and experience that FreeFlow brings.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Alan Scroope

\*\*Web:\*\*freeflow.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*066-7185400

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\*\*Galway Clinic\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Galway Clinic is one of the leading acute private hospitals in Ireland. Our vision is Excellence in Patient Care'. To ensure our patients receive the best care, we invest heavily in our staff, in the latest healthcare treatments and technologies, and in infection control and prevention measures. In 2014, we opened the Limerick clinic, providing diagnostics and consultant facilities for the Midwest region.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Joe O'Donovan

\*\*Web:\*\*galwayclinic.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*091-785000

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\*\*Garvey Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Garvey Group is a retail and leisure company based in the southwest of the country. We have eight SuperValus and two Centras along with the Dingle Skelligs and Dingle Benners Hotel. We pride ourselves on first class quality fresh food, superior customer service and excellent value.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Kevin McCarthy

\*\*Web:\*\*garveygroup.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*066-7149995/6

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\*\*Glenisk\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Glenisk is the Cleary family business. We produce a premium range of products -- organic dairy and goats milk products -- with a strong commitment to sustainable practices and an emphasis on quality produce. We endeavour to be the best through constant innovation and development of our range. We want only the best quality food for our families and strive to give only the best to yours.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Vincent Cleary

\*\*Web:\*\*glenisk.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01 4977524

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\*\*HiberniaEvros Technology Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''HiberniaEvros is an IT managed services specialist providing a complete range of outsourcing, support and data centre services for more than 20 years. We offer the highest levels of service and technical expertise keeping more than 500 Irish organisations operating effectively.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Robert Murray

\*\*Web:\*\*hetg.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*1890-911211

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\*\*H&J Martin\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Henry Martin began his construction company in 1839, joined by his son, John, 40 years later, they became collectively known as H&J Martin. Throughout the next 175 years H&J Martin's descendants with their unshakable vision would be responsible for some of the UK & Ireland's most iconic buildings.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Derek Martin

\*\*Web:\*\*hki.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01 6055400

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\*\*H&K International\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''H&K International is one of the world's largest suppliers of kitchen equipment solutions to the food service restaurant industry, employing approximately 1,300 people worldwide. It is an Irish business, headquartered in Dublin, with global operations that service 35 million people on a daily basis in more than 20,000 restaurants in 80 countries. H&K's main global customers include McDonald's, Burger King, KFC and Subway. As a strong endorsement of H&K, the company has received multiple awards from McDonald's including Partnership of the Year and Innovation Challenge Award last year.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*David Bobbett

\*\*Web:\*\*hki.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01 605 5400

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\*\*Hodson Bay Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The Hodson Bay Group owns and operates the four-star, 180 bedroom Hodson Bay Hotel in Athlone, 153 bedroom Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill, and the 176 bedroom Sheraton Athlone Hotel. The successful family-run Irish hotel group operates in the key markets of conference, leisure and weddings. In addition, significant international business forms part of the business mix in particular with the international branded Sheraton Athlone Hotel. The Hotels have achieved a number of awards, including excellence in service, food quality and best four-star hotel in Ireland.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Padraig Sugrue

\*\*Web:\*\*galwaybayhotel.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*091-520520

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\*\*Irish Dog Foods\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Irish Dog Foods Limited is a leading supplier of quality and innovative pet foods to the discount, multiple and pet specialist market in Ireland, Britain and Europe. The company operates from two state-of-the-art facilities at Naas, Co. Kildare and Gowran, Co. Kilkenny. There are 150 staff employed by the company. Irish Dog Foods has had rapid growth over the past number of years with a turnover of EUR 3 million when acquired in 2000 growing to EUR 40 million in 2012. The company plans to grow turnover to EUR 100 million by 2017.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Liam Queally

\*\*Web:\*\*irishdogfoods.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*045-872701

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\*\*Java Republic\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*"At Java Republic, we are driven by a determination to delight tea and coffee lovers everywhere. We're committed to doing the best we can for the people who grow our coffee and only buy from ethical trades or directly from sustainable co-operatives. Our obsession with quality is matched by an open and honest approach to communication, and a belief in our values that performance matters, people matter as well as pride and accountability in what we do. In the world's first purpose-built carbon-neutral coffee roastery in West Dublin we roast enough beans each year to serve 50 million cups of coffee to more than1,300 foodservice industry accounts in Ireland."

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*David McKernan

\*\*Web:\*\*javarepublic.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8809300

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\*\*J H Roche & Sons\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''A family-owned business that has been serving the farming community since 1879. Based in the Midwest region supplying to more than 4,000 customers nationwide in the ***agricultural*** sector. ***Manufacturing*** ***animal*** ***feed*** specifically designed for individual farmers giving each customer what they need and what their ***animals*** require.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Bobby Roche

\*\*Web:\*\*rochesfeed.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*061-308111

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\*\*Joe Duffy Motor Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Joe Duffy Motor Group is Ireland's leading premium brand motor retail group. It was founded in 1972 and represents 12 franchises from flagship retail facilities in Dublin. It is partner for some of the most prestigious automotive Marques in the world and are proud to represent Audi, BMW, BMW Motorcycles, BMWi (BMW Electric vehicles range), Ford, Land Rover, Mazda, MINI, Porsche, Seat, Volkswagen and Volvo. Founded on the principle that ''It's our people that make the difference, the group now employs in excess of 240 dedicated and highly motivated staff who are committed to offering our customers exceptional levels of customer service.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Gavin Hydes

\*\*Web:\*\*joeduffy.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01 864 7777

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\*\*Kainos\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Kainos provides digital technology solutions that enable companies to work smarter, faster and better. We have been operating successfully for more than 26 years, and employ more than 500 people, with offices in Ireland, Britain and Poland.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Brendan Mooney

\*\*Web:\*\*kainos.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2890571100

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\*\*Kestrel Foods\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Kestrel Foods is a family-owned and managed business specialising in the production of premium dried fruit, nuts and seeds under the Forest Feast brand. Forest Feast offers great tasting, premium snacks with a superb track record in product innovation.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Michael Hall

\*\*Web:\*\*forestfeast.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2838350934

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\*\*Kevin Dempsey Distributors\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Kevin Dempsey Distributors (KDD) is a leading trade distributor to the retail home furnishings market in Ireland and Britain of soft furnishing fabrics and window blinds. The company's key brands include Prestigious Textiles furnishing fabrics, SLX Styleline Express window blinds and curtains, and Artesia designer blinds and luxury bed linens. Our success is based on our strong strategic focus, award-winning people culture, credibility within the market place and passionate leadership, which is infectious."

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Kevin Dempsey

\*\*Website:\*\*kdd.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4568280

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\*\*KN Network Services\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''KN Network Services (KNNS) are providers to the telecommunications, civil engineering, rail, electricity, and energy sectors in Ireland, Britain and internationally. Our focus is to provide fully managed services to the markets and sectors we serve.

\*\*Group chief executive:\*\*Donagh Kelly

\*\*Web:\*\*knns.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4575000

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\*\*KTL Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The KTL Group is a leading provider of services to the telecommunications, power and renewable energy sectors in Ireland and Britain. The company has grown consistently since its inception in 1998, winning major design and build contracts with international telecom, utility and renewable energy clients.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Alan Hanamy

\*\*Web:\*\*ktl.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*045-901030

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\*\*Lifes2good\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Lifes2good is a multimillion, global business with a portfolio of award winning brands, marketed in 25 countries across Europe, the Americas, Middle East and Australasia. In 2013, 95 per cent of Lifes2good's turnover came from export sales. Its flagship brand Viviscal, a hair growth programme, which is both developed and ***manufactured*** in Ireland is backed by strong clinical evidence.

\*\*Founder and group chief executive:\*\*James Murphy

\*\*Web:\*\*lifes2good.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*091-750800

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\*\*Mash Direct\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Mash Direct is an award-winning farming and food production business producing an innovative range of quality, convenient mashed potato, root vegetable and cabbage products. The small management team includes specialists in ***agriculture***, engineering and marketing. Combined with their complete dedication, focus and attention to detail, the company sets itself apart from its competition in terms of product quality and marketability.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Martin Hamilton

\*\*Web:\*\*mashdirect.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*028-91878316

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\*\*Medicare Pharmacy Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Medicare is the largest indigenous and fastest growing pharmacy group in the North. The business was established by pharmacist Michael Guerin who purchased his first pharmacy in 1989 and expanded via acquisition until 2001, when there were 13 outlets in the group. In 2002, the group was brought under the Medicare brand and has continued to grow, now employing in excess of 600 staff in 57 locations across the province with a 60,000 square foot head office and distribution centre in east Belfast.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Michael Guerin

\*\*Web:\*\*medicare-group.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2890708800

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\*\*McArdle Skeath\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''With more than 45 years of delivering quality supply chain management services, McArdle Skeath offers a unique service portfolio within the areas of transportation, refrigeration and storage. Our philosophy continues to originate from maintaining client trust, by delivering services and solutions in innovative and cost effective ways.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Micheal McArdle

\*\*Web:\*\*mcardleskeath.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*042-9365000

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\*\*McCue Crafted Fit\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''With 60 years' experience, we are specialists in high quality refurbishment and fitting out across Ireland, Britain, and into Europe. We take time to know our customers, the things that matter to them and take pride in bringing forward new ideas."

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Les McCracken

\*\*Web:\*\*mccuefit.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2893329000

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\*\*Musgrave Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Musgrave Group is a family-owned business founded in Cork in 1876. With our retail partners, we employ more than 60,000 people and operate nine brands in three international markets -- SuperValu, Centra, Budgens, Dialprix, Londis, Daybreak, Mace, Marketplace and Dialsur.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Chris Martin

\*\*Web:\*\*musgrave.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*021-4522100

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\*\*National Plastic Packaging Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''National Plastic Packaging Group (NPP) is the leading supplier of flexible packaging materials to Ireland's food, beverage, agri-business and pharmaceutical industries. 2014 is a significant milestone representing its 30th year in business. The company continues to build on its success and broaden its product portfolio both organically and by acquisition.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*David Duffy

\*\*Website:\*\*npp.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8809299

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\*\*Noonan\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Noonan is the market leader in the provision of strategic outsourcing solutions to all business sectors in the 32 counties of Ireland. Employing more than 7,000 staff and delivering services nationwide to over 2,500 client locations, our commitment to customer service, our investment in expanding the scope of service we self-deliver, our ability to attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff and providing clients with innovative, cost effective solutions are the building blocks for our success to date.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*John O'Donoghue

\*\*Web:\*\*noonan.eu

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8839800

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\*\*O'Connell Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The O'Connell group is an export-driven business, which helps its customers export to over 84 countries. With more than 30 years of experience in the logistics business and having a portfolio with over 746,000 square feet of warehousing.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Eddie O'Connell

\*\*Web:\*\*oconnellgroup.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*021-4821357

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\*\*OSG Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''OSG Group is an independent, Irish-owned, professional outsourcing firm employing more than 330 people. Originally established in 1984, OSG is now firmly positioned, nationally and internationally, as a renowned specialist in the insurance and banking outsourcing service market.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Malcolm Hughes

\*\*Web:\*\*osg.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-2611524

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\*\*PRL Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The PRL Group is Ireland's leading marketplace partner. PRL works collaboratively with clients to provide fully integrated and cost effective in-market solutions that maximise brand presence and performance. PRL is the brand behind winning brands."

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Eoin Stapleton

\*\*Web:\*\*prl.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-2571400

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\*\*Quish's SuperValu\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Quish's SuperValu is a family-run business operating two SuperValu stores, in Ballincollig, Co Cork and Tramore, Co Waterford. Sean Quish founded the company in 1996 and the directors are Sean, Noreen and Cormac Quish. The two stores focus on fresh food, with in-store scratch bakeries, a kitchen and team of chefs, fully qualified butchers and Seafood Circle fish counters. The company is an innovator in the field with a thriving online shopping business. They trade successfully in their respective towns against Tesco, Dunnes, Aldi, Lidl and Superquinn.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Sean Quish

\*\*Web:\*\*quishssupervalu.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*051-386036

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\*\*Sam McCauley Chemists Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Sam McCauley Chemists is headed up by executive chairman Sam McCauley and managing director Patrick McCormack. Through astute and prudent management, the company has continued to thrive during a very tough time for retail pharmacy in Ireland.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Patrick McCormack

\*\*Web:\*\*smcc.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*053-9121803

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\*\*SouthWestern Business Process Services\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Number one in the Irish market, SouthWestern provides integrated front and back office services. Our key focus areas are finance and accounting, CRM, HR and Payroll. We provide business services to leading public and private sector clients (in the Financial Services, Travel, Media, Food and Drink sectors) in Ireland, Britain and Europe.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Jim Costello

\*\*Web:\*\*southwestern.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*023-8832800

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\*\*Surecom NS\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Established in 2005 with operations in Ireland, Britain and Greece, Surecom Network Solutions is a leading provider of engineering solutions and services to the telecommunications industry. Surecom operates at the high-end of the telecommunications technology business, providing engineering services and solutions to our customers. The Surecom brand has quickly become a recognised brand in the telecoms sector and we continue to increase growth in both domestic and international markets.

\*\*Company director:\*\*Jim Sheehan

\*\*Web:\*\*surecomns.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*052-7443669

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\*\*System Dynamics\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''System Dynamics is Ireland's longest-established IT services company. Our clients value the quality and relevance of our services and offerings, our robust processes and the expertise and knowledge of our people. Our long-standing client relationships flourish because of the underlying behaviours of our people, particularly with regard to collaboration, communication and commitment delivery. In System Dynamics, our core value is behavioural leadership, the discipline of fostering and sustaining high-impact behaviours to meet and exceed our clients' expectations. For us, IT is personal."

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Tony McGuire

\*\*Web:\*\*systemdynamics.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4830300

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\*\*The Taxback Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The Taxback Group provides taxation, financial, travel and corporate promotional services to an international client base. The group delivers services throughout 100 countries via its global footprint of 33 offices in 23 countries. Group headcount is currently at 875.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Terry Clune

\*\*Web:\*\*taxback.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01 6353740

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\*\*Tazbell Services Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Tazbell is a leading business services group. Established as a car park management company, Tazbell has grown and diversified. We now provide car park management, enforcement services, toll operations, fine and debt collection, remote and contact centre management through our brands Park Rite, Toll Collection Services, Dublin Street Parking Services and Fine Collection Services. We have over 25 years' experience with a growing and diverse client base who continue to endorse our professional approach. We were delighted recently to be awarded the parking enforcement contract for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and a long term car park lease with Green REIT.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*St John O'Gara

\*\*Web:\*\*parkrite.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-5425600

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\*\*Tekelek Europe\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*Tekelek Europe was established in 1995 in Shannon, Co Clare, to initially focus on electronic R&D services. Through a series of Tekelek-specific product developments and acquisitions in Ireland, Britain and China, the company now specialises in telemetry based tank monitoring technology, application specific HVAC controls, ATEX rated field diagnostic equipment for the gas industry and contract ***manufacturing***.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Peter McCarthy

\*\*Web:\*\*tekelek.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*061-471511

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\*\*TG Eakin\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Eakin is a ***medical*** device ***manufacturer***, dedicated to the production of high-quality skin protection products for use in stoma and wound care. The Eakin products are now exported to almost 40 countries, improving patients' quality of life around the world.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Jeremy Eakin

\*\*Website:\*\*eakin.eu

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2891871000

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\*\*The Printed Image\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''The Printed Image is a marketing communications company that offers creative solutions to marketing focused clients who need both value and innovation in their marketing mix. They offer clever customer communications in the areas of design, print and promotions.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Colin Culliton

\*\*Web:\*\*tpi.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4089222

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\*\*Tour America\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Tour America is an Irish travel company specialising in holidays to the US. It has three other brands, Cruise Holidays, Magic Holidays and, new for 2014, Honeymoon Finders. Tour America also operates in Britain and has offices in Dublin and Cork, employing 50 people, with two staff based in Orlando. They deal directly with the consumer and have more than 47 per cent repeat business.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Mary McKenna

\*\*Web:\*\*touramerica.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8173535

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\*\*TTM Healthcare\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''TTM Healthcare is Ireland's largest independently owned health and care recruiter and an emerging powerhouse in international recruitment. We provide exceptional levels of service and delivery to public, private and voluntary sector employers across temporary, contract and permanent positions for clients.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Brian Crowley

\*\*Web:\*\*ttmhealthcare.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*065-6896212

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\*\*TVM\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Ireland's leading outside broadcast facilities provider, TVM was established in 1986 by Bart and Helen Arnold. TVM provides facilities for both live and recorded events with clients such as RTE, TG4, TV3, SKY Sports, Setanta Ireland and various independent production houses. They provide OB units kitted out with production, engineering, audio and VT facilities coupled with varying size and type of Cameras to give viewers at home the best coverage of sporting events, chat shows, national events and music entertainment.

\*\*Owner:\*\*Helen Arnold

\*\*Web:\*\*tvm.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*025-36236

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\*\*Version 1\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Established in 1996, Version 1 has progressed through organic growth and strategic acquisition to become a trusted technology partner to major domestic and international customers across all industry sectors. One of the fastest-growing IT services companies in Western Europe, Version 1 have completed two British acquisitions within the last year, solidifying ambitions of international expansion and yielding aggressive growth totaling a 500 strong team. In the next 10 to 15 years, Version 1's aim is to become the first EUR 1 billion Irish services company.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Justin Keating

\*\*Web:\*\*version1.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-8657800

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\*\*Voxpro\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Dan and Linda Kiely along with the management team have taken Voxpro, a long-established business, to growth levels of an average rate of 50 per cent over the past three years, with 80 per cent of its business now international. Voxpro operates from three purpose-built offices in Cork. Voxpro is a high-end BPO provider at the end of the phone, email, SMS or web chat. Voxpro is the unseen link connecting businesses to their clients 24/7/365 in a multilingual environment.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Dan Kiely

\*\*Web:\*\*voxpro.ie

\*\*Tel:\*\*021-4521900

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\*\*Wilson Auctions\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Wilsons Auctions Group is the largest independently-owned auction house in Ireland and Britain, with a 300 strong team of experienced valuers and auctioneers. We are the only auction house to have bespoke auction complexes in the Republic of Ireland, the North, Scotland, England and Wales.

\*\*Managing director:\*\*Ian Wilson

\*\*Web:\*\*wilsonauctions.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*0044-2890342626

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\*\*Zeus Packaging Group\*\*

\*\*About:\*\*''Zeus Packaging Group was established in 1998 and is Ireland's largest independent supplier of packaging products. Zeus has grown revenues to a current level of EUR 100 million with more than 200 employees with offices in Ireland, Britain, Spain, Poland and China.

\*\*Chief executive:\*\*Brian O'Sullivan

\*\*Web:\*\*zeuspackaginggroup.com

\*\*Tel:\*\*01-4018900

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[***Saint or sinner?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:59K7-2531-JCF1-207T-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Whether you shun or love the socially responsible approach, the pressure on companies to go green has implications for all investors, says the Investors Chronicle companies team

It is a sad but incontrovertible truth that when it comes to investing it has usually proved more profitable to be naughty rather than nice. As ethical funds have struggled to convince investors that they can match the performance of their wider benchmarks, the so-called vice industries, especially tobacco and alcohol have seen their share prices thunder ahead. In short, investors have become addicted to the chunky dividends they offer, underpinned by the steady cash flows generated by the recession-proof habits they cater for.

The numbers speak for themselves. The average share price gain among the world's listed tobacco and beverage giants over the past decade stands at an eye-watering 277 per cent and 163 per cent- including dividends the return becomes an even more spectacular 480 per cent and 237 per cent against a FTSE All World return of 122 per cent. Ethical funds can't match that, but they aren't in fact the chronic underperformers that they are often touted as - as Katie Morley explains in the Big Theme Big Theme.

Perhaps that's why the vast majority of investors still prefer to hold their nose and put financial security above their social conscience. According to research from ethical fund group Ecclesiastical Investment Management, only a third of investors consider themselves to be ethically motivated, a far smaller number than the 60 per cent that make ethical choices when it comes to doing the weekly shop.

The willingness to invest in a socially responsible manner may also suffer due to the fact that there is no clear cut way of evaluating a company's ethical credentials. Benchmark indices like the FTSE4Good series can be somewhat confusing, often containing constituents that many wouldn't consider ethical, such as oil producers or drinks companies. In fact, the only sectors that are actually barred from inclusion are defence, tobacco and nuclear. Weir Group (WEIR) (UK industrial engineering) has long been regarded as a sinner by the green brigade for its involvement in fracking but was one of 30 companies added to the FTSE4Good index series on 20 September following the last semi-annual review.

Clearly, Weir's inclusion is in on the back of strict internal procedures rather than its activities. It even operates an ethics hotline that employees can use to raise concerns about unethical behaviour. Again, this opens up the debate about what is an ethical investment and what's not. Even the Church of England (CofE) falls foul of this ethical dilemma - the investment guidelines for its GBP5.2bn of funds under management state that a company can derive no more than 5 per cent of its turnover from alcohol, even though when it comes to taking drink the Bible is unequivocal. The book of Proverbs warns readers: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."

Abiding by the conventions set out by the CofE would rule out pub groups and distillers from its portfolios, but it would still allow supermarkets and wholesalers to be held in its portfolios. A major company such as Sainsbury's (SBRY) will make hundreds of millions from alcohol and tobacco sales annually. However, in the context of its overall revenues the impact on profits is tiny. Can we then regard Sainsbury's as an unethical investment if it benefits from selling fags and beer? Is sipping a fine malt whisky next to the fire really the end of civilisation as we know it?

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According to research from ethical fund group Ecclesiastical Investment Management only a third of investors consider themselves to be ethically motivated

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One problematic question with ethical investing, then, is how to define consistently the difference between companies that benefit in some way from selling 'unethical' products, and those that derive only an indirect benefit but are still regarded as 'normal' companies. Furthermore, if we delve into the closets of many companies beyond the polluters and purveyors of sin, we will discover many unethical skeletons. What could be unethical about mobile telecommunications, for example? How about large-scale tax avoidance and the tantalum required for mobile phone electronics, a conflict mineral mined in the war-torn Congo. Supermarkets, too, are a classic example of this moral dilemma - the convenience they've brought has proved transformational to people's lives and diets, but an army of redundant small shopkeepers and squeezed farmers might disagree that their rise has been a good thing. For that reason Tesco (TSCO), as the UK's market leader, is a great example of a stock which bitterly splits opinion.

But as we will outline throughout the next few pages, investors should also be mindful of the potential impact, good or bad, on their portfolios, regardless of their ethical standpoint. Increasingly, ethically-minded customers will also bring pressure to bear, and in some cases, this need for change will put pressure on profitability - look no further than supermarkets as a case in point. Regulation will add further cost, too - organisations that are UK incorporated and listed on the main market of the London Stock Exchange will be required to report on their greenhouse gas emissions performance, for example.

But for others it represents a genuine business opportunity, especially those who are able to support others in achieving their own social aims - more fuel-efficient aircraft components, for example, can help an airline industry constantly battling rising fuel costs. Ian Simm, chief executive at Impax Asset Management, puts it another way, arguing that they should see environmental investment as a hedge against the exposure they have to the rising risks of climate change and resource scarcity. It's an angle that makes sense.

So, whether you're of an ethical persuasion and want to keep your portfolio squeaky clean or just want to make sure you're not caught out by the rising tide of social responsibility, this guide should help.

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Go on, be a devil

The arguments over ethical versus non-ethical investing have raged for at least 20 years. But, however virtuous it feels to invest in artisan alpaca mills in Peru, or wind turbines in the middle of rural Gloucestershire, there is a very simple fact to contend with: over the time periods of at least 10 years, ethical investments have always tended to underperform. However, this might not be for the reasons you would expect.

The initial impression that ethical investments underperform is borne out by data gathered by Moneyfacts, which shows a mixed 10-year record for ethical investments versus non-ethical, or traditional - if you prefer - investments. While it is true that ethical funds have made gains of 24 per cent over the past year, compared with 18 per cent growth for the average non-ethical fund, over the long-term this advantage evaporates. For example, over a 10-year period, ethical funds grew by 56 per cent, which is less than half of the 128 per cent growth of the mainstream sector, according to Moneyfacts research.

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What the literature on the subject points to is that ethical investments are not really for investors who care about the relative merits of windpower over oil, but rather are content to pursue a strategy that involves less market risk over the long term. There isn't really a single reason why ethical investments should display this characteristic, except that the data shows that the sector tends to have an average beta value well below 1.00. In other words, it does not move with the rest of the market.

This could be down to the relative stickiness of holdings within the sector - renewable energy companies are often dominated by founders, for example - but it does give investors a degree of protection against the ebb and flow of market sentiment. The price for that in return is that even bog-standard market trackers will outperform your carefully chosen portfolio of Fairtrade Coffee companies unless the beta risk is offset by other means.

In practice, that means holding companies or funds in your portfolio that may offend your moral outlook. Even the CofE was caught out recently by its own pension fund managers after it emerged that it was a significant investor in the pay-day loan company Wonga - an organisation that had recently been criticised by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the end, investors have to keep their minds open to all possibilities if the price is right. To those who wish to be virtuous: good luck. The rest of us have get by on avoiding being poor. Sometimes it is worth acknowledging that the devil has the best portfolio.

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Military support

Those who are keen to avoid a defence angle in their portfolios also need to look beyond the defence sector to ensure they don't trip over their own ethical principals. Unsurprisingly, given the imperative on all publicly funded bodies to cut costs, outsourcing companies have significant exposure, too. Serco (SRP), for one, manages the UK's Atomic Weapons Establishment and provides logistical support to the Royal Navy, among other things. And FTSE 100 company G4S's (GFS) activities include training British Army Gurkhas and providing security and post-conflict reconstruction services in Iraq. These two companies have seen their ethical credentials take a further dive recently when they hit the headlines for alleged fraud on UK government prisoner escort and tagging contracts. Babcock International (BAB) is also a big defence industry player, managing the British Army vehicle fleet and providing aircraft maintenance for the RAF.

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Vice no longer quite so nice

Whichever way you look at it, big tobacco is a definite no-no for any ethical investor, no matter how 'light green' - - because however much corporate social responsibility (CSR) British American Tobacco (BATS) and Imperial Tobacco (IMT) carry out, it will never outweigh the effects of selling a product that is highly addictive and damaging to one's health.

These characteristics partly explain why tobacco has proved such a highly cash-generative business over the years - put simply, smokers were prepared to cough up whatever price increases the tobacco companies pushed through, or indeed whatever duty increases governments around the world decided to slap on cigarettes.

However, an oft repeated question is how far we have now gone beyond 'peak smoke' and how many years the industry will be able to offset slowing growth through cost-cutting and improved ***manufacturing*** efficiency. Smoking is a habit in decline around the world, subject to increasing government interference - global smoking rates have continued to drift lower over the last five years, from 21.6 per cent in 2007 to 20.6 per cent in 2012, with only Africa seeing an increase. And they're expected to decline further still - the UK government is aiming to halve smoking rates to 10 per cent of the population by 2020, and the awareness of smoking's health implications are spreading into the emerging markets giants that the likes of British American Tobacco have targeted for growth.

BAT, for one, is now developing a range of e-cigarettes and other products for people who are trying to kick the habit - but the jury is still out on whether it will replace the mighty cash flow of tobacco, and global tobacco shares have fallen 4 per cent this year. Besides which, e-cigarettes only marginally improve the industry's ethical credentials - it may not be dealing in death, but it is still dealing in addiction.

Where companies in the business of making alcoholic beverages fall on the ethical spectrum, meanwhile, is highly subjective. If you believe selling the stuff is an unsavoury business, then as an ethical investor, steer clear of Diageo (DGE) and SABMiller (SAB). But, if like most investors you enjoy a glass of wine, the odd gin and tonic or a cheeky nightcap, you can't argue that what these companies are doing is wrong - problem drinking is arguably as much their fault as rising levels of diabetes is Unilever's.

The likes of Diageo and SABMiller nevertheless spend millions on alcohol awareness and social and environmental projects to help the communities in which they operate, and offer employment, healthcare and education to people in developing countries where those sorts of benefits are a rarity. They can certainly afford it - like tobacco companies, they generate huge profits and have been able to consolidate the world's drink makers into hugely powerful companies with significant presences in cash-generative developed markets and fast-growing developing ones. And while the shares have taken a bit of the hit these past few months as emerging economies have slowed, the long-term investment case does not face the same regulatory threat as that of tobacco.

Gambling is another industry which many believe profits from human weakness, and one which anyone of an ethical bent would give a wide berth. It's also proved a less reliable vice for investors - compare blue-chip bookmaker Ladbrokes (LAD), for example, whose shares have barely made any progress over the last 20 years, with the five-fold increase in the shares of SABMiller or BAT over just a 15-year period (see chart above). The performance of many online bookmakers has proved worse still, mainly because the industry has proved prone to regulatory interference over the years, not least the US gaming ban in 2006 which left many UK gaming executives facing criminal charges. That's prompted a race for regulated safe-haven jurisdictions, but that comes with additional cost. And while the US seems to be considering softening its stance on online gaming, the conservative right there should not be counted upon to support the preservation of a new gambling-friendly environment when they regain power.

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Defending the indefensible

For most, one suspects, defence would be the first industry crossed off the list of any self-respecting ethical portfolio. Clearly, the deliberate act of killing or maiming is accepted as fundamentally wrong, and a breach of human rights. But there is a real ethical dilemma and moral debate to be had about any military conflict. Most responsible governments avoid war at all costs, although often money and politics have as much to do with decision-making as ethics. But there are a number of so-called 'Just War' theories that might reasonably argue the case for (the) 'defence'.

This does, perhaps, stray into an ethical argument that is both unclear and inevitably inconclusive, and on which a consensus may never be reached. On that basis, there is no room for defence companies in ethical portfolios. That clearly adds companies such as arms ***manufacturer*** BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce (RR.), which makes engines for the military, to our list of sinners. Qinetiq (QQ.), Senior (SNR), Cobham (COB), Chemring (CHG) and Meggitt (MGGT) would also struggle to argue their way into an ethical portfolio.

However, those who put environmental above ethical concerns might not be so quick to rule out the sector. Many have major interests in commercial aviation, a business that emits millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide every year and which would omit airlines from some ethical portfolios. (Standard Life stopped putting British Airways (now IAG), Ryanair (RYA) and easyJet (EZJ) in its green funds five years ago.) But companies such as Meggit and Senior, along with automotive specialist GKN (GKN) are key suppliers of the composite materials used to build lighter, more fuel-efficient aircraft, which use 20 per cent less fuel than older models. Rolls-Royce's current generation of jet engines, the Trent 1000, which first entered service in 2011, is 12 per cent more fuel-efficient than the Trent 800, which entered service in 1996.

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Ricardo's Foxhound vehicle is a life-saver.

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Beyond aerospace, engineers are also shaking off their reputation for industrial griminess. Take IMI (IMI) for example - - on the one hand it sells high-tech valves used to convert liquefied natural gas (LNG) back to usable gas, and kit that will increasingly help America export cheap shale gas, as well as those used to run nuclear power plants. But its special valves also help vehicle ***manufacturers*** meet stringent new environmental legislation by reducing emissions and cutting fuel consumption. It's a similar story at engineering consultant Ricardo (RCDO). As well as involvement in the design of fuel-guzzling supercars, it also works with them to reduce carbon emissions, improve fuel economy and perfect electric vehicles. It also helped design the army's new Foxhound vehicle - to some a distasteful piece of military kit; to others a vital development to save the lives of British troops in conflict zones littered with improvised roadside bombs.

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Social responsibility Scandinavian style

Can one of the world's biggest oil exporters really be considered a candidate for an ethical investment portfolio? In the case of Norway's Statoil (No:STL), we think it can. The reason why Statoil is fundamentally different from just about any oil major you care to name is that its corporate ethos is defined by its majority owner - the Norwegian state. Since 1969, Norway has grown to become the eighth largest producer of oil in the world, but it is not a member of OPEC. A possible reason for this is Norway's human rights record, which is somewhat at odds with those of the cartel's member states.

The ethos that Statoil operates under is linked to the centuries-old Norwegian tradition of exploiting natural resources by utilising the most efficient and low-impact methods. Norway's natural resource industries - from fertiliser production to logging - are an exemplar for best environmental practice and the oil industry (through Statoil) is also obliged to toe the line.

Petroleum accounts for a third of state revenues, and effectively funds the nation's vast pension pot and a large sovereign wealth fund. The investments to fund the Norwegian state are largely funded by receipts from big state-controlled entities such as Statoil, Yara and Telenor, but they're subject to screening by an ethics committee and guided by a formal code. The Norwegians have disinvested from companies engaging in developing anti-personnel technology, utilising child labour, or those responsible for severe environmental damage. Undoubtedly, Statoil operates in a dirty industry, but it does so under a publicly enforced philosophy of transparency and corporate responsibility.

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Commodities with a conscience

The prevailing view is that investors of a socially responsible persuasion had best steer clear of the natural resources sector - by their very nature the mining and oil & gas industries are inherently disruptive to the environment. They're also often centred in politically unstable locales, and some would argue that their presence can be a destabilising factor in itself - - take the tragic incident at African Barrick Gold's (ABG) North Mara mine complex in May 2011, when officers of the Tanzanian police force gunned down 19 people, killing seven, after police ranks guarding the complex from theft were attacked by several hundred locals who were intent on removing finished gold from the mine.

It's no secret that oil and mining companies from across the globe have been wreaking havoc in both environmental and political terms for decades, but without descending into outright cynicism, is it realistic to eschew investment in businesses that underpin the wider economy? Unlike some other industries that are deemed unethical, such as tobacco, it's impossible to imagine how modern societies could operate without the raw materials provided by the extractive industries. We can't do without these commodities, so assuming we recognise they're necessities, surely it would be difficult to justify an ethical restriction on investing in these sectors on a wholesale basis? Aren't we all culpable to an extent, in our needs to heat our homes, power our fridges or move from A to B? And while the petrochemical industry might be ostensibly unethical on the basis of its record as a polluter, it's also argued that it has done more to alleviate famine (through synthesised nitrate production) in the post-war period than the collective efforts of national governments.

The central problem is that by extension it's virtually impossible to invest in a section of the economy, ethical or otherwise, that isn't indirectly reliant on what is perceived as a 'dirty' industry. There would be no wind turbines save for steel mills, no photovoltaic cells without open-cast mining, and Johnson Matthey (JMAT) would struggle to make catalytic converters vital for reducing automotive pollution without platinum - a point worth bearing in mind when casting judgement on the recent trouble at Lonmin's (LMI) Marikana mine in South Africa, where numerous miners were killed during labour disputes.

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Numerous miners have been killed during labour disputes at Lonmin's Marikana mine.

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Africa's mineral wealth is, of course, huge, and could eventually help bring about the economic transformation of a frontier continent where rates of poverty are still high. Poverty in Africa is predominantly rural. According to the World Bank, more than 70 per cent of the continent's poor people live in rural areas and depend on ***agriculture*** for food and livelihood, yet development assistance to ***agriculture*** is on the wane, so the importance of other sources of revenue and capital investment, such as mining, is becoming ever more important.

And although corruption is still a problem, mining codes are evolving to offer a much greater share of extraction proceeds to benefit local communities, not just those in government cutting the deals. The push towards more equitable and regionally-focused mining contracts has been helped by the emergence of more democratic and accountable governance across the continent, in tandem with agitation by local community and civil pressure groups. The economic benefits that have accrued in Central and South America because of relative political stability over the past 20 years has not been lost on African political bodies, so miners operating in Africa will increasingly be required to address stakeholder environmental issues, while setting aside provisions to adequately compensate affected communities after mining operations have ceased.

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Resource exploration has resulted in violence and environmental damage - but it also funds community projects in the world's poorest countries.

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The presence of western mining companies can also bring higher standards of ethical governance - the issue of how the diamond trade had been illegally used to fund bloody insurgencies throughout Africa reached a wider audience through the 2006 feature film Blood Diamond. The problem persists today, but is far smaller than its zenith in the 1980s, when the UN estimated that a fifth of the global trade in diamonds was being used to fund conflicts across Africa.

One mining company at the forefront of this ethical transformation is coloured gemstone miner Gemfields (GEM). It's taken an active role in tackling the environmental issues associated with the mining industry via its working partnership with the World Land Trust, and local surveys at the Kagem site under the auspices of the University of East Anglia and London's Natural History Museum. The company provides financial and logistical support to community schools and farmers in the area, and has constructed the Nkana ***Medical*** Clinic, while providing support an HIV/AIDS support/prevention programme at the centre. According to its chief executive Ian Harebottle, that effort isn't lost on an increasingly discerning customer base, which given the growing awareness of conflict minerals are now more inclined to steer away from products with a questionable provenance.

Few companies in the oil and gas business could truly be considered ethical based on environmental grounds, but there are plenty trying to make it a cleaner business. Take Hydrodec (HYR) for example, which has a unique refining technology that simultaneously recycles and cleans up used transformer oil. This oil would otherwise be disposed of and its long lifespan means it often contains harmful PCBs, which were banned in the US in 1977 because of evidence they build up in the environment and can cause harmful health effects. Hydrodec's unique process generates near zero emissions nor any hazardous by products while restoring the oil to an almost new condition, so it can be used again and again. The company has recently expanded outside of the US to the UK, and hopes to eventually transfer its technology to the significantly larger industrial oil and motor oil markets.

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The process of 'fracking' in order to extract shale gas is thought to have a negative impact on the environment.

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Quadrise Fuels (QFI) is another company looking to find cleaner fuels. Its proprietary MSAR emulsion fuel (or multiphase superfine atomised residue) eliminates the need to use expensive light distillates in the production of the heavy fuel oil (HFO) used in power generation and shipping. Quadrise has been deploying its technology within the refining segment of Saudi oil & gas giant Aramco, which supplies HFOs for most of Saudi Arabia's absurdly wasteful power generation, and shipping giant AP Moeller Maersk (CPH:MAERSK-B). Because of changes to EU maritime law governing emissions, the imperative for Maersk and other shippers to employ the enhanced version of the fuel 'Marine MSAR2' has intensified. Indeed, shipping is one of the world's big polluters - - with Maersk itself recently fined GBP22,500 after dumping palm oil slops close to the Cornish coast.

Aside from demonstrating its viability as a bunker fuel, the Maersk sea-trials confirmed MSAR's environmental benefits through potential emission reductions. The continued success of MSAR through its various trial stages has translated into a strong, if somewhat volatile, share price performance from Quadrise, which is up by 338 per cent on our original buy recommendation in September 2011.

If you're interested in the higher returns offered by conventional oil & gas exploration and production, but are concerned about often dubious corporate social responsibility practices or environmental mishaps in the developing world, we'd suggest Parkmead Group (PMG) as a local alternative. Parkmead is focused on oil & gas in the North Sea and western Europe and the company has an excellent environmental, safety and corporate governance track record. Moreover, it's run by Tom Cross, of Dana Petroleum fame. A seasoned and shrewd executive who keeps expenses to a minimum, Mr Cross has personally invested nigh on GBP10m into the venture to date. And if the upcoming Pharos exploration well in the UK Southern North Sea is positive, both he and you could benefit from significant share price gains.

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Soulful power

Britain's utilities often find themselves in the eye of the storm when it comes to social responsibility - not just because most of the world's power still comes from polluting fossil fuels, but because of the regular accusations of profiteering thrown at the industry. Labour leader Ed Miliband's recent conference promise to cap energy prices added further fuel to the mounting public anger at rising energy bills, but was met with wide derision.

The reality is that wholesale gas prices have been rising, and huge investment in infrastructure is required to keep Britain's lights on - trade body Energy UK estimates that GBP110bn will needed to be invested in power stations over the next decade, and it's a similar story at water utilities, which need to invest heavily to meet leakage targets to preserve the nations H2O. On that front, Pennon's (PNN) scores well, with its South West Water business meeting its Ofwat-set leakage targets every year since their introduction, and United Utilities' (UU.) water business also has a good track record of meeting leakage targets. Severn Trent (SVT), however, missed its 2010-11 leakage targets set by the regulator Ofwat.

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Returning to energy, renewable obligations as mandated by the government don't come cheap, either. Greenhouse emissions are expected to be reduced by 80 per cent by 2050 (from a 1990 baseline) - the EU, meanwhile, wants to reduce emissions by a fifth by 2020. A key plank of this strategy is the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive, which aims to increase the proportion of energy demand met by renewables to 15 per cent from 3 per cent. The problem is that renewable energy is generally not as cheap as dirtier sources - - coal and gas can produce electricity at a cost of somewhere around 5-10p per kilowatt hour (kWh) whereas offshore wind costs 15-20p per kWh and solar and tidal come in well above that. These costs are expected to drop in the future as knowhow increases but, for now at least, renewables need subsidies and there has been criticism of the 'green levy' on consumers' energy bills to pay for them.

No wonder, then, that burning coal and oil remain dominant, with renewables making up just 8 per cent of the generating mix. The UK's biggest generator of electricity from renewable resources is currently FTSE 100 company SSE (SSE) and there is little doubt that the company is leading the charge on greener energy among big utilities, but it does also still produce plenty of power from less ethically attractive coal-fired power stations. Drax (DRX), meanwhile currently operates the UK's largest coal-fired plant, but is in the process of shifting to predominately biomass-fuelled generation. But ethical investors need to tread carefully here, too - a recent European Environment Agency study found that some forms of biomass are no more environmentally friendly than coal, as they can have knock-on effects on land use. For its part, Drax says it will use 'sustainable' biomass that will mean greenhouse gas emissions are lower than coal.

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The Fukushima clean up has raised questions over nuclear.

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Nuclear, which currently generates 18 per cent of the UK's electricity is another ethically ambiguous area. On the one hand, it can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is fairly cheap at 5-10p per kWh. On the other, it produces a pile of toxic waste and can cause extreme environmental damage if something goes wrong - look no further than Fukushima for a recent example, where 733,000 curies of radioactive cesium leaked into the Pacific, contaminating fish supplies and making 90 square kilometres around the Japanese nuclear plant a "permanent exclusion zone" too radioactive for human habitation. That disaster prompted Germany to abandon its own nuclear fleet, with the last plant due to close in 2022.

Perhaps a better way for ethical investors to add utility exposure to their portfolio is through the smaller UK companies that are helping utility giants reduce their environmental footprint. Smart Metering Systems (SMS) installs metering equipment designed to help reduce energy consumption. Recycling is also big business. Waste management company Shanks Group's (SKS) activities focus on recycling and the production of reusable products. Another, smaller, recycling play is Straight (STT), which offers services including food waste recycling and water saving.

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Tap into renewable power

It wasn't too long ago that the idea of solar power becoming established in dull and drizzly Britain was scoffed at, but advances in solar technology as well as government support and falling equipment prices have transformed the economics of the industry. While it remains in its infancy, more than 2.5 gigawatts (GW) of solar capacity has been installed in the past three years. The trend towards more substantial solar farms is growing and investors are able to tap into this through the Bluefield Solar Income Fund (BSIF), which listed earlier this year raising GBP130m in an oversubscribed offering. The Foresight Solar Fund is currently canvassing demand for a GBP200m fundraise on the main market.

Both these funds have indicated their desire to pay a 6 per cent yield on the initial 100p a share investment. In the wind sector, the Greencoat UK Wind fund (UKW) raised GBP260m earlier this year to invest in wind assets and the Renewables Infrastructure Group (TRIG) raised GBP300m for a range of investments - both also intend to pay out healthy dividends, Greencoat has already paid a half-year dividend of 1.5p a share. All these funds are main market-listed investment companies.

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You can also play the renewables theme more discreetly through individual companies. Mytrah Energy (MYT) is focused on renewable energy production in India and in particular wind power. Through strong relationships on the ground in India the company has managed to fund a rapid build of wind power assets on the sub-continent which totalled 309.9 megawatts (MW) of capacity at the end of June, and which is expected to reach 548.1MW by the year end with a long-term 2015 target of 1.5GW.

Close relationships with turbine makers Suzlon and Gamesa underpin such targets. And the business rationale is beginning to show through, with revenues up by 70 per cent and cash earnings up 83 per cent in the first half, at a margin of 88 per cent.

Greenko (GKO) is another option - it operates clean energy projects such as wind and hydro in India. Back in the UK, there's always Renewable Energy Generation (WIND), which operates onshore wind farms and generates clean energy from used cooking oil. Another possible renewable energy play is Good Energy (GOOD), an energy supplier that sources all of its electricity from renewable sources such as wind and solar.

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Supermarkets split opinion

What with stories of ripping off farmers, ruining the high street and misleading consumers, supermarkets have a bit of an image problem. Add to that questions over the quality of the produce they procure following 'Horsegate' earlier this year, and it's hard to place grocers in the ethical category. Moreover, the situation has deteriorated so much so that a grocery codes adjudicator has been brought in by the government to ensure they stick to rules governing the way they promote their goods.

It's a shame since supermarkets were originally seen as the gatekeepers of quality for consumers. Sainsbury's chief executive Justin King recently questioned whether supermarkets have forgotten whose side they are on. "Why should consumers need protecting from us when our role is to protect them and their relationships with producers?" he asked.

However, the successes of up-market Waitrose - which as a shareholder-owned co-operative boasts strong ethical credentials - and M&S Food in recent years goes to show that shoppers are willing to pay for quality and to pay a higher price, especially when they know the primary producer, ie the farmer, is getting fairly remunerated for his produce. What is actually happening is that stiff competition for the 'middle' consumer between the big four supermarkets has led to a price war to lure in customers, and it's the farmers who have lost out as the supermarkets seek to protect their margins. They will argue that they're simply trying to give 'cash-strapped families' the best deals.

Morrison (MRW), meanwhile, is a vertically integrated grocer, which means that it processes meat through its own abattoirs, sourced directly from farmers with whom it has long-standing relationships, and so supply chains are short. It knows and picks its suppliers carefully, only doing business with those who employ high welfare standards. The majority of its fresh produce comes from British farms, boosting the national economy, supporting agribusiness and rural communities. It's the ethical pick of the bunch.

Then there's the waste argument - supermarkets chuck out a lot of food, use too much packaging and demand that the produce they buy looks perfect, rejecting a cucumber simply because it's a bit wonky. To their credit, though, supermarkets have been quick to improve waste, introduce biodegradable packaging and have been instrumental in getting shoppers to use their own bags. They're also working closely with companies such as DS Smith (SMDS) and Mondi (MNDI), which make cardboard packaging and collect waste paper recycling from big supermarkets and other retailers. Both source their wood responsibly, avoiding any link to deforestation or illegal logging. Much of the raw material is recycled fibre and a significant proportion of the fresh fibre-based material they need comes from their own vast forests where felled trees are replaced. SCA Packaging, which Smith bought last year, is included in the Ethisphere Institute's World's Most Ethical (WME) Companies list. Mondi, meanwhile, offers free anti-retroviral therapy to all staff with HIV/AIDS.

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Food for thought

If the business of selling food prompts some ethical and environmental scrutiny, spare a minute to consider the process of growing and making it. Farming itself has become a highly mechanised business, using machinery to till ever greater areas and relying on chemical pesticides and fertilisers to keep crop yields high - in the UK, to the clear and potentially disastrous detriment of its bee population. US crop technology giant Monsanto (US: MON) has often found itself the target of much vitriol from social campaigners for its involvement in genetically modified crops that lock farmers into costly seed contracts.

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The horsemeat scandal shook Britain's supermarkets.

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Palm oil, meanwhile, is becoming the edible oil of choice, used in a wide range of foods and cosmetics thanks to its chemical properties which make it more stable at room temperature than alternatives, and therefore lower cost. However, its external cost has been high - the cultivation of oil palms has been responsible for large-scale deforestation and the destruction of wildlife habitats in South-East Asia, and few in the industry beyond New Britain Palm Oil (NBPO) can yet boast truly sustainable credentials here.

However, it is possible to identify some ethical opportunities in food. Pork producer Cranswick (CWK) has cut its carbon footprint by 20 per cent since 2007 and is committed to a further reduction of 30 per cent by 2020. Its fresh pork comes from British farms approved by Freedom Food in accordance with strict RSPCA welfare standards, making the shares suitable for a very ethical investor. Cranswick's high standards of ***animal*** husbandry are translating into strong share price performance, too. And it is cows, not pigs, whose methane output accounts for 18 per cent of all greenhouse gases, more than all the world's motorised transport combined, according to the UN Food and ***Agricultural*** Organization.

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Meat and dairy herds contribute 18 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases.

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Origin Enterprises (OGN) offers technical agronomy advice and systems to farmers as well as specially blended fertilisers. This might not seem eco-friendly at first glance, but helping farmers to create the most efficient and high-yielding systems with technical precision is surely good for the environment, as it boosts yields and reduces the use of excess fertiliser, a major environmental concern surrounding today's intensive farming methods.

Anpario (ANP) ***manufactures*** natural ***animal*** ***feed*** additives that improve the health and output of ***animals***, including organic ***feed*** for organic farmers. The product range is developed and ***manufactured*** in Nottingham, providing jobs for local people, and means ***animals*** lead healthier, happier lives. Both Anpario and Origin's shares have performed very well this year, and are probably set for further growth, as global food consumption has risen and farmers look for ways to improve their output.

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High-street horrors

The collapse of a Bangladeshi garment factory in April, which killed over 1,000 workers, served up a stark reminder of the potentially high cost of the low-price clothing that has flooded the UK's high streets in recent years. The insatiable demand from consumers for hot fashions that won't break the bank has forced retailers to continually seek ways of lowering the cost of production. In doing so, corners have almost certainly been cut across stretched global supply chains. Accusations of sweatshops and slave labour refuse to subside, seemingly with some justification.

Among the 28 brands supplied by the Rana Plaza factory was Primark, the fast fashion chain owned by Associated British Food (ABF) which has redefined the price benchmark for shopping in the UK.

It has agreed to pay compensation to the victims of the disaster, and along with 40 European retailers has signed up to a legally-binding accord on Bangladeshi factory safety and will contribute E500,000 a year for five years to fund improvements. Other British retailers, including Tesco and Debenhams (DEB), have pulled out of factories in the same Savar district where the disaster took place. The industry has been shocked into action.

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The Rana Plaza factory (above collapse highlighted the urgent problems in the global retail supply chain (below).

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The problem is, the necessary changes will not come cheap, and that will put pressure on already tight margins. Primark already employs 40 staff around the world monitoring worker conditions - - the failure to prevent the Rana Plaza tragedy suggests more will be required. And pressure to raise wages is also strong - - since the collapse workers have taken to the streets of Dhaka to demand better pay of $100 (GBP62.17) a month - in Cambodia it's a similar story, with many of its 500,000 garment workers earning below the country's official $80 a month minimum wage.

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But again, there exists a moral dilemma, because it's also possible to argue that without these factories staff would be poorer still. Clothing accounts for 80 per cent of Cambodia's exports, and there is a real concern that efforts by organisations such as the International Labour Organization to improve pay conditions for workers risks making it uncompetitive. The worry for Cambodia is that brands simply take production elsewhere.

Low wages aren't unique to the emerging markets factories making clothes for British consumers - spare a thought for the thousands of workers on zero-hours contracts manning the shops, too. And let's not forget about the environmental impact of the global supply chain supporting the high street - shipping is said to account for up to 5 per cent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, with consumer goods accounting for a rising chunk of the world's seaborne trade.

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Banks - goodfellas or good fellows?

Banks get a pretty miserable press. After all, it was their greed-driven weak credit practices that generated the financial crisis, which - combined with an arrogant assumption that banks were too important to be allowed to fail - ultimately led to eye-wateringly large taxpayer bailouts.

That has added significantly to the nation's debt pile, which in turn has long-term implications for the economic health of us all. No wonder that, among the many new words to enter the public consciousness as a result of the financial crisis, the idea of the 'bankster' has become so popular - a far cry from the old-fashioned image of the local bank managers, a pillar of the community who could be trusted to look after your cash and sign your passport.

The idea that banking is only one step away from organised criminality has some merit. The list of banking misdemeanours is certainly long. Standard Chartered (STAN) was forced to cough up $667m in fines last summer after being accused by regulators in New York of having "schemed" to avoid US sanctions against Iran.

HSBC (HSBC) was fined almost $2bn for systems failures that led the bank to be used as a conduit for "drug kingpins and rogue nations". RBS (RBS) and Barclays (BARC) were fined GBP260m and GBP290m respectively for their roles in rigging the Libor interbank rate, and even now Barclays is under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office into 2008's Qatar capital injection.

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And all banks have paid millions for mis-selling payment protection insurance to retail customers - Lloyds (LLOY) tops the pile here with a compensation provision of GBP7.28bn. More reputational pain is on the way, too, with interest rate product mis-selling set to grow in significance.

There is, however, nothing intrinsically immoral or harmful about financial intermediation - indeed, the provision of finance to individuals and businesses is an essential part of delivering the economic growth from which we all benefit. True, some loans on banks' books will be to clearly unethical borrowers - the arms trade, or tobacco business, for example.

But that's unlikely to be an especially significant element. And while some forms of finance do cause clear ethical problems - such as pay-day lending - the listed UK banks don't fall into that category.

Indeed, RBS and Lloyds, by virtue of their government share holdings, even support some public policy-related objectives - through signing-up to the Help to Buy scheme, for example. Generally speaking, banks also boast good employment policies and are often involved in supporting charities and the local communities in which they work.

The trouble is that the banks have been found guilty of so many misdemeanours that the possibility of another scandal emerging somewhere in the sector is hard to rule out - Indeed, RBS looks especially vulnerable - the Financial Conduct Authority says that RBS has 10,528 interest rate product mis-selling claims under review, which is more than all of the cases at HSBC, Lloyds and Barclays combined.

So those bank investors with ethical sensitivities could find themselves unexpectedly disappointed, and on the receiving end of more large bills, even if, as their marketing messages almost universally do, banks now claim to be rediscovering their community-minded roots.

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It's hip to be a green builder

Housebuilders may not seem to be an obvious choice for being environmentally responsible, but they are in fact making a major contribution, even if the Home Information Packs introduced in 2007 designed to highlight home efficiency have gone out of the window.

This is because modern house construction is going some way towards reducing pollution and saving energy. New houses have much better insulation against heat loss, which means they consume less energy to stay warm. Effective water heaters use less energy, while mandatory double glazing cuts down on noise pollution as well as saving heat. And if you buy into the dire warnings about Britain's housing shortage, it's possible to argue that housebuilders make a positive contribution to society, too - although, in the context of Ed Miliband's recent conference speech, it's equally easy to paint them as villains deliberately limiting the supply of new homes to keep their prices artificially high.

Just as housing construction is becoming greener, so infrastructure construction companies have been working hard to minimise their footprint and make building less of a dirty business. And these targets are not simply a concession to environmental pressures - using less energy also makes economic sense.

Take Carillion (CLLN), for example. In 2011 it set up a target to capture water consumption data with a view to reduce consumption by a quarter by 2015. It is also working towards sending zero non-hazardous waste to landfill in the same time scale. And the group has also set up a natural habitats fund, contributing over GBP370,000 to 60 projects since 2001. Meanwhile, Costain (COST) moved to accurately report its carbon footprint using independent accreditation, and is on target to achieve a 55 per cent reduction in emission intensity by 2020.

Construction is one of the world's most dangerous professions - 28 per cent of all industrial fatalities in the UK are on building sites. But large infrastructure groups are also working hard to ensure sites are safer - not easy if, like Balfour Beatty (BBY), you're operating hundreds of sites in 90 countries worldwide. Its target is zero harm, which means no deaths, injuries to the public or harm to health. Sadly, this wasn't achieved last year, but the group did manage to reduce the number of serious injuries and deaths. In fact, 20 of its 34 operations achieved zero harm levels.

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Aim-ing for a greener future

Ethical investors looking for opportunities on the junior Aim market have suffered mixed fortunes at best in recent years. In the middle of the last decade, when new issues were booming on Aim, a significant number of companies in the ethical space sought out funds to develop their businesses in the alternative energy and energy efficiency sectors, offering up to investors the chance to invest in all manner of concepts from battery power to wind farms, fuel cells, fly wheels, solar energy, waste to energy, gas to liquids and even nanotechnology.

But many investors had their fingers seriously burned in companies which struggled to make the transition from the laboratory to the commercial world. This has hardened both investor attitudes and those of the management of companies in this space, which means such early stage companies are unlikely to make it to market without a very compelling offering. It has also culled much of the potential deadwood from the Aim market and left a number of companies with proper businesses or products that are significantly closer to commercialisation, with the following among our favourites:

Alkane Energy (Alternative energy)

Alkane (ALK) has built up a portfolio of alternative power producing assets through a combination of coal bed methane extraction and stand-by power gas turbines. It recorded a 44 per cent increase in power output year on year in the six months to June, which helped push profits up 50 per cent. With a number of fixed price contracts in place for the rest of this year and next giving some confidence in forecasts, and a forward PE ratio of less than 12 times, Alkane is a buy.

Nanoco (Technology hardware & equipment)

Nanoco (NANO) specialises in the production of cadmium-free quantum dots, miniscule semiconductors which can be used in lighting applications, solar power and the next generation of power-saving LED televisions. It is in the process of rapidly transforming from concept to commercialisation through a deal with Dow Chemical which will see the US giant bankroll a production facility in Asia in 2014. The shares have already appreciated considerably on the back of the Dow deal but first production, and commercial agreements during 2014 could provide further catalysts.

Graphene Nanochem (Alternative energy)

The riskiest of our ethical Aim plays, Graphene (GRPH) sits firmly in 'blue sky' territory. It joined Aim in March through a reverse takeover accompanied by a GBP32.5m fundraising. This will be put towards further development of its graphene extraction technology, which uses biogas from waste products to produce the material known as 'atomic chicken wire'. Graphene, which is derived from carbon, has incredible superconductivity qualities and has the potential to replace silicon in semiconductors. But this remains some way off, in the short term Graphene Nanochem is using it to enrich biodegradable drilling fluids for the oil and gas industry.

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Graphene

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Ceres Power (Fuel cells)

Ceres Power (CWR) is a different kind of venture altogether - but one with similarly impressive environmental credentials, although not yet financial ones. An alternative energy company based in the UK, Ceres has developed a fuel cell technology that reduces emissions, increases fuel efficiency and improves long-term energy security. The question for investors is whether or not Ceres can successfully commercialise its technology. In that regard, Ceres made significant progress in July when it signed up South Korea's largest boiler ***manufacturer***, KD Navien, as a partner to trial Ceres' mass-manufacturable fuel cell boiler units. These boilers would likely use some natural gas for fuel but the fuel cell units can also run on pure hydrogen or renewable biofuels. The only outputs are electricity, heat and water vapour, if run on hydrogen.

Other companies worth consideration:

a Trading Emissions (TRE) - environmental investment company in the process of liquidating its portfolio, leading to potential cash returns.

a Impax Asset Management (IPX) - asset manager with a number of funds in the ethical/environmental space.

a Accsys Technologies (AXS) - technology business which converts softwood into hardwood suitable for use in the construction industry.

a Modern Water (MWG) - water technology company with applications in efficient desalination and water quality monitoring.

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Sponsors of goods and vouchers

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Shire horse classes sponsors

Special prizes for champion shire & reserve. Special prizes for champion foal & reserve sponsored by - seven star natural gas ltd

Class 1 Gelding 4 years old and over. Sponsor - Sainbury plc.

Class 2 Barren Mare 4 years old and over. Sponsor - F Ball & Co Ltd.

Class 3 Barren Mare or Gelding 3 years old. Sponsor - Jackson Marquee Hire Ltd.

Class 4 Brood Mare with own foal at foot. Sponsor - P J S Machinery Ltd.

Class 5 Filly Foal. Sponsor - A H Brooks & Co.

Class 6 Colt Foal. Sponsor - Shirleys Transport Ltd.

Class 7 Filly or Gelding 2 years old. Sponsor - Lafarge Cement UK.

Class 8 Filly, Colt or Gelding 1 year old. Sponsor - Less co2.

Class 9 Best Matched Pair of Horses in hand mares or geldings. Owned by The Exhibitor. Sponsor - Blythe Scaffold Services Ltd.

Class 10 Ridden Heavy Horse Type. Light horse crosses not accepted. Sponsor - Central ***Medical*** Supplies.

Class 11 Decorated Harness with Traditional Brass, open to any heavy horse. Sponsor - Povey`s Oatcakes in memory of Steve Povey.

Sponsors for private driving. F Ball & Co Ltd, Mr H Critchlow, J Pointon & Sons Ltd, Povey's Oatcake Shop.

The Wine Shop, Russell Street, Leek. sponsor of special prizes for Decorated Harness: 1 bottle of whisky; Champion Sheep : 1 bottle of whisky; Champion Private Driving: 1 bottle of whisky; Champion Goat Section: 1 bottle of whisky.

Donated by Cottage Delight, Best Trade Stand (small): hamper

Kelvin. The White Lion, Macclesfield Road. Leek. Sponsor of special prizes for: Champion Rare Breed Sheep: 1 bottle of whisky; Champion Rare Breed Cattle: 1 bottle of whisky.

Donated by Ian & Jennifer Ball, Champion Dog Section: 1 bottle of whisky.

Donated by Alison Hodkinson Catering, Best Trade Stand (large): 1 bottle whisky.

**Load-Date:** July 22, 2014

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Manchester Evening News

December 5, 2013 Thursday

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**Section:** FEATURES; Pg. 6

**Length:** 1030 words

**Byline:** Alex Bell

**Body**

MARKET UPDATE

In the last week, the FTSE100 has fallen by 1.7%.

The benchmark index ended the month in negative territory, having lost 84 points over November.

World markets were generally in holding patterns ahead of the release of US jobs data at the end of the week.

They will, once again, be keenly watched by investors.

Investors will be awaiting hints as to when the US Federal Reserve will begin to taper stimulus measures.

This may impact the hoped-for December Santa Rally.

However, some analysts are still holding out for a rally towards 7,000.

That is because the FTSE100 index having risen 19 times in December over the last 21 years.

Alan Freeman, head of retail

XCap Securities

â ***AGRICULTURAL*** ***feeds***, food and fuels distribution business NWF has bought SC ***Feeds*** Ltd. Nantwich-based NWF said the 6.75million deal has been agreed on a cash free, debt free basis. SC ***Feeds*** Ltd is a leading ***animal*** ***feed*** ***manufacturer*** based in Stone, Staffordshire. Richard Whiting, Chief Executive of NWF Group, said the total consideration for the acquisition is up to 6.75m comprised of 6m in cash and up to 0.75m to be satisfied by the issue of new ordinary shares in NWF. He added: This exciting acquisition is in line with the strategic ambition we have set out to develop the Group towards a greater focus on ***agriculture*** and meeting the needs of farmers in the UK. â MANCHESTER-based Kalibrate, a provider of pricing and retail planning tools to oil companies and convenience store chains, has raised more than 13million after floating on London's AIM market. The Placing saw 8,227,848 new shares on behalf of the company and 8,354,430 sale shares on behalf of an existing shareholder. When the company announced it would float just weeks ago, it was aiming to raise around 8m. Bob Stein, Chief Executive Officer of Kalibrate Technologies plc, said the successful placing and admission to AIM represented a milestone event for the firm. â STEVE Corcoran said it is appropriate that he steps down as the Speedy Hire chief executive, after accounting irregularities were found in the company's international division. The tool and equipment hire business, based in Newton-le-Willows, said there might be a reduction in pre-tax profits as a result of the mis-statement of a number of accounting balances. The business said the issues within the international business were discovered following management changes. The cost of the issues is expected to be between 4.5m and 5m and it is estimated that pre-tax profit will drop by 3m. â BUSINESS telecoms company Daisy Group intends to complete more takeovers despite a fall in revenues from 178.1m to 173.9m during the half year to September 30. The Nelson-based firm has already completed three deals this year, the last being the 18m acquisition of Indecs Computer Services and Indecs Computers in October. Underlying profits grew by 2% in the same six month period to 27.8m. Loss before tax from continuing operations was 15m, compared with 13.8m last year. â IT security specialist Accumuli has reported revenues of 7.7m for the six months ending September 30, up 23% on last year's 6.3m. Underlying profits were 7% higher at 1.1m during the same period and gross profit up 28% at 4.5m, the Salford firm said. The business generated 1.2m in cash from operations, compared with the 200,000 generated last year. Accumuli Chairman Nick Kingsbury said acquisitions such as Signify and this week's purchase of Eqalis were a factor behind the growth. â PACKAGING firm API Group has reinstated its dividend after 12 years. The Stockport firm has undergone a turnaround plan under chief executive Andrew Turner and finance director Chris Smith. Mr Smith said the AIM-listed firm will pay an interim dividend of 0.7p. It was announced as API reported revenues for the six months to September 30 of 56.9m, down from 58.8m during the same period last year.

APC Technology Group The electronic components ***manufacturer*** and distributor, will announce final results on December 9. The market will be looking for Sales to have grown 53.9% to 21m, ahead of previous market expectations, and adjusted profit before tax of 0.35m, with net cash at year end at 1m. The group recently announced it had agreed terms to acquire the remaining 10% of Minimise Energy Ltd, continuing its strategic focus on investment in the cleantech sector. In the last year, shares have traded between 12.75p and 68.25p and now stand at 64p. Stagecoach The international transport group, will announce interim results on December 11. The market will be looking for Sales to reach 1.485bn, a 5.8% increase compared to the same period last year, with pre-tax profit approaching 90m. Like-for-like revenue growth is expected in the Group's main businesses, with the exception of UK Bus (London) against last year's Olympics-influenced strong figures. Shares in the group have grown 18.2% this year and now stand at 363.15p, giving a market capitalisation of 2.088bn. Analysts have forecast a small, but reliable, dividend yield of 2.6% for the full year. 237m. Alan Freeman, XCap Securities

1. JD SPORTS FASHION PLC 1339.00 646,250,000 8.25 2. W.H. IRELAND GROUP PLC 85.50 20,250,000 8.23 3. ENSOR HOLDINGS PLC 80.00 22,950,000 7.38 4. RENOLD PLC 51.00 104,280,000 7.37 5. TERTIARY MINERALS PLC 7.50 11,930,000 7.14 6. DAISY GROUP PLC 199.00 482,220,000 6.99 7. NORCROS PLC 22.12 126,910,000 5.94 8. BGLOBAL PLC 7.12 7,440,000 5.48 9. BROWN (N) GROUP PLC 535.00 1,419,980,000 3.08 10. NCC GROUP PLC 172.25 361,600,000 2.99 11. NICHOLS PLC 1199.00 365,830,000 2.04 12. SCAPA GROUP PLC 93.00 137,620,000 1.64 13. ADVANCED ***MEDICAL*** SOLUTIONS 100.50 158,660,000 1.52 14. NANOCO GROUP PLC 144.75 336,240,000 1.40 15. POCHINS PLC 41.00 8,220,000 1.23 16. MCBRIDE PLC 107.75 203,620,000 0.94 17. JAMES HALSTEAD PLC 295.00 560,270,000 0.85 18. PZ CUSSONS PLC 384.00 1,762,650,000 0.52 19. FAIRPOINT GROUP PLC 131.50 49,490,000 0.38 20. BRAMMER PLC 446.00 451,400,000 0.22 21. FRENKEL TOPPING GROUP PLC 30.00 18,020,000 0.00 22. PROMETHEAN PLC 10.00 5,650,000 0.00 23. 2 ERGO GROUP PLC 2.38 9,920,000 0.00 24. SUNRISE RESOURCES PLC 0.50 1,970,000 0.00 25. RENOVO GROUP PLC 18.75 29,310,000 0.00

**Load-Date:** December 5, 2013

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[***Red alert! Met Office warns of urgent risk to life as flood-hit Britain is battered by 100mph storm closing major rail line on Wild Wednesday***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5BH3-1RM1-DXDT-60NX-00000-00&context=1516831)

MailOnline

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**Section:** NEWS

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**Byline:** MARK DUELL

**Body**

Cobra committee convened this morning as PM pledges 'money is no object' in providing flooding relief

Cameron warns 'things may get worse before they get better' with  gusts of up to 100mph on exposed coasts

Storm could cause transport and power issues, with continuing problems in Thames Valley and West Country

Up to 1.5in rain is forecast for South, with 2.75in by Friday in the West, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Some 600 troops have been deployed to assist with flood protection and relief, with around 1,000 on standby

Around 1,700 homes in Datchet, Berkshire, hit by power cuts after area is hit by severe flooding from Thames

West Coast Main Line will close between Preston and Lancaster at 7pm for a few hours because of high wind

Britain was today experiencing a 'Wild Wednesday' of severe storms and rising water levels, with no prospect of an end to the misery in sight.

The Met Office has issued a red weather warning - the most severe level of threat - for 'exceptionally strong winds' of up to 100mph.

The rare alert, which was last issued 13 months ago, is in place for western parts of Wales and some north-western parts of England this evening.

The last red alert overall was issued in January 2013 for snow in the Welsh valleys, but the last red wind alert was in January 2012 for western Scotland.

Just 10 red alerts for all types of weather have been issued since the Met Office warnings system was revamped three years ago in April 2011.

Scroll down for videos and petition

A wind gust of 110mph was recorded today from a ship south of Ireland, while on land 92mph was observed at Mumbles Head at Swansea Bay in Wales.

It comes as these flood and weather warning maps show the true extent of severe weather that has already struck Britain - and what is still to come.

Meanwhile, Environment Agency staff were withdrawn from flood-hit area in Berkshire because of hostility from members of the public.

It is understood that staff were abused in the Wraysbury area of Berkshire, and have now been told to report any incidents to the agency.

The GMB union said the hostility was a 'direct result of the irresponsible attack' by Communities Secretary Eric Pickles and others on the EA.

The Government's Cobra emergency committee convened this morning after David Cameron pledged 'money is no object' in providing flooding relief.

More than 130,000 people have now backed the Mail's petition - which you can sign here - for Mr Cameron to use foreign aid cash to tackle flood crisis.

And the Prime Minister has warned that 'things may get worse before they get better', with hundreds of flood warnings and alerts still in force.

Forecasters are warning that some of the strongest winds of the winter could hit today, with gusts of up to 100mph on exposed parts of the Welsh coast.

The storm could fell trees and cause transport and power disruption, with winds in the South West potentially reaching 80mph.

And there is continuing disruption to rail services in the Thames Valley and West Country. The Met Office also forecasts that yet more rain is on the way.

Up to 1.5in of rain will fall in southern and western areas, and 2.75in by Friday in the West Country, south Wales, western Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Now sign our petition calling on Government to divert foreign aid to flood-hit British families Please revert to our desktop version of the website if viewing on an iPhone.

Alternatively you can click HERE to print a copy and send it to the Daily Mail by post.

The Met Office has already revealed that England and Wales has seen 'one of, if not the most, exceptional periods for winter rainfall' in 248 years.

M2 STILL CLOSED AFTER 15FT HOLE APPEARS IN CENTRAL RESERVATION

A 10-mile section of a busy motorway remains closed after the discovery yesterday of a 15ft-deep hole in the central reservation.

The section is on the M2 in north Kent, between junction 5 near Sittingbourne and junction 6 south of Faversham.

The hole - about 16ft long and 6ft wide - led to the section being closed from early yesterday afternoon, leading to big tailbacks on routes leading to and from the Kent coast.

The Highways Agency said work was continuing to find out what caused the hole to open and that the section remained closed.

The agency went on: 'Drivers heading to and from Dover are advised to use the M20. The Highways Agency and its contractors are working hard with partners, including the emergency services and Kent County Council, to minimise disruption as much as possible.

'This has included ensuring any planned roadworks are not carried out on nearby local and strategic roads. Lanes on the M2 will only be reopened to traffic as soon it is safe.'

The agency said engineers were joined on site by emergency services including Kent Fire & Rescue Service. Cameras were being used to investigate the extent and nature of the hole.

In the South West, three people were injured today after a high-sided heavy goods vehicle blew onto a car in Bideford, Devon.

Police said severe gales caused the Volkswagen LT135 to blow over onto the top of the green Ford Fiesta at around 10.35am.

Some 600 troops have now been deployed to assist with flood protection and relief, with around 1,000 on standby.

Mr Cameron said 'thousands more' were available for filling and moving sandbags, getting ***medical*** assistance to the sick and helping vulnerable people.

Residents in Staines, Surrey, were evacuated from their flood-hit homes during the night, while around 1,000 homes in the Thameside village of Datchet were left without electricity during the night after power cuts which initially affected 1,700 properties.

And a primary school in Wraysbury, Berkshire, was reportedly turned into a '24/7 control centre' for residents affected by flooding, the BBC said.

It reported that army personnel had been on the streets during the night to help police, and that the army and police had set up checkpoints to monitor who comes and goes in the area following fears of looting at the homes of flood victims.

Lucy Foster, who has been helping to co-ordinate the operation, told the BBC morale and energy had been low in Wraysbury because the village had been looking after itself for so long.

She said: 'Finally we've got the boys and girls that we need - we've got the Army, the police force, the fire service and getting a lot of support from them and a lot of direction from them, which is what was needed.'

Around 1,000 homes in the Thameside village of Datchet were left without power during the night after power cuts which initially affected 1,700 properties and left engineers scrambling to fix the fault.

The Environment Agency (EA) has said rises in the level of the River Thames are among the biggest threat over coming days.

Windsor and Maidenhead, Berkshire, as well as parts of Surrey, are now considered at risk, on top of the 1,000 properties reported as flooded over the past week.

Since the beginning of December, a total of 5,800 premises have flooded - although the agency also stressed that 1.3 million have been protected by defences.

EA senior flood adviser Kate Marks warned it was 'increasingly likely' that there would also be problems along the River Severn and River Wye.

Sixteen severe flood warnings - danger to life - remained in place in Berkshire, Surrey and Somerset this morning, with a further 122 flood warnings and 229 flood alerts.

About 100 properties remain flooded on the Somerset Levels, where extra pumps are being brought in from the Netherlands.

Groundwater flooding is also expected in the coming days in Hampshire, Kent and parts of London.

The Thames barrier closed again yesterday to protect communities to the West of the capital.

Announcing new support for householders, businesses and farms, Mr Cameron told a Downing Street press conference that every effort would be made to help affected areas get back on their feet.

'Money is no object in this relief effort. Whatever money is needed for it will be spent,' he said.

The Prime Minister chaired Cobra in Whitehall last night and has cancelled a planned trip to the Middle East to take personal charge of the response to the flooding crisis.

Tomorrow he will chair the first meeting of a new Cabinet committee set up to oversee the recovery effort.

He said a tax deferral scheme will help businesses hit by flooding, while up to £10 million in new funding is being found to support farmers.

Grants of several thousand pounds for homeowners and businesses will be available to improve flood defences as they repair their properties.

The PM rejected calls to divert funds from the overseas aid budget to the flood relief effort, insisting that, as a 'wealthy country with a growing economy' Britain does not have to choose between the two.

MORE WOE FOR RAIL PASSENGERS

Travellers faced more misery on the rail network today as strong winds added to the complications caused by flooding.

Fewer than half the normal number of services were running on a major commuter route through Maidenhead (above), Berkshire, and speed restrictions were expected across parts of the West in response to gale-force winds.

Network Rail's managing director of network operations Robin Gisby told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: 'I'm afraid it's going to be another difficult day for passengers.'

'We have got restrictions at Maidenhead - that's groundwater coming up into the railway as much as flooding coming sideways. We're only running five trains an hour - normally It would be 12 through there - and there are delays of five, 10, 15 minutes a train. Similarly we have got a restricted service between Oxford and down to Didcot.

'We don't expect that to get any worse today - obviously we will keep passengers updated through the websites and so on. With the rain that's coming tonight and the effect that has on the Thames, we will keep watching that over the next couple of days.

'The wind today will involve us putting in speed restrictions down in the Cornwall, Devon area, in bits of Wales and certainly in the North West, the Preston area, as well, as that wind comes through.'

Delays were reported today on these routes:

CrossCountry: Oxford and Didcot / Bridgwater and Taunton / Taunton and Penzance

First Great Western: Clifton Down and Severn Beach / Barnham, Littlehampton and Worthing / Falmouth Docks and Truro / London and Reading / Oxford and Didcot / Bridgwater and Taunton / Taunton and Penzance

South West Trains: Staines and Windsor & Eton Riverside / Eastleigh and Fareham

Southeastern: Tonbridge and Hastings

Southern: Purley and Caterham / Oxted / Barnham, Littlehampton and Worthing

Virgin Trains: Stoke and Manchester

Appointing Major General Patrick Sanders to co-ordinate the military response, he said local authorities should not think twice before calling on the resources of the armed forces.

Labour leader Ed Miliband called on ministers to ensure insurance is paid promptly and protect access to insurance in future for people in flood-hit areas.

Speaking after a visit to flooded areas of Berkshire, Mr Miliband said: 'The Government should be getting round the table with the insurance industry immediately to ensure every firm is signed up to clear principles of prompt assessment and payment.

'Now is not the time for foot-dragging of the kind we saw after the riots.'

Insurers and business organisations met in Downing Street to speed up the response to claims from flood-hit companies.

And Mr Cameron said that householders who experience difficulties with insurance should tell their local MPs, so the authorities can 'go after those insurance companies and make sure they pay up'.

Local authorities will be able to request top-ups from central government for hardship funds for those with no insurance.

Mr Cameron acknowledged that it would take a 'depressingly long period of time' for the country to get back to normal.

Repairs to the seafront rail link at Dawlish in Devon are expected to take six weeks, while pumping the water from the Somerset levels would take 'a lot of time' even if there was no more rain.

Even after water levels drop, householders face a 'really painful and depressing process' of restoring their homes and replacing furniture.

Mr Cameron praised the work of the Environment Agency's staff for the 'brilliant job' they have done on the ground, but again offered only limited support for its under-fire chairman Lord Smith.

'Of course there will be a time to discuss how the pendulum against dredging swung too far in the past and how we put that right in the future,' said the Prime Minister.

'But right now everybody needs every minister, every head of an agency, everyone involved, to work together to deliver the best possible response we can to these floods and that is exactly what is happening...

'Now is not the time for resignations.'

Mr Cameron defended the Government's record of investing in flood defences, but admitted: 'The truth is that when you have these extraordinary weather events, the wettest winter for 250 years, it is very difficult to have all the protections in place that you need.'

Thames Valley Police Assistant Chief Constable John Campbell, the area's gold commander in charge of the operation, defended the authorities' response to the flooding in Wraysbury and said there was only a 'limited' amount that could have been done to protect the village.

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: 'In the first 48 hours or so a lot of effort with military and blue light services and the Environment Agency was put into preventing further flooding, and that involved a range of activities along the Thames, building flood defences, protecting infrastructure sub-stations and assisting Network Rail with issues in terms of the Maidenhead line.

'In terms of Wraysbury, one of the unfortunate things about Wraysbury as a location is there are limited flood defences that can take effect around that location - unfortunately it has flooded before.

'In terms of the emerging picture we saw yesterday a number of residents wanted to see more activity in the Wraysbury area and with the second wave of military support that we got... we deployed those to Wraysbury.

'Certainly we have now got at least 100 soldiers and military personnel.'

The residents of Wraysbury were 'happier', he said: 'Clearly they were frustrated that they didn't think enough was being done in the first instance.

'Obviously we have to prioritise and focus on trying to defend certain aspects of the Thames and the flood breaches and that was what we were trying to do in the first instance.'

He said the situation on the river was 'going to get no worse' and levels were 'slightly' reducing in some areas, although more rainfall was forecast.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin denied that the Government was 'powerless' in the face of the forces of nature.

Speaking to BBC Breakfast, he said: 'It isn't powerless in that it's got the machinery of government to try to help and alleviate the problems that individuals face.

'And it is also not powerless in making sure that when we do the repairs we do them at a resilience that will last for future storms that come along.

'Engineering techniques have changed a huge amount and when we rebuild walls we will build them to a different standard of engineering to what they were originally built to.'

Mr McLoughlin said the Government would have to prepare for further extreme weather events.

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: 'It was not many years ago that we were all talking about droughts and the problem "would our underground water ever fill up again?".

FIFTH OF BARRIER CLOSURES SINCE 1982 HAPPEN IN LAST TWO MONTHS

One fifth of all the Thames Barrier closures since it was built in 1982 have taken place in just the last two months, it was revealed today.

The barrier - which closed again yesterday to protect communities to the West of London - is the main defence against flooding for the capital and covers a 1,700ft section of the River Thames near Woolwich.

A map (above) released by the Environment Agency two months ago showed how London could look if sea levels continued to rise and the Barrier was not there to protect it.

Parts of Beckton, West Ham, Whitechapel and Southwark were shown completely submerged with only a handful of spots across the floodplain escaping the flooding.

The Barrier, which was built in 1982, has been shut 28 times since December 6. The total number of closures since it was inaugurated is around 150, reported BBC News.

'That was three years ago and now we are talking about water just coming up out of the ground into people's homes.So we have got to accept there is more extreme weather and how do we become resilient for it?'

He added: 'I don't think we can just take this as a one-off event.'

Mr McLoughlin denied that the Prime Minister's claim that unlimited public funds would be used to deal with the fallout from the floods amounted to a 'blank cheque'.

'I don't think it's a blank cheque. I think what the Prime Minister was making very clear is that we are going to use every resource of the Government and money is not the issue while we are in this relief job, in the first instance, of trying to bring relief to those communities that are affected,' he told ITV Daybreak.

'Then we have got to do the repairs of the structures and the railway infrastructure that's been damaged and then the other long-term issues, which will need some careful consideration.'

Asked if the money should have been spent preparing for floods, he said: 'Lots of money is being spent across the line but nobody was predicting exactly that this kind of incident was happening.

'Nobody was saying that we were going to get the problems we have got at Dawlish, where 4,000 tonnes of the embankment has been washed into the sea.'

The Prime Minister chaired a meeting of Cobra in Downing Street this morning where he was told that flooding could reach 1947 levels in some areas but thousands of military personnel are available at short notice if extra support is needed.

EA chief executive Paul Leinster told the emergency committee: 'Oxford to Maidenhead we think could rise over the next five days and may lead to more flooding in that area.

'Below Maidenhead, the levels are holding at the current level but potentially over the weekend and going into the beginning of next week they could rise to higher than the current levels.

'The current extent of flooding is similar to 2003 and in places we believe it could get to 1947 levels but, of course, there has been further work done since then, so we wouldn't expect to see the same levels of properties affected.'

Major General Patrick Sanders, who is coordinating the military response, told the meeting that around 2,000 military personnel are involved in the clean-up operation and support in Somerset was increased overnight.

'What we would like to do is to thicken up some of the command and control structures at gold and silver level,' he said.

He told the Prime Minister that 'thousands' of extra military personnel were available in a short period of time.

Mr Cameron said: 'I think one of the things we have got to make sure today is that all the local authorities who need help are clear that they can get help.'

As well as receiving updates from the Environment Agency, Network Rail and Met Office at this morning's Cobra meeting, Mr Cameron spoke by phone with the police 'gold commanders' in charge of the response on the ground to flooding in the Thames Valley, Avon and Somerset and Surrey regions.

RSPCA RESCUES PETS IN FLOODS

Pets including two sheepdogs and their six puppies and a tortoise have been rescued from flood waters by the RSPCA.

Officers from the ***animal*** welfare charity have also rescued a number of horses and chickens and other ***animals*** and provided support to residents left stranded by the floods in the town of Wraysbury, Berkshire (above).

The RSPCA team said it had helped several people to safety from their houses and given advice to pet owners who were staying in their homes.

Among the pets rescued in the town were a hibernating tortoise, which was reunited with its owner in the rescue area, one rabbit in its hutch whose owners were away and two adult sheepdog-type dogs and their six puppies.

Officers have also helped owners move three horses from a flooded yard to a drier field, rescue 30 chickens from a flooded pen and move 30 to 40 koi carp to transport them to their owner's friend's pond, the charity said.

Rosie Russon, from the RSPCA water rescue team, said: 'We took the decision to deploy to the town yesterday, after receiving reports that there were people in need.

'The team have been going door to door offering help and advice - from pet owners concerned about how to protect their ***animals***, to elderly people who needed assistance evacuating their homes to a place of safety.'

'It is thanks to the generosity of the public that the RSPCA exists and is able to carry out our vital work, so it is wonderful to be able to give support to people as well as ***animals*** during this difficult time,' she added.

Across the country, the RSPCA said it had taken more than 1,500 flood-related calls since the beginning of the year, and had rescued more than 200 ***animals***.

The charity had also provided advice, support and monitoring in relation to more than 5,500 ***animals***.

Chancellor George Osborne also attended the meeting, and underlined the Prime Minister's message that money was 'no object' in the relief effort, Mr Cameron's spokesman said.

Asked where money would be found to fund extra flood relief spending, the spokesman said: 'The Government has a number of contingency funds, some of which are in departments.'

More than 50 local authorities have already registered with the Department for Communities and Local Government for help through the Bellwin scheme for emergency financial assistance, which Mr Cameron announced last week will cover 100 per cent of eligible claims during the current crisis rather than the usual 85 per cent.

Asked whether Britain will apply to the European Union for financial assistance available to member states following natural disasters, the spokesman said: 'The Government will look at all ways in which local communities can be helped.'

UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, who has urged the Prime Minister to divert cash from the UK's £11billion foreign aid budget to help flood-hit communities, called on Mr Cameron to spell out in detail the extent of financial help that he is now offering.

Mr Farage warned that the cash available from Government contingency funds and departmental underspend would not be enough to deal with damage on the scale seen over the past few weeks and warned that the Prime Minister should not 'offer false hope to people in the midst of a crisis'.

'The blunt truth is that it is fantasy for David Cameron to imply that the Government has some magic extra store of money that can be used for this purpose,' said Mr Farage.

'The Treasury's contingency fund is limited and is bound to face other calls on it too.

'If Cameron is only talking about utilising a £60million transport underspend and one or two other bits and bobs from across Whitehall, then he still clearly does not appreciate the terrible scale of this crisis.

'If, on the other hand, he were to do what I have been calling for and divert the foreign aid budget, even for a single month, then he would have nearly £1 billion to put into both short-term relief and long-term repairs and flood defences.

'That is the kind of money we need to combat a civil disaster on this scale. So the Prime Minister is quite wrong to pretend he has not made a choice between competing priorities.

'He has. And it is the wrong choice.'

Meanwhile, the Unite union called for a five-year post-flood regeneration plan for the South West and urged the Government to consider resurrecting the regional development agency (RDA) to co-ordinate reconstruction.

Unite regional secretary Laurence Faircloth said: 'The South West needs a five-year reconstruction and development plan and we believe that the re-formation of the SWRDA, foolishly abolished in 2012, would be an excellent vehicle to spearhead such a programme.

'Climate experts said that the effects of the flooding could last until May and the Government needs to act quickly to help those in ***agriculture*** and business who have lost their jobs.

'Those struggling, with perhaps no home or income coming in, need assistance now to put food on the table for their families.

'The Government needs to be talking constantly to business and tourism representatives, as well as civic groups, to refine what the South West needs on a daily basis.

'There is also the question of what financial assistance may be forthcoming from the EU - this possible pot of money needs to be investigated as a matter of urgency by ministers.'

At Prime Minister's Questions Mr Cameron repeated his pledge that 'money is no object in this relief effort' as he was questioned by Ed Miliband about the Transport Secretary's comments.

Mr Cameron said: 'I want communities who are suffering and people who see water lapping at their doors to know that when it comes to the military, when it comes to sandbags, when it comes to restoring broken flood defences, all of those things, money is no object.

'To be fair to the Transport Secretary this is what he said this morning: "money is not the issue while we are in this relief job". That's what he said, he is absolutely right.'

He urged the emergency services gold commanders co-ordinating the response to flooding not to 'think twice' before calling on military assistance.

The Labour leader said some people in flooded communities thought the armed forces were sent in too late, and asked the Prime Minister whether help in the coming days would be provided 'in time rather than after the event'.

RESIDENTS DESPERATE TO STOP AREA SUCCUMBING TO FLOODS

Weary homeowners in Surrey are taking matters into their own hands in a bid to save their community from succumbing to flooding.

Residents of Egham say they are exasperated that their pleas for help from the local authorities appear to be falling on deaf ears.

Members of the military were brought in to dispatch sandbags to areas considered most prone to flooding, while police boats were also primed to evacuate the most vulnerable.

The assistance came too late for those in the Pooley Green area of the town, where flood water - filthy with faeces from sewers - lapped around the thighs of some homeowners.

Elsewhere, residents took the initiative, with two men digging an 8ft trench into the sodden soil in an attempt to drain stagnant water at the mouth of an estate into a vacant gully.

Mr Cameron said: 'It's always been possible for gold commanders in these emergency situations to call on military assets. Indeed a military liaison officer is supposed to sit with those gold commanders and liaise with them.

'What we've done in recent days is say very clearly to all the local authorities concerned, and we have contacted them individually, "if you want military assistance, don't think twice about it, think once, then ask, and they'll be there".'

Downing Street said the total bill for the relief effort would depend in part on how many households and businesses apply for assistance.

More than 5,500 properties have been flooded since early December and could be eligible for grants of up to £5,000 each to fund improvements to make them more resilient in future, said Mr Cameron's official spokesman.

A senior Labour source said: 'Having listened to Prime Minister's Questions, we can safely say that yesterday there were grand promises and today there seem to be a growing list of questions.

'They have been slack in their preparation, they've been slow in their response and they seem to be incredibly unco-ordinated in this emergency.

'There was obviously a lack of co-ordination between Eric Pickles and Owen Paterson over the weekend. That has continued into a lack of co-ordination between the Prime Minister and Transport Secretary today.

'What we need is commitments on what the Prime Minister has said. If money is no object, will he commit to reconsidering redundancies at the Environment Agency and greater investment in our flood defences?'

The AA said that by early afternoon it had attended 29 flood-stricken vehicles, with the number since last Friday reaching 680.

Darron Burness, head of the AA's flood rescue team, said: 'We've never seen anything like it. The scale of the flood devastation is sobering and our crews report seeing hundreds of cars submerged in water, often still stuck on the drive.

WORCESTERSHIRE RESIDENTS PREPARE FOR RISING SEVERN

As the country battles extreme weather and ongoing floods, homeowners in Worcestershire are preparing themselves for continuing rising water from the River Severn.

The Environment Agency has warned that alongside the Thames in Oxfordshire, West Berkshire and Reading, the Severn in Worcestershire is at an increased risk of flooding for the next five days.

Christian Gandar, who lives alongside the river in Worcester, said he and nine other families on his cul de sac near the city's racecourse have been fending off water on-and-off since Christmas.

Mr Gandar and fiancee Gemma Brown bought their house - which has flood defences installed - 18 months ago, but high water levels have now seen an inch of floodwater seep into the lower parts of their home.

The 33-year-old, who is sales manager for a motorcycle company, said: 'It's been up and down really since before Christmas.

'On Christmas Day I got a knock on the door from the neighbours at 7am, telling me to move my car because the road was flooding. It went down for a week or so then went back up.

'It's been similar to the Somerset Levels but obviously not as widespread. We have had electricity, so not as bad as those guys, but it's the same scenario.'

When they bought the house 18 months ago, Mr Gandar said there was around £30,000 of flood defences installed by the previous owners after their house was flooded in 2007.

'We bought here 18 months ago and we wouldn't have bought it if the previous owners hadn't had flood defences, and things like raised floors and raised electrics.

'But from 2007 until Christmas 2012 they hadn't flooded. When we moved in it was the first time they had been tested.'

So far, they have an inch of water in their hallway and downstairs lounge, but he said the kitchen and main living space is raised higher to avoid flooding.

'It's a bit emotional because you think, how bad is it going to get?,' he added. 'We've still got electric and heating, if it comes to that stage of losing that then we'll be moving out for a while.

'The drains are blocking up now, people are struggling to flush their toilets. Gemma's parents are coming round to get our washing because we can't get the washing machine on.

'People have offered to come and help but there's not really that much they can do.'

Although the flooding is less widespread in his area, Mr Gandar agreed with fellow flood victims in the Somerset Levels that dredging could be part of a solution.

He said: 'One of the guys has lived here for years and he said years and years ago when they used to dredge, it kept the waterway clear and water would run away quicker so you didn't get this scenario of floodwater staying up for weeks. I think dredging would help - it's an answer, albeit not the full answer.

'And as everyone has been saying, the Environment Agency and the Government and all the different sectors just need to listen to people on the ground, people who have worked the land, people who have seen it for the last 60 years.'

'At the moment, the number one priority is getting our members to safety.

'The cars are an insurance job - written off. However, if your area is still at risk of further flooding, try to move your car to higher ground, if it's safe and practical to do so.'

The AA also warned motorists about entering vehicles that have been submerged in flood water.

Mr Burness said: 'Water can play havoc with a vehicle's electronics and sometimes the consequences can be more dangerous, for example, compromising the safety of the airbags.

'There's a risk they could go off unexpectedly, so our flood rescue crews use a special Kevlar-reinforced restraint over the steering wheel before working on the vehicle. If your car has been sitting in water, don't be tempted to try to move it, just call your insurer.'

John Allan, national chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, welcomed the support for businesses which may not be able to trade as a result of flooding and would be under financial pressure.

'The Government now needs to look at how to make flood defences more robust to protect against these incidents.'

He said it remained a concern that the Government had chosen not to include small firms in the planned Flood Re scheme with industry to provide affordable flood insurance in high risk areas.

'FSB research shows one in five small firms were affected by floods in 2012-13 and we know many struggle to get adequate insurance cover.

'If they can't use this scheme, small businesses will be forced to pay exorbitantly high costs to be insured against this threat. We want the Government and the insurance industry to think again on this issue,' he said.

The Department for Transport will provide £30million of additional funding for English councils affected by the severe weather to maintain roads and repair potholes and £31million for 10 rail schemes in the south west to improve resilience to flooding.

The Transport Secretary will also work with bus and coach operators to ensure that extra services are in place for areas affected by the storms and floods, Downing Street said.

The West Coast Main Line will close between Preston and Lancaster at around 7pm today for a couple of hours because of high winds, Network Rail said.

Also, from 4pm today there will be speed restrictions on various rail routes in north west England, with passengers told to expect journey times to be extended by up to 60 minutes.

At present there are no East Midlands Trains are running between Manchester Oxford Road and Liverpool Lime Street.

Surrey Police said around 1,000 homes in their area had been affected by flooding, with 600 people evacuated.

'Latest forecasts indicate more rain is expected and water levels will continue to fluctuate over the coming days and into next week,' a spokesman said.

Meanwhile, it was announced that flood victims in Somerset would not have to pay part of their council tax until they return to their homes.

Somerset County Council will suspend the county council part of the tax for residents affected by the flooding.

Council leader John Osman said: 'We recognise that local people affected by the flooding are struggling and under tremendous strain.

'We want to remove one of their financial worries by suspending their council tax charge while they are stranded or unable to live in their home.

'There are some people who are being asked to pay council tax both on their home that they have had to leave under traumatic circumstances, and also where they are now in emergency accommodation. That can't be right and we are reacting quickly to reassure people.

And an academic said today that politicians must set aside party rivalry and plan the country's flood response '20 to 30 years ahead'.

Dr Nicholas Odoni, of Durham University's Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience, said the problems faced across Southern England should not be seen as a sudden or unforeseeable disaster.

More thought was needed in how the whole environment fits together, with agencies working together to develop strategy.

The honorary fellow and research associate said: 'The current flooding is a reminder that the areas where we live, including every component of the drainage and river network, are contributory elements subsumed within the wider ecological and physical workings of the landscape.

'This system, as well as responding to the weather, also responds to every aspect of how we live now, for example how we build our towns and cities, how we grow our crops and use the land, how we run our transport systems, and also how and where we want to implement flood risk reduction measures, including drainage and dredging.

'When we see the acute flooding problems in the Thames Valley or the Somerset Levels, and the need for immediate relief and alleviation, we have to keep in mind at all times that we are looking at the response of a complex system.

'This needs to be examined, analysed and understood in a holistic way, over a 20-30 year timescale, if we are to deal with flood risk and all the other different modern demands on land use in a manner which is affordable and sustainable in the long-term.'

Dr Odoni added: 'From a scientific perspective, this means continued close working with Government agencies, local authorities, related stakeholders and local people.

'We need to develop the necessary modelling and monitoring tools, to review natural and man-made flood interventions, and to build the body of science that will enable society as a whole to achieve the kind of sustainable and affordable, long-term flood risk management that we all seek.

'This means getting the wholehearted commitment of all political parties to adopt a long-term view of the landscape and flooding issues, so we shift attention from the four to five year electoral cycle to a much longer - and sustainable - flood management cycle, one which is supported and maintained properly throughout the ups and downs of the economy.'

ALMOST 2,000 HOUSES WITHOUT POWER IN FLOOD-RAVAGED VILLAGE AS STORMS CONTINUE TO CAUSE TROUBLE

Around 1,700 homes in the flood-ravaged village of Datchet have been hit by power cuts as storms continue to wreak havoc across southern Britain.

Thousands of people in the Thameside village were left without electricity from 8.10pm last night as they battle to cope with the aftermath of severe flooding in the area.

A spokesman for Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), the area's electricity providers, said engineers are working tirelessly to solve the fault and around 700 homes have already been reconnected. The company said it hoped to restore power to the remaining 1,000 homes overnight.

An SSE spokesman said: 'The power went off at around 8.10pm. Initially there were around 1,700 homes affected, there are now around 1,000 homes still without power.

'Our engineers are undertaking a process called switching, which is when they switch the network to locate the fault and restore power to homes affected. We are expecting to have their power restored in the next few hours.'

The spokesman said it was 'too early to say' what was responsible for the sudden loss of power, but he did not rule out that flooding could lie behind it and a full investigation will be carried out once electricity is restored.

Homes, shops and businesses in the Berkshire village, which is near Windsor Castle, have all been flooded with water which has escaped from the swollen River Thames. The spokesman said: 'It is too early to say what the precise cause of the flood is, clearly we can't rule the water out at this time.

'But our focus is to get the power back on. Our engineers are working to restore power as quickly as possible. We would like to apologise to our customers for any inconvenience and thank them for their patience as we carry out the repairs.'

He urged any customers affected by the power cut and seeking advice to call the company's emergency line on 0800 0727 282. The line will give the latest information on when power is likely to be restored.

How the extent of flooding could reach that last seen in 1947

Flooding levels could reach those last seen in 1947, the emergency committee Cobra has been warned.

Some 67 years ago Britain was in the grip of a Big Freeze. Heavy snow and freezing temperatures saw homes left without power and children sent to bed without dinner.

The thaw was accompanied by heavy rain, with widespread floods affecting as many as 31 counties south of the River Ouse, destroying 70,000 acres of wheat and 80,000 tons of potatoes.

David Cameron chaired a meeting of Cobra in Downing Street this morning where he was warned the harsh winter of 1947 could be repeated.

Environment Agency chief executive Paul Leinster told ministers, council leaders and the army: 'Oxford to Maidenhead we think could rise over the next five days and may lead to more flooding in that area.

'Below Maidenhead, the levels are holding at the current level but potentially over the weekend and going into the beginning of next week they could rise to higher than the current levels.

'The current extent of flooding is similar to 2003 and in places we believe it could get to 1947 levels but, of course, there has been further work done since then, so we wouldn't expect to see the same levels of properties affected.'

Overdraft extensions and faster cash loans for flood victims

Banks and building societies are offering a helping hand to support flood victims, with offers of mortgage repayment holidays, overdraft extensions and speeded-up cash loans to cover emergency costs.

Nationwide, Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), NatWest, HSBC and Santander have all announced measures to step up efforts to ease the financial stress on families and businesses.

HSBC has pledged to give those customers affected more flexibility, including fast-tracking credit acceptances as well as loan and overdraft extensions. It said it will consider giving customers a loan repayment holiday of up to three months and will waive or reduce arrangement fees on loans and overdrafts.

The bank said it has been calling ***agricultural*** customers to ensure they have the support they need and it is also using mapping technologies to identify the most at-risk properties and pro-actively contact customers to offer its support.

HSBC has posted insurance claim loss adjusters to some of the worst-hit areas, such as Somerset and the Thames Valley, to ensure claims can be processed quickly.

Meanwhile, Santander has set up a special helpline to deal with inquiries - 0800 121 4993 - and said it will consider giving mortgage customers a payment holiday or converting their deal to an interest-only loan.

Customer overdraft extensions, including those which are business or personal, will be made without renewal or extension fees being charged. Santander will also add an extra £100,000 to its 'community plus' programme, which hands out grants to small, locally-based charities.

The additional money will be available to help communities recover from the impact of the flooding.

Nationwide also said that it will give extra help to those flood victims who are struggling with their mortgage repayments and they should contact the building society on 0845 6011184. Nationwide current account customers can ask for a temporary overdraft or an increase in their overdraft limit to cover emergency expenses by contacting 0845 6011184.

Many people will have had their paperwork damaged in the floods or be unable to access it and Nationwide said that in such cases it will find other ways to securely identify its customers.

Meanwhile, RBS and NatWest, which are part of the same banking group, will grant three month mortgage repayment holidays to customers with flooded homes who apply for this.

The two banks are also sending out specialist business support teams to visit flooded areas to help firms with short-term financial problems as they conduct urgent repair work and deal with loss of trading income.

In January, RBS/NatWest announced a £250 million UK Storm Business Fund that can provide short-term, interest-free financing to help speed recovery for businesses affected by recent floods and gales. The fund is available to all businesses, not just those that are customers of RBS and NatWest.

£5,000 GRANTS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

Grants of up to £5,000 will be available to businesses and homeowners hit by flooding to better protect their properties in future.

David Cameron gave details of the grants and a promise of business rate relief as he repeated his pledge that 'money is no object' in the relief effort.

At Prime Minister's Questions he said: 'We will be introducing a grant for all affected homeowners and businesses to build in better flood protection as they repair their properties. That will be up to £5,000 per house and per business.

'On top of that we are announcing a £10million fund for farmers who have seen their land waterlogged day after day, week after week.

'And I can also announce today that we will be deferring the tax payments that businesses have to pay and all of the businesses that have been affected by floods will get 100 per cent business rate relief.'

Some reports have estimated that the total insurance bill for the flood damage could be around £1 billion, with concerns also raised about the potential this could have for forcing up premiums.

A spokesman for the Association of British Insurers (ABI) said: 'It is too early to say if the current floods will have an impact on future premiums - this is a highly competitive market. Premium levels take into account a range of factors, not just claims from one event.'

The spokesman said that as flooding is still continuing, 'we cannot speculate on the total cost of claims'. The great storm of 1987 cost around £2billion in today's money while the summer floods of 2007 resulted in a hit of more than £3billion.

Lloyds Banking Group has announced a £250million fund to provide fee-free lending for businesses and farmers, as part of the help it is offering to flood victims. Businesses across Britain can apply for the fund through Lloyds Banking Group's branches and business centres.

The fund will help businesses manage through the tough weather conditions, for example by helping farmers fund food and shelter for livestock. It aims to help any businesses that are unable to trade and those that are trying to get back on track.

Lloyds said it has been giving immediate support to affected businesses by increasing overdrafts, waiving fees and providing loan repayment holidays. It has also been making calls to farming customers, providing overdrafts where required.

To support families, Lloyds has been providing emergency payments and offering alternative accommodation where needed, as well as relocating specialist staff. Lloyds has also been contacting customers to offer same-day bank transfers for crucial items including clothing, food and alternative accommodation.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has also launched a phone helpline for anyone affected by the floods to get help with tax problems.

HMRC said it will agree 'a practical approach' where people and businesses have lost vital records due to the floods, suspend debt collection proceedings for those affected and cancel penalties when the taxpayer has missed statutory deadlines.

It will also agree payments to be made in instalments in cases where taxpayers are unable to hand over the money as a result of the floods. The helpline number is 0800 904 7900.

Frail Somerset flood victims still trapped in homes seven weeks on

Frail flood victims are still trapped in their homes with nowhere to turn more than seven weeks after murky waters rose and surrounded their houses.

Lorraine Catterall, 45, suffers from multiple sclerosis and the crippling pain condition fibromyalgia, which often confines her to a wheelchair.

The disabled mother-of-one has been unable to leave her marooned home since December 23 after rising flood waters cut-off her village of Thorney, Somerset.

She is too frail to join neighbours in the tractor ferrying residents to the 'mainland' and fears it could be weeks before she is able to leave her home.

PINK FLOYD HOUSEBOAT IS LASHED TO TREE TO SAVE IT FROM FLOODS

A historic houseboat which has been turned into a studio used by Pink Floyd to record songs had to be lashed to a tree to prevent it from floating away.

The century-old Astoria has been owned by the group's guitarist David Gilmour for 28 years and has also been used for his solo material as well as mixing a number of releases.

The Floyd frontman's wife Polly Samson posted a picture of the houseboat online (above) with webbing straps stretched across a flooded riverbank to hold it in position on the deluged River Thames.

She wrote on Twitter: 'They've tied Astoria to a tree to stop her from floating away.'

The boat - moored at Hampton, Surrey - was built for music hall impresario Fred Karno, whose troupe of comic acts included Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel, in 1911.

Its grand scale, at 90ft long, was designed to accommodate an orchestra to enable Karno to have the finest boat on the stretch.

It has been used to record sections of Pink Floyd albums A Momentary Lapse Of Reason and The Division Bell, and also featured in the BBC series Three Men In A Boat, in which Dara O'Briain, Griff Rhys Jones and Rory McGrath recreated the journey in the book by Jerome K Jerome from Kingston Upon Thames to Oxford.

The former florist and graphic designer is now calling on the Environment Agency to 'stop wasting money' and clear the silt-ridden waterways around her home.

Mrs Catterall said: 'I sit there watching other people doing things, just sitting there myself in my room, just watching TV. I haven't been out the house for weeks. I'm so fed up. There are so many things I wish I was out doing and seeing.

'I've gone from being up and about, running my own business in London not so many years ago, to being stuck at home, to then this - not being able to leave the house. It's the last straw.'

She was diagnosed with complex pain condition fibromyalgia seven years ago, and MS in 2000, leaving her unable to walk more than a few metres. On bad days she cannot get out of bed.

But Mrs Catterall has managed to retain her independence with the help of her husband Jason, 48, and a specially-adapted mobility car.

However, it cannot cross the 0.6mile-long stretch of murky waters which have surrounded the home she shares with her husband and his mother Ann Long, 73, since before Christmas.

Mrs Catterall, who has never claimed benefits despite near-constant pain, added: 'I can't get my wheelchair out on to anything and I haven't got the strength to get up into the tractor or trailer.

'Even if I could, I just couldn't stand for the length of the journey across the water. I do think more could have been done to help us. Some villages, as soon as flooding hit they had people out helping them.

'I don't begrudge that, but we needed help too and it is only in the last few weeks the army and the 4x4s have turned up. I think the Environment Agency need to be dredging the rivers and stop wasting money.

'They've wasted all this money on creating wetlands and wildlife areas when they could have spent money on protecting people here as well as wildlife which is now underwater.'

Meanwhile Pat Mennim, 77, and her daughter have been forced to stick it out in their drenched home because they say 'we've got nobody else in the world'.

The pair - who are without heating and water - have been forced to wade around their home in East Lyng, Somerset, in wellington boots after water crept over flood defences last week.

The 'forgotten' duo had to rely on neighbours to help them move furniture upstairs because they have yet to be visited by anyone from the council or Environment Agency.

Ms Mennim slammed the succession of Governments visits from David Cameron and Nick Clegg - dubbed locally as the 'Westminster flood tourists'.

She said: 'They just come and they say we are going to do this and were going to do that - they bang on about it but they don't do anything.

'Cameron keeps saying we will make sure the flood victims are going to get compensation but are we going to? Are we? There's so much damage- I wonder who is going to pay for it all.

'Chris Smith is deluded. The men on the ground are working very hard but it's higher up that's the problem - they want sacking. They haven't supported us, they haven't been down here - we are a forgotten corner.'

Since water crept in on Sunday, the pair have been forced to send their horses to livery and their 17-year-old cat Bumble has been confined upstairs.

Ms Mennim is calling for immediate action from the Government - but fears help will come too late for her home and is beginning to lose hope.

She said: 'Before we flooded I was up every hour looking at the water. Now I stay in, pick up a large gin and tonic and go to bed.It is intimidating.

'We have got no heating and it's very cold. For a couple more days we will stay but I think it will be overwhelming by then.

'The water pumps are no longer doing any good - they're pumping it out just as fast it's coming in again. But I don't want to leave. I'm worried about looting. We might have been okay if they had got on with stuff - dredged and planned a bit more and had the pumps serviced before the flooding.'

Flooded crops warning for gardeners and allotment owners

£750,000 FLEET OF TRACTORS SENT BY JCB TO HELP FLOODED AREAS

Construction equipment giant JCB has reacted to the national flooding crisis by deploying a £750,000 fleet of machines to help out in the worst-affected areas.

The Staffordshire-based company said four high-speed Fastrac tractors are being sent to areas where people and livestock need to be moved away from advancing flood waters.

Meanwhile, two JCB backhoe excavators will be used to bolster flood defences and eventually assist in clearing away debris left behind by floodwater.

JCB has already supplied a telescopic handling machine to support Somerset farmers left without ***feed*** and bedding for livestock evacuated to dry land.

JCB chairman Lord Bamford said: 'The scale of the floods and the anguish being caused is devastating for all concerned.

'As Britain's biggest ***manufacturer*** of construction equipment, we are in a position to provide machinery quickly to help families and farmers who are suffering so dreadfully through the floods.

'It's my hope that the JCB machines we're providing will help alleviate that suffering. The machines are being shipped from JCB's world headquarters in Rocester, Staffordshire, today and will be operated by drivers provided by the Construction Industry Training Board.'

Allotment owners and gardeners hit by flooding have been warned against eating fruit and vegetable crops that could have been contaminated by sewage.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) issued the warning as it set out advice for gardeners on coping with flooding, which is set to linger into the spring when people will be starting to sow and plant flowers and food crops.

The long-term effects of flooding on gardens should not be too bad, as long as the flood water was not seawater, the RHS said.

Chief horticultural adviser at the RHS Guy Barter said: 'Once the water goes down, the soil will be ready to sow and plant after a few days.

'There could be rubbish to pick up and people have got to be aware of contamination from sewage, and they will want to take appropriate precautions for that.

'The soil won't be damaged beyond repair, although nutrients will be washed away so investment in fertilisers is a good idea.

'But if we get an average spring and summer there should be no long-term consequences.'

Edible crops close to being harvested should not be eaten in case flood water was contaminated, the RHS advised.

Crops that are eaten raw should not be harvested for another six months, although the experts said it was best to avoid growing salads and uncooked crops in flooded land for two years to avoid the risk of disease spores.

But crops such as root vegetables which are cooked before being eaten are safe, and fruit from trees and bushes that stand above the water will also be safe to consume, the RHS said.

Rubbish left in gardens after the floods recede should be put out in the household waste or bagged up and taken to the local waste disposal site.

Gardeners are also being urged to make sure products such as greenhouse paraffin, fertilisers and pesticides are put where they cannot cause pollution.

And electricity in sheds and greenhouses should be disconnected if it is likely they will be flooded, and not switched on again until it has been checked by a qualified electrician.

Ruined plants can be dug into the soil or put in the compost bin, the RHS said, but fertiliser or mulch should not be put on the soil when it is saturated as it may cause pollution or be wasted.

The experts also said that where it looked like there would be serious delays in the soil drying out, gardeners should sow plants in pots and seed trays on the patio, at home and or window sills or buy plants in from nurseries so they can get them outside in mid-spring.

**Load-Date:** February 12, 2014

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**Byline:** Tim Bradshaw in San Francisco

**Body**

It is the revolutionary television that gadget fans have been waiting years for. A camera recognises you and instantly personalises the screen. Ask what is on the Discovery Channel, the voice recognition understands and shows you. Call up Breaking Bad, and the device offers a choice of episodes on live TV, Netflix or its own video service.

This might have been the Apple TV that Steve Jobs had in mind when he told his biographer Walter Isaacson in 2011 that he had "finally cracked" the perfect user interface for TV.

But instead it is Microsoft's new Xbox One console, which has received rave reviews for its media-centre capabilities as well as gaming.

"Using voice to navigate around the TV experience opened my eyes to the potential with this experience. Other boxes have tried this and failed," said Ben Bajarin, analyst at Creative Strategies, in a review of the console.

A year ago, when Tim Cook, Apple's chief executive, began to raise expectations that it was about to launch a new TV product, the company's existing set-top box was par for the course in a market of humdrum streaming devices and clunky smart TVs. But now it looks in danger of being left behind by the more radical steps taken by its rivals.

As well as the Xbox One and Sony's PlayStation 4, which both sold 1m units in their first day on sale this month, Google has released its $35 Chromecast, which allows smartphone-toting couch potatoes to transmit wirelessly whatever is on their small screen to the big one. It works with most devices that can run Google's Chrome web browser.

Apple offers something similar with its Airplay feature, but it is limited to its own devices and its Apple TV receiver is three times as expensive.

At the same time, Samsung is courting developers to make apps that run on its mobiles and smart TVs, as well as touting integration between them for consumers, such as carrying over a film from a TV to a tablet when you leave the living room.

"A more advanced living room play is beginning to look like a growing opportunity for Apple," says Dan Cryan, digital media analyst at IHS. "The rest of the market has moved on a lot."

Google, Microsoft and Samsung all have viable "ecosystems" that encompass the biggest screen in the house and the smallest in the pocket, Mr Cryan says, while Apple still sits on the sidelines in TV.

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&gt; "It would be strange for a company as involved in entertainment as it is to not try to further its involvement in the one major screen and point of interaction out there in consumers' homes that it's not already got some kind of story for."

This week, Apple paid about $360m to acquire PrimeSense, an Israeli company that provided some of the technology behind the previous Xbox's motion-sensing device, Kinect.

"Some sort of living-room appliance is in Apple's future and gesture technology could be critical," wrote analysts at Jefferies in a note to clients this week, calling PrimeSense a "global pioneer and leader in gesture technologies.

"Smart TVs and gaming consoles are key recipients of these technologies."

However, Jefferies analysts also described Apple TV as "the Unicorn", as it had been rumoured for so long without ever being seen.

Apple executives have been dropping hints about its plans for the TV market for almost two years. Mr Cook said on several occasions throughout 2012 that it was an "area of intense interest".

"It's a market that we see, that has been left behind," he told NBC last December in a rare TV interview. In May, he said Apple had sold more than 13m TV boxes to date, about 6.5m of which were in the previous 12 months.

&lt;&gt;Since then, however, Apple's progress in TV has fallen short of the revolutionary. Its existing $100 set-top box has acquired new channels such as HBO Go, ESPN, the NFL and Sky News.

But while the iPhone and iPad's user interface has seen a complete overhaul, the Apple TV still looks pretty much the same as before software design duties were handed to Sir Jonathan Ive late last year.

People who own the Apple TV box spend far more on content than those who merely own an iPhone or iPad, analysts say. In June, Apple said it sells more than 800,000 TV episodes and 350,000 movies every day on iTunes, a large portion of which is through Apple TV, generating upwards of $3m a day in revenue.

A substantial amount of that spending is believed to be from "cord cutters" who have used Apple TV to replace their cable subscription. But some analysts believe that Apple's future is more likely to be working with the existing broadcasters and service providers than against them.

Mr Bajarin says that Apple could take the same partnership approach to TV that it did with AT&T for the iPhone.

"The Xbox One has convinced me that a very disruptive opportunity exists to become the one box for TV," says Mr Bajarin, "and you don't become the one box without doing a deal with the service providers", because they still control direct access to their networks.

Apple could one-up Microsoft by striking such a deal with the lure of better technology and the opportunity for cable companies to sell more expensive services, he suggests, citing Apple's recent talks with Time Warner.

But striking many of those deals across the patchwork of satellite and cable operators in the US and abroad would be a long-term task. One former Apple employee says the company believed taking that approach was too risky because it would rely on competitors' networks for quality of service.

If Mr Jobs had indeed "cracked" how to sell an Apple TV through such networks, this person said, it would be on sale by now.

Perhaps PrimeSense and other deals can help Apple raise its game in the living room but for now, many watchers of the company still doubt its TV unicorn exists.

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By Jan Cienski in Warsaw

Almost a quarter century after the Velvet Revolution swept Czechoslovakia's communists from power, the betrayals and morally awkward compromises of that era are still haunting the Czech Republic as political parties try to form a government.

Andrej Babis, a food, fertiliser and publishing tycoon who is the county's second-richest man, sponsored a new political party dubbed Ano, or "Yes", which swept to a strong second place in October's parliamentary election. But the party's efforts to enter government by building a new coalition have since been stymied by problems amid allegations that Mr Babis was an informant for Czechoslovakia's repressive StB secret police in the 1980s.

If true, the charges would exclude him from taking a job as a minister in any new government, and Ano could fracture. Czech law forbids former StB agents from government posts, and Milos Zeman, the Czech president, has said he will not appoint people without a clean record from the communist past.

The allegations emerged in newspaper reports in neighbouring Slovakia during the election campaign, but still did not prevent Ano - which ran on a pro-business, low-tax platform - from taking 18.5 per cent of the vote. That placed it behind the Social Democrats, who garnered 20.5 per cent and whose leader, Bohuslav Sobotka, was last week given the task of cobbling together a majority coalition.

Archives kept by Slovakia's Nation's Memory Institute allege that Mr Babis, who was a member of the Communist party, met with the StB in the early 1980s and later became an agent, using the code-name "Bures", informing for police on his co-workers in the fertiliser business in an operation named Oko, or "Eye". However, parts of the secret police files have been shredded.

Mr Babis, 59, denies the reports, and is suing the institute, insisting he was registered by the StB without his knowledge.

"I legally defend myself against the accusation that I co-operated with the communist secret police," Mr Babis told the Financial Times in an email exchange. "The Secret Police (StB) kept a file that I didn't know about and there is not even my signature in this file."

Mr Babis, an ethnic Slovak who speaks Czech with an accent, admitted that he had met with StB agents because he was working for a foreign trading company importing phosphates to Czechoslovakia, but says he did not inform on anyone.

The Institute says it is confident of its records. "There is generally a low probability that the pieces of evidence were fabricated as they exist in three files independent from each other," Ondrej Krajnak, the Institute's head, told the CTK Czech news agency.

The allegations haunting Mr Babis add another element of uncertainty to a Czech political landscape that has been shaken by the recent collapse of the centre-right government of Petr Necas in a sex, spying and bribery scandal. The political uncertainty is weighing on the country as it struggles to emerge from a record-long recession.

One of the more surprising elements of the Babis affair may be how little ordinary Czechs seem to care about it. If anything, Ano continues to gain in local opinion polls.

Jiri Pehe, a Prague-based political scientist, said the allegations "don't cause strong emotions here" because there were relatively few dissidents in communist times, with the exception of a tiny but hardy group gathered around former president Václav Havel. Most ordinary people accommodated themselves to the system, he added.

Czechs voters seem more animated by the antics of the current political class. Mr Babis built Ano as a response to the frequent corruption scandals swirling through Czech politics, saying that the country's leadership had become dominated by "godfathers" linked to lobby groups.

The outcome of the October vote saw no party take an outright majority, in part because established parties lost much of their credibility. In fact, no government can be created without at least three political parties. Mr Sobotka is expected to tap Ano and the smaller centrist Christian Democrats in his attempt to form a coalition. There are already fissures between the three potential partners over whether the so-called "lustration" law preventing former spies from serving in government should be scrapped or not.

Mr Babis had wanted to be finance minister, which would allow him to push his low-tax policies in a government led by the left-leaning Social Democrats. But if the law is not changed he may be content to put in a proxy from his party.

"If the president insists on my certificate of innocence, I don´t have to be in the government," said Mr Babis. "I am excluded from the society only because somebody kept a falsified record. There is no evidence about my conscious co-operation with StB. And my conscience is clear."

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Americans began their holiday shopping earlier than ever on a Thanksgiving evening marked by family outings, heavily policed queues and a rush for discounted big screen televisions.

The initial signs were that sales would match or exceed last year, but the early start appeared to spread spending out over a longer period more than it encouraged people to splash out extra.

At Walmart and Best Buy in Westbury, Long Island, queueing shoppers on Thursday night were marshalled by guards hired to prevent trouble, then headed straight for the advertised "door buster" discounts they had pre-chosen.

Edgard Maldonado was one of the first to re-emerge from Walmart, bounding out with his young daughter, a trolley full of goods, and a big smile. "I got exactly what I was coming here for," he said.

"I got my Blu-ray players, the Barbies, this for my bed," he explained, patting a large duvet. In total he had spent $236. So was the sales scramble worth it? "It is. And I love it," he said, as his wife took a picture.

Holiday buying traditionally begins the day after Thanksgiving on what is known as Black Friday, but in a fragile post-crisis economy, where ecommerce is booming, retailers started early with big discounts that are likely to sap profits.

Online sales rose by 19.7 per cent year-on-year on Thanksgiving and by 9 per cent in the hours up until 3pm on Black Friday, according to IBM Digital Analytics research. Adobe said Thanksgiving online sales topped $1bn.

Bill Simon, head of Walmart US, which released its first discounts at 6pm on Thursday, said on Friday morning that the retailer had a "great" night with shopper numbers up on last year's 22m, though he would not say by how much.

Walmart sold 2m televisions and 1.4m tablet computers. Asked how shoppers' average spend compared to last year, Mr Simon said: "I don't think that we saw a dramatic difference generally speaking."

There were scattered reports of violence breaking out among overeager shoppers at several retailers, but Mr Simon said the number of incidents at Walmart was down from last year.

Kenneth Onuorah, a Nigerian doctor, walked out of Best Buy in Westbury carrying a $325 Toshiba laptop. "I was looking for a cheaper one" from Hewlett-Packard, he said. "But when I got in, it was sold out." It was worth the effort to join the queues, he said. "But sometimes it makes you buy something you don't need."

The only obvious problem for others was fitting a 55-inch, $500 LG television into their cars. One man had put it on the back seat but could not shut the rear door. "Can I pick it up tomorrow?" he asked plaintively. "I don't know," replied a Best Buy employee.

The long weekend that begins with Thanksgiving accounts for about 10 per cent of US retail sales in November and December, according to analysts at Cowen & Co. The pressure this year has been intensified by the fact there are six fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas than last year.

Simeon Siegel, a Nomura analyst visiting New Jersey malls, said the traditional three-hour spending rush on Black Friday morning was fading out and being replaced by ecommerce and mall shopping stretched over a longer period.

"That's probably not healthy for your business," he said. "You start having to put more [workers] in stores, pay more hours . . . You start fighting against yourself and your competitors more."

Labour activists have criticised retailers for requiring staff to work on Thanksgiving, but most shoppers said they had managed to have a traditional meal before heading out.

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&gt;But no one was compelled to go shopping. Except perhaps Seema Baldeosingh, who was at Long Island's Roosevelt Field mall. "I hate people. I hate crowds," she said. "Especially Macy's. It's so crowded and people are so rude."

She had been forced out to the stores by her brother and her husband, who had disappeared in search of more bargains. But it was not all bad, she conceded. "My husband scored a Perry Ellis leather jacket for $80 [at Macy's], which was amazing."

Outside Walmart, as one woman pushed a trolley with a 32-inch television on the lower rack, a late-arriving motorist slowed to yell: "Hey, is that the $100 TV?" It was. Or rather the $98 Funai screen, one of Walmart's most popular deals.

The woman with the trolley, who said her name was Sunshine, had also bought a soundbar for the TV and a Doc McStuffins toy, among other goods. But she added: "This is my last year. I'm gonna do it online next year. You get pretty much the same prices online. No more of this craziness."

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From Mr Alex Turkeltaub.

Sir, The interim agreement reached in Geneva to curb Iran's nuclear programme will not only undermine the cause of non-proliferation but will also make a long-term rapprochement between the US and Iran less likely.

The Obama administration's argument for the agreement suggests that devastating sanctions have brought the Iranians to the negotiating table and, after the confidence-building impact of an interim agreement, we will be in a better position to achieve a comprehensive settlement. This perspective defies basic logic: if the Iranians were eager for a deal because of the harshness of the sanctions and yet were only willing to settle for an interim step forward, why would they give up more in six months when the sanctions are relaxed and the west's leverage is decreased? And if the sanctions were not so devastating as to encourage a full dismantling of the nuclear programme today, wouldn't the right approach have been to threaten an increase in sanctions unless a full dismantlement took place immediately?

Of course we hear the usual argument that dealing "reasonably" with Tehran "strengthens the moderates in Iran" - although who these moderates are, and why giving in rather than standing strong doesn't actually encourage the "conservatives" - remains unexplained. Most glaringly, the Obama administration has failed to inform us why reapplying the logic of America's failed policy toward North Korea is likely to produce different results with a stronger and cannier adversary.

The interim agreement not only fails to contain the Iranian nuclear programme; it decreases the incentive for Tehran to make a strategic shift and seek a broad rapprochement with the US. The major incentive for Tehran to re-evaluate its relationship with Washington was to protect its nuclear programme (and by extension, the very survival of the regime); in other words, for a broad geopolitical arrangement to have a chance, it had to be negotiated concomitantly with a solution to the nuclear issue. What incentive will Tehran now have to make further concessions or seek a broader agreement? Why would a regime that flaunted America in Syria and Iraq (which is cascading toward a civil war in which Iran is a major if silent participant) and still managed to get a good deal from the west feel any incentive to co-operate further?

The deal with Iran speaks to a fundamental flaw in America's Middle East policy: a legalism that approaches each problem individually and attempts to get the best deal possible in a short timeframe. This may result in good outcomes in boardrooms and court rooms; it's a path to disaster in geopolitics.

Alex Turkeltaub, Washington, DC, US

Co-Founder and Board Member, Frontier Strategy Group; Co-Founder and Chief Executive, Roam

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From Prof Nuno Gil.

Sir, John Kay misses the point on this one ("The Olympics were a great party - but there was no gold for the beancounters", Comment, November 27). You cannot really put in the same category planning for the Olympics and High Speed 2.

Planning for the Olympics is a game that belongs to a league of its own. The International Olympic Committee unilaterally dictates all the rules of the game, picks and chooses the winners and losers, keeps the upper hand on many design negotiations, but, alas, does not supply the cash. There are way too many countries - and politicians - interested in hosting the games, and only one brand owner. This is about sports, but ironically, it is not about a level playing field.

Planning for HS2 is more similar to Crossrail and other megaprojects that require conventional planning consent. By the time the scheme leaves the parliamentary process, there is no reason to expect that promoters will not be able to have reconciled design, timescale and budget with confidence. Of course, this does not mean the budget will not evolve in planning. It will. The fact of the matter is that, in an ideal world, the promoters would never release single-point estimates in the early planning stages because they can only know how much things will cost after they finish negotiating the megaproject design through the political and democratic process. Many concessions and deals have to be made in order to beat off opponents who are competing for the same resources to do other things with equally ambiguous business cases.

Comparing megaproject final costs and early estimates without controlling for design evolution is like comparing apples and oranges. The argument that project promoters suffer from optimistic bias (ie, are incompetent) or strategically misrepresent these projects (ie, are crooks and liars) has long been a popular one. It is also hard to dismiss as it appeals to common conceptions. But it is time we shelved it. It has no scientific basis and has been a serious disservice to a serious public debate about megaprojects.

Nuno Gil, Professor of New Infrastructure Development, Manchester Business School, UK

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From Mr Radoslaw Sikorski, Mr Guido Westerwelle and Mr Villy Sovndal.

Sir, Over the past 20 years, 70,000 tanks, combat aircraft and helicopters and other military equipment have been destroyed in Europe as a result of the treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) introduced at the end of the cold war. It was a major instrument in the co-operative Euro-Atlantic security architecture. It not only paved the way for the destruction of military equipment, it also established an inspection and verification regime that led to an unprecedented level of transparency.

Since then, new challenges have emerged in other parts of the world (international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), with serious repercussions for Europe. Former foes in the Euro-Atlantic area are facing these threats together. To make this co-operation effective we must build trust. This must stem from a stable security architecture in Europe, including a viable system of arms control and confidence-building measures.

But this system is now in crisis. Implementation of the CFE treaty has come to a partial halt. We risk losing the fruits of years of work and confidence-building. Some may ask, why bother if Europe is at peace today? In short: because recent history has shown that local and sub-regional conflicts can develop into military confrontations with serious consequences for Europe and neighbouring regions. Peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area have not come about by themselves. Trust and confidence as a necessary basis need to be constantly earned and maintained.

We, the ministers of Poland, Germany and Denmark, met on September 27 in New York to confirm our initiative to develop a new generation of conventional arms control in Europe. The world has changed and so have the threats. Military capabilities have developed in an almost revolutionary manner. The confrontation of military blocs is a thing of the past. If we want to maintain and improve a viable system of co-operative security in Europe, we need to redesign it to take into account these new realities.

A new system must be built on the basis of existing structures and focus on confidence-building measures and increased transparency. It should confirm the basic principles of international law and neighbourly relations. Since real and perceived threats still vary among countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, a modernised agreement should, if interested states call for it, provide instruments tailored to subregional needs.

We also need to think about the capabilities of armed forces rather than the sheer quantity of equipment. Counting battle tanks or combat helicopters remains important, but to understand the true potential of today's highly mobile conventional armed forces we need a much broader approach that captures qualitative aspects and complex capabilities.

Much has been achieved through the CFE treaty. Now is the time to take serious steps towards a new generation of conventional arms control in Europe. We will work with our partners to make this happen.

Radoslaw Sikorski, Guido Westerwelle and Villy Sovndal, Foreign Ministers of Poland, Germany and Denmark respectively

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From Ms Gillian Clough.

Sir, Christopher Carr (Letters, November 28) should get out and about more in the Swiss countryside on his side of the border. On the mountain pastures it is common practice to rake up the grass by hand after the machines have done their best. There is no way of telling how severe a winter lies ahead, so it is important to maximise the yield from the limited land to ***feed*** the ***animals*** till spring.

As most maize grown in Europe is used for cattle ***feed***, he probably saw the farmer's family doing just this on the French side of the Jura, to ensure the survival of their ***animals***.

Gillian Clough, Zug, Switzerland

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If you've been relying on foreign capital since 1788, as Australia's treasurers often like to claim, turning down takeovers is unusual. Blocking the US$3.1bn acquisition of GrainCorp by Archer Daniels Midland might be the one-off that Canberra wants to see it as. The risk is that it is not.

Joe Hockey, Australian treasurer, decided that GrainCorp's dominant position - it handles more than four-fifths of eastern Australia's bulk grain exports - meant a full takeover was not in the national interest. It is not clear how transferring ownership of an already dominant player to another that is prepared to play nicely (ADM had already proffered $200m of local infrastructure investment) is damaging to that interest.

More worrying was the "significant consideration" Mr Hockey gave to the risk that approving this contentious deal would have generated wider hostility to foreign takeovers. That sounds like another public outcry could produce a similar result.

Approving 131 investment applications, as Mr Hockey says he has, does not matter if you turn down the big ones. Ask France, whose spirited defence of Danone in 2005 before a rumoured takeover offer from Pepsi had even materialised, has become a symbol of that country's perceived hostility to foreign funds.

For a better example of the dangers of restricting foreign funds, Australians need look no further than Qantas. The airline is watching its cash-burning domestic rival suck in new capital from foreign airlines. It cannot access those funds because politicians in the 1990s deemed foreign ownership of the flag carrier not in the national interest. GrainCorp can only hope it isn't in a similar position in 2033.

Email the Lex team in confidence at [*lex@ft.com*](mailto:lex@ft.com)

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Fancy a chicken stuffed into a duck stuffed into a turkey? How about some horse hair jewellery? Small businesses are using the targeting power of social networks to advertise to the most niche of audiences this holiday season.

From the purveyor of "Turkducken" to the makers of custom bracelets from your own horse's tail hair, the number of small businesses using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn has increased as the sites develop their self-service platforms to make it easier for the uninitiated to advertise.

Facebook says the great majority of its more than 1m advertisers are small and medium-sized businesses, which it sees as a "big opportunity". Twitter says 4.5m small businesses use the site, building follower bases to promote local menus and new products, though Twitter does not say how many of them pay for advertisements.

The percentage of small businesses using social media has risen in the last year, with 37 per cent saying they use Facebook, 23 per cent more than the year before, according to the American Express Open Small Business Monitor released last month. The number of small businesses on LinkedIn and Twitter have increased by more than 50 per cent, albeit from a much lower base.

Brian Wieser, an analyst at Pivotal research, said small business advertising on Facebook in particular is "growing by leaps and bounds" because of the social network's massive audience of over 1bn users. Niche companies can use the site to find customers all over the world with the same interests, he said.

"There are a good many gluten-free, dairy-free, egg-free, pizza crust makers whose market might be small but the beauty of paid search and social is they allow so much in the way of targeting," he said. "You can easily become a national and international brand."

In the last month, Facebook has given small businesses many of the tools that larger advertisers have benefited from such as 'custom audiences', which allows them to advertise only to existing customers on Facebook, and 'lookalike audiences', which allow small businesses to find people who have similar interests to their existing consumers.

For TailSpin Bracelets, the Orange County-based maker of $85 horse hair bracelets, Facebook advertising allows them to target over 5m horse enthusiasts. Divas Snow Gear, which designed a fashionable line for female snowmobilers, turned to social media after realising traditional sources of advertising would make it hard to reach this very specific audience. By using Facebook to target active women in snowy states, it has expanded the business by 500 per cent in the last three years.

Facebook does not break out how much revenue small business adverts generate but Mr Wieser estimates it could be "very substantial", saying the average small business on the site might spend $1000-$2000 a year compared with the $10,000 they spend on Google. But the growth potential is even higher as a new generation of small businesses prefer social media to search, he said.

Social networks are keen to develop their self-service platforms for small business so they do not have to spend on large sales teams across the world and can maintain sizeable margins as they grow.

Debbie Williamson, a social media analyst at research firm E-Marketer, said Facebook was making a "strong effort" to court small businesses, with the aim of getting the 20m who use the free "pages" service to buy adverts.

She said Facebook had improved the once-complex process of buying adverts online last month by allowing businesses to choose an "objective" such as getting people to click on their website or redeem a special offer in-store. Before, they had to navigate a range of options from right rail adverts to native promotions in timelines themselves.

"Facebook helps by selecting which kind of ad Facebook thinks works best. If a small business even has a marketing development person, chances are it is only one person," she said.

Ms Williamson said Twitter is also trying to lure more small businesses to advertise but with about 230m active users, advertisers outside major cities could find it harder to reach Twitter users.

In the right market, however, Twitter's live news ***feed*** can help some businesses keep in contact with their customers in real time. San Francisco-based 4505 Meats uses Twitter to tell its followers what it is selling. Ryan Farr, the owner, said he tried to create an entertaining dialogue on Twitter which could lead to lines outside their farmer's market stall before they even opened.

"I definitely feel that we wouldn't be the company we are now if we didn't start using Twitter so early in our existence," he said, adding it had grown from a stall to a butcher's shop and a restaurant in the last four years. "It is a way for a business that has zero capital when it starts to inform people of who they are."

On the eve of Thanksgiving, 4505 Meats was busy tweeting pictures of its "Turkduckens" to its over 10,000 followers. "So happy to be delivering Turkduckens today. Come and get them!"

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China's cotton reserve sold only about half the stock on offer during its first sale this season, raising the possibility that the reserve will resort to deep discounts to clear its bloated stockpile.

The China National Cotton Reserve is sitting on about 10m tonnes of the commodity - half the world's stocks - after it built up a stockpile at inflated prices over the past few years in an effort to encourage Chinese planting.

The market had watched the first auction for signs that the reserve would begin to shed its surplus.

On Thursday, the reserve sold 12,312 tonnes of cotton, or roughly half of the 24,354 tons on offer, for an average price of Rmb17,737 per tonne ($2,900), according to the China Cotton Information Network.

Industry fears that Chinese cotton mills might sidestep the auction in favour of buying fresher, imported cotton at similar prices were borne out when only 39 of the 136 textile mills present bought lots.

The mills' purchase volume for the auction was constricted in an effort to prevent speculative trading in the cotton.

The reserve's above-market purchases over the past few years had lifted prices in China and abroad, while starving domestic textile mills of raw material.

The reserve faces politically damaging losses if it sells off its stockpile, and large sales could also depress Chinese and world cotton markets, threatening future planting.

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Let's all stick pins into Derek Sach. He's the man in charge of Royal Bank of Scotland's hit squad, the Global Restructuring Group, and it seems that, just as in the movies, he's almost single-handedly blown up the great swaths of British business that were his targets.

To read two reports this week, you'd think Mr Sach's bonus depends on destroying as many viable companies as he can, before flogging the rubble at silly prices to his mates in other parts of the bank. Well, maybe. The behaviour of big banks never ceases to surprise, and seldom on the upside, but this is a bit much.

We haven't seen all the gory details of the Tomlinson report into the treatment RBS meted out to small businesses, but even the author must be surprised at the traction it's got, considering he commissioned himself to write it. However, many of the cases that we have seen have a common theme.

They are essentially about property, the great British obsession. The developers/speculators from whom Mr Sach's men pulled the rug had borrowed heavily from RBS in the good times. Had they continued to roll, the borrowers would have got stinking rich, while the bank would get its money back - a high-stakes version of heads I win, tails you lose.

This hardly excuses the more extreme brutality of Mr Sach's hitmen, but both borrower and lender might have investigated beyond the mark-to-market value of the property before taking the plunge. Merely looking at the asset backing of a venture is lazy banking. A loan may be under water, but if the business plan still stands up, an intelligent lender will not pull the plug, or cause death by a thousand cuts with fees and charges.

Looking may be what GRG actually did. The other report, from Andrew Large, found that only one in ten businesses which went to the boot camp subsequently went bust. Unfortunately for Mr Sach, they are the loudest decile.

The days may be short, but it's still autumn at the Treasury, and next week George Osborne will make a statement to prove it. Please don't call it a Budget (we will, we will). This is supposed to be about spending, but no recent chancellor has resisted the chance of a headline-grabbing tax initiative.

Few tax increases are popular, but an outfit called the Intergenerational Foundation may have found one. It argues that removing tax breaks from buy-to-let landlords would yield £5bn, and judging from the invective that followed Norma Cohen's report of the report, the Foundation may be on to something.

The rentier benefits from tax relief on the mortgage, dilapidation allowances and - if the owner times his residence moves right - freedom from capital gains tax on disposal. The Foundation argues convincingly that buy-to-let has helped push up property prices, particularly in London, and has done little to stimulate new building.

Well, the clue's in the name, and since everyone else has a lobby group, we shouldn't argue about one for the young. There's nothing inherently wrong with buy-to-let, but subsidies for the rentier class are another transfer of wealth from the young to the old. That looks wrong today - and £5bn is a useful extra sum for George Osborne to play with.

Robin Leigh-Pemberton, who died this week, was a very odd choice for governor of the Bank of England in 1983. But after Kit McMahon had described Nigel Lawson's Medium Term Financial Strategy as hokum, and Jeremy Morse spoke out about being bullied into subsidising the financing of UK exports, the two front runners effectively ruled themselves out.

Gordon Richardson had been governor for a decade. He was so cross at not being asked to continue that he gave little help to his successor, whose mixture of effortless charm and ability to delegate overcame his ignorance of the mechanics of central banking. Lord Kingsdown, as he later became, considered that being made Lord Lieutenant of Kent mattered more to him than being governor of the Bank - which may also help explain why he was rather good at it.

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Shares in Speedy Hire lost a fifth of their value on Friday following the resignation of its chief executive, who stepped down after the discovery of accounting irregularities at its overseas operations.

The small-cap tool hire company said Addleshaw Goddard, the law firm, had been appointed to lead an independent legal investigation into the international division, which comprises just 5 per cent of revenues but has been a big focus for the group since 2010.

"Given these events, Steve Corcoran believes it is appropriate that he resigns as group chief executive, will be stepping down from the board of Speedy Hire and will be leaving the company at a date to be finalised," the company added in a statement after the London market closed on Thursday.

The shares fell 20 per cent to 51p in early London trading.

Speedy was once a FTSE 250 company and seen as a stock market darling. But the ill-timed acquisition of Hewden Tools for £115m in 2007 led to a succession of rights issues and left the group carrying net debt to earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation of three times in the deepest downturn in construction in decades.

The Merseyside-based group has since acted on costs, reducing its headcount from more than 5,100 in 2008 to about 3,800. It has also cut the number of depots, from 488 in 2008 to 264.

It had been seen to be turning itself round with a focus on international expansion and a move towards services rather than pure tool hire. Before today, the shares were up more than 90 per cent in 12 months.

Speedy said on Thursday that information had very recently emerged of "the misstatement of a number of accounting balances within the international division over recent accounting periods". It said the impact of the irregularities would reduce full-year pre-tax profit by about £3m. Pre-tax profit for the year to the end of March was £12.8m.

The finance director of the international division has been suspended and other senior divisional management are the subject of further investigation.

Speedy pointed out that the accounting issues did not relate to its prized oil services contract with Zadco in Abu Dhabi or a recently announced joint venture in Kazakhstan.

The company this month appointed a new chief operating officer, former Serco and Costain executive Mark Rogerson, who is set to start work on Monday and will be seen as the frontrunner for the chief executive role.

Mr Corcoran, a former Royal Engineer, joined the company in 1987 and rose through the ranks to become chief executive in 2005.

Analysts at Cantor Fitzgerald said: "Although the issues are solely due to the international division, the turmoil is likely to slow down progress on Speedy's UK network reconfiguration programme, which could hinder the company's ability to fully benefit from improving domestic markets."

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When China created a controversial "air defence identification zone" last Saturday, it sparked alarm about the rising risk of Sino-Japanese conflict over the bitterly contested Senkaku Islands.

But while the focus has been on the Japanese-controlled chain - which Beijing claims and calls the Diaoyu - China also said in the same statement it "will establish other air defence identification zones at the right moment after necessary preparations are completed", raising the spectre of tensions spreading across the region.

The Senkaku spat has attracted much attention over the past year because of the potential for war between Asia's two biggest economies. But China is engaged in a number of equally contentious territorial disputes with Southeast Asian nations - particularly the Philippines and Vietnam - over the resource-rich South China Sea.

Ian Storey, a security expert at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, said the most obvious candidates for any new Chinese air defence zones were the northern part of the South China Sea and the Yellow Sea.

Chinese maps often include a controversial "nine-dash line" that loops the South China Sea, running close to the coasts of Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, and stretching south to Indonesia. It first emerged in a 1947 Republic of China map that was later used by the Communist government of Mao Zedong when it came to power in 1949.

While some Chinese scholars say China does not claim the entire South China Sea, the use of the map has sparked concern among Southeast Asian nations. China last year started issuing passports that included an image of the "nine-dash line", provoking angry responses from Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Mr Storey said China would probably not create an ADIZ for the whole South China Sea, saying it would be "absolutely outrageous" if they included the whole area inside the "nine-dash line". Instead, he said China was more likely to establish a zone in the northern part of the sea, and particularly surrounding Hainan Island.

Hainan hosts the Chinese navy's South Sea fleet - one of its three naval fleets - and also a new generation of nuclear submarines that are an increasingly important part of China's naval capabilities in the South China Sea.

But Mr Storey added that creating an ADIZ over even some of the South China Sea would be "unnecessarily provocative" at a time when China is trying to reduce tensions with its Southeast Asian neighbours.

In October, Chinese President Xi Jinping took advantage of the absence of US President Barack Obama at the Apec summit in Indonesia to launch a charm offensive with Southeast Asian countries, including by floating the idea of creating an "Asian infrastructure bank" to promote development in the region. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang then embarked on a tour of Southeast Asia that was widely seen as an effort to repair relations.

The creation of an ADIZ over the South China Sea would be unlikely to generate the same kind of military response that occurred this week when the US flew B-52 bombers near the Senkaku without alerting China - mainly because, with the exception of Singapore, most Southeast Asian nations have limited air power.

But Gary Li, a senior analyst at IHS maritime, said a Chinese ADIZ in the northern South China Sea would be "very, very sensitive". He said it would almost certainly overlap with Vietnam's ADIZ, which reaches north to about 100km from Hainan Island, and includes the disputed Paracel Islands.

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&gt;Mr Li said the Yellow Sea was also a contender for a new Chinese ADIZ. China has repeatedly criticised the US and South Korea for holding joint military exercises in the Yellow Sea, which lies between East China and the Korean peninsula, and particularly so when the US sails its aircraft carriers through the area.

Wu Shicun, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies in Hainan, a think-tank that advises the Chinese foreign ministry, said that while China had the right to create new zones, it would take its time.

"We cannot rule out the possibility of setting up new ADIZs, but not in the short term," said Mr Wu. "Given the strong reaction from the international community to the East China Sea ADIZ, China will further evaluate when and how to set up new ADIZs. But it will happen sooner or later, since it is related to its national security."

Shi Yinhong, an international relations expert at Renmin University, agreed that China was unlikely to create a zone in the South China Sea anytime soon, mainly because Beijing does not see the same urgency, but he said that could change if "confrontations in the South China Sea escalate".

China and Japan had for decades put the Senkaku dispute to the side. But Beijing reacted angrily last year when Japan bought three of the islands from their private owner, in a move that sparked anti-Japan protests across China.

Mr Li said China probably decided to create an ADIZ - which other countries such as Japan and the US did long ago - because Tokyo has routinely pointed to the number of Chinese incursions into Japan's zone as a way to rally public support.

"That caused the Chinese side to say we need to get one too. There is a huge PR war here," said Mr Li.

Additional reporting by Julie Zhu

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Two weeks ago, Jack Lew, the very domestic US Treasury Secretary, was in Asia making the rounds in Singapore, Tokyo and Beijing. Those who attended meetings with Mr Lew assumed he was coming to apologise for the way the debate in Washington on extending the debt ceiling was handled in the previous month and to offer reassurance that the next time the matter comes up, it will be handled more smoothly.

For those investors who are judged on their performance in dollar terms - such as the Chinese sovereign wealth fund; and those in non US dollar terms - such as the Singaporeans - since the greenback is the world's reserve currency, such issues matter enormously. But listeners who expected an apology or an explanation were mistaken.

Instead Mr Lew instructed his audiences that Asia needed to get its act together and improve its own governance. He further alienated attendees at one session in Singapore by refusing to address the concerns of local bankers about extraterritoriality as the US unilaterally imposes rules on foreign banks with any presence in the US at all.

But today none of that matters. The consensus is that despite the cavalier treatment of investors in Treasury securities, whether foreign or domestic, and despite official behaviour that is unworthy of a nation whose currency is the universal safe haven and store of value, the US dollar will be strong next year and the US market will be the biggest game in global markets. This past week the composite Nasdaq rose above 4,000, a level not seen in 13 years, not since the euphoria of the tech bubble. As everything financial rallies to pre-crisis levels. It is no longer 2007 again - it is better than that.

More sober observers may well wonder why that should be the case.

At this odd moment in time, the US markets are the beneficiaries of two contradictory trends: one is today's reality and the other is tomorrow's expectation.

Neither of them has anything to do with economic fundamentals, unfortunately. The bullish reality today is that the Fed is still supplying massive liquidity to the markets, driving asset prices ever higher. Moreover, incoming chairman Janet Yellen is even more committed to quantitative easing than the current occupant of the seat Ben Bernanke.

At the same time, though, the same market pundits who were sure that the Fed would tighten policy and taper asset purchases back in September are predicting that the Fed will now do so early next year on the back of some positive economic signs - including the recent stronger than expected payrolls report.

The anticipated move away from QE is, ironically, also supportive since that expected tapering will mean a stronger dollar and an expectation of improved fundamentals - and finally perhaps corporate spending on plant and equipment.

So the market is going up for both reasons. Price/earnings multiples have gone from 14 times at the end of last year to almost 17 times - (2007 again).

"Multiple expansion is driving stock market performance to a far greater degree than earnings, while earnings themselves are being driven to a remarkable extent by share buybacks," notes CLSA analyst Christopher Woods.

Those share buybacks amounted to some $218bn in the first half of the year, and keep rising, as do dividend payouts. Capex, of course, remains as subdued as ever - but never mind because for the moment, that is what keeps the Fed with its foot on the monetary accelerator.

Analysts like Mr Wood are now beginning to query what can go wrong and bring the stock market down, beyond the sort of geopolitical shock that is always a possibility. His answer is the continuing thereat of deflation.

As the disconnect between the rising prices of financial assets and the real economy continues, is it possible that even the most aggressive easing has limits? And does the fact that the more sceptical analysts are beginning to pose the question that this point is in sight?

The real incomes of most of the population have not risen at all. And if the only beneficiaries of QE are the very wealthiest, can their spending be enough to support the real economy? In a world where demand will probably be weaker tomorrow than it is today, can asset prices rise indefinitely?

Every day they rise suggests perhaps that the end point is nearer.

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Standard & Poor's move to reduce its credit rating on the sovereign debt of the Netherlands had little impact on European markets on Friday.

The country's borrowing costs ticked only fractionally higher and Amsterdam's main equities index remained as flat as its Continental peers.

S&P cited "less promising" economic prospects and a growth rate lower than European peers as it trimmed the Dutch rating from AAA to AA+.

The AEX index was, after an hour of trade, up 0.1 per cent at 396.9, while the yield on Dutch 10-year debt was trading 0.7 basis points higher at 2.03 per cent.

The region-wide FTSE Eurofirst 300 was up 0.1 per cent at 1,306.61, led by banking and mining stocks.

Crédit Agricole climbed 3 per cent to EUR9.25 after UBS added the French bank to its "key call" list, saying the stock traded at half its book value and at a steep discount to its domestic rivals.

In London, the FTSE 100 was 0.2 per cent higher at 6,665.55 as Whitbread, the hotel and leisure group, led with a 2.1 per cent gain to £35.89.

Mining stocks added weight, with Antofagasta the best of the sector, up 1.5 per cent to 800p.

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The Netherlands has become the latest eurozone member to be stripped of its triple A credit rating by Standard & Poor's, the credit rating agency, which cited weakening growth prospects as it downgraded the country to AA+.

"The downgrade reflects our opinion that The Netherlands' growth prospects are now weaker than we had previously anticipated, and the real GDP per capita trend growth rate is persistently lower than that of peers," said S&P in a statement.

Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Dutch finance minister, said that S&P's downgrade was disappointing given that the Netherlands has recently emerged from a yearlong recession.

Earlier this month France also suffered a downgrade by S&P, when it was cut from AA+ to AA- two years after losing its triple A rating. Of the 17 members of the single currency bloc, only Germany, Finland and Luxembourg still hold the highest rating from S&P.

There was little reaction to the downgrade in the bond markets; the yield on the Dutch 10-year bond was barely changed at 2.03 per cent in early trading on Friday.

"There was no knee jerk reaction from the markets as they had already factored in that the Dutch economy was not worth a triple A rating," said Nick Kounis, economist at ABN Amro.

The Netherlands has been suffering from the bursting of a housing bubble, rising unemployment and weak consumer spending.

The country's gross domestic product increased 0.1 per cent in the third quarter but shrank 0.6 per cent compared with the same period a year ago.

"We do not anticipate that real economic output will surpass 2008 levels before 2017, and believe that the strong contribution of net exports to growth has not been enough to offset a weak domestic economy," said S&P.

The economy is expected to contract 1 per cent this year, according to the European Commission forecast, more than double the projected eurozone contraction.

Mr Dijsselbloem accepted the downgrade, but was confident that the economy was starting to improve.

"We're a country where we have a strong structural base but we have a number of issues to deal with," he told CNBC. "This confirms the need to push forward with some of the reforms."

He added that the government was making the labour market "more flexible" and the pension system "more sustainable", and helping stimulate the housing market.

The Dutch economy is expected to start growing in 2014 at 0.2 per cent, according to the Commission. Economists expect sustained growth of above 1 per cent to return in 2016.

"Despite the many difficulties it faces the Dutch economy remains one of the most competitive in the eurozone," said Mr Kounis at ABN Amro.

The other two major rating agencies, Moody's and Fitch, recently confirmed their triple A ratings for the Netherlands.

The unemployment rate has improved slightly since hitting 9 per cent in July 2013. In October, 8.3 per cent of the working population were without a job, compared to 5.4 per cent in December 2011.

Property prices have been falling since 2009, and slipped a further 4 per cent in October year-on-year.

Meanwhile, Spain, which last month emerged from a two-year recession, had its outlook upgraded by S&P to "stable" from "negative", suggesting that a further downgrade in the next 18-24 months was unlikely for the BBB- rated country.

The agency also upgraded the long-term credit rating of Cyprus from CCC+ to B-, thanks to receding risks to the country's ability to service its debts.

Additional reporting James Fontanella-Khan in Brussels

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London-listed coal miner Bumi has moved a step closer to unwinding its troubled relationship with Indonesia's powerful Bakrie family after confirming that Samin Tan, chairman, had belatedly arranged the financing for his portion of the separation deal.

The company said on Friday that its independent directors were satisfied that Mr Tan had the necessary means to pay $223m for the Bakries' 23.8 per cent stake in Bumi.

The move is part of a deal that will see the Bakries simultaneously pay $501m for Bumi's 29 per cent holding in Bumi Resources, a Jakarta-listed coal miner that is part of their group.

Mr Tan, who is a close associate of the Bakries, had previously missed a November 20 deadline to secure the funding.

Bumi, which was created in 2010 in a complicated $3bn deal between the Bakries and financier Nat Rothschild, said it would send a circular to shareholders next week before they vote on the separation proposal at an extraordinary meeting in the week beginning December 16.

The co-founders later fell out following a string of corporate governance scandals, boardroom spats and whistleblower allegations of fraud. Mr Rothschild failed this year in an attempt to unseat a number of directors from the Bumi board.

Bumi's response to Mr Rothschild's challenge was to unwind the relationship with the Bakries, but doubts over financing dogged the complex two-step separation deal.

If the separation agreement is backed by shareholders, Bumi will be left with a stake in Berau, another Indonesian coal miner, and change its name to Asia Resource Minerals, while Mr Tan will own more than 47 per cent of the new company.

The Bumi saga, along with the scandal at Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation, have tarnished the reputation of the City as a listing venue for emerging-market minerals companies and driven regulators to tighten rules on the London Stock Exchange.

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Ed Miliband on Friday will promise to "reset the broken energy market" by simplifying all energy bills and setting up a new energy security board responsible for ensuring that Britain's energy resources do not run out.

The Labour leader will launch a green paper while on a visit to Manchester Town Hall, setting out a range of ideas on ways to tackle rising household energy prices at a time of pressure on family budgets.

Meanwhile government sources dismissed reports that they were pressing the big six energy companies to freeze bills for the 18 months between now and the general election.

Instead the coalition is poised to announce next week a series of measures to reduce the cost of state insulation schemes on people's bills. That should lead to energy companies holding back their price rises for the coming year - although they will not promise a total freeze.

Mr Miliband will set out a range of energy policies in an attempt to show that Labour's vision in the area is not restricted to the 20-month price freeze which he announced at party conference in September. He will claim that these represent the biggest shake-up of the energy market since the privatisations of the 1980s.

Mr Miliband's new plan for an energy security board will be modelled on the Office of Budget Responsibility, the neutral body which ensures that the government's fiscal promises add up.

Labour would also replace Ofgem, the energy regulator, introduce a new energy "pool" to break the dominance of the big six and improve transparency in both generation and retail markets.

The Tories have claimed that Labour's energy freeze would merely lead to energy companies putting up their bills before and afterwards.

The BBC reported on Thursday night that ministers were pleading with the big six to freeze bills until mid-2015, barring any increase in wholesale fuel costs.

But coalition insiders said this was inaccurate: "There is no plan to freeze energy prices," said one aide. "That is Miliband's policy, which would deter competition and investment and push up prices long term for consumers."

Instead the government plans to "roll back" certain green and social levies including the "ECO" insulation scheme and the "warm homes discount".

The current proposal is to extend the deadline for energy companies to fulfil their ECO obligations by two years to 2017, while shifting the Warm Homes Discount to general taxation.

However there are no plans to cut the subsidies which go towards supporting solar panels, wind farms, nuclear power and other low-carbon energy schemes.

Energy UK, the industry body, said that only about half of the typical energy bill was made up of energy - with the rest from distribution, tax and levies.

"`The only piece that actually sits within the control of the energy company themselves is the 18 per cent-20 per cent of the bill for operating costs and so forth," said Angela Knight, head of the group.

She said energy companies were operating in a "pretty competitive market'' and were not making "a particularly big profit'', adding: "Having to make some profit is essential for any business to remain in business.

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Wealthy Chinese collectors are increasingly buying up Western art as their tastes move beyond the traditional confines of Chinese ceramics and paintings.

Auction houses said more of the spending power generated by China's booming economy was being targeted at non-Chinese art, such as Impressionist paintings, Old Masters and 19th century European furniture.

Sotheby's said the number of mainland Chinese bidding for non-Chinese works in its auctions had risen by 54 per cent since 2010, with $378m spent by 530 successful bidders over the period.

Patti Wong, chairman of Sotheby's Asia, said patterns of taste had begun to broaden when mainland Chinese began travelling internationally, likening the shift to that which occurred among wealthy Russians after the fall of Communism.

"Every culture starts with their own heritage. For the Chinese it's their ceramics, paintings and ink on paper, but as they travel they see more of the world, they visit museums, and their interests broaden. It's a natural progression of the market," she said.

This month a Picasso oil painting, Claude et Paloma, went for $28m to Wang Jianlin, chairman of Chinese property group Dalian Wanda, at a Christie's auction in New York. Last year, a Chinese buyer lost out at Sotheby's New York sale of Edvard Munch's The Scream - but only after bidding $73m.

Interest in western art is growing both in China and across the wider Asia region. Over $2bn was spent by Asian clients in Sotheby's "non-Chinese" categories in the five years to 2012 - an increase of over 200 per cent on the previous five-year period.

Ten years ago Sotheby's Hong Kong sales - which offered only Chinese art and jadeite jewellery - accounted for about 5 per cent of global sales, but by 2011 Asia, Europe and the Americas contributed to the auction house's revenues in roughly equal proportions.

Christie's, the auction house, said the Chinese were now bidding and buying across a range of its categories, from British Victorian art and Old Masters to contemporary work. Last year Asian bidders registering at Christie's grew by 15 per cent. The number of Chinese clients registering in Hong Kong rose by 32 per cent and by 21 per cent in London

Steven P. Murphy, chief executive of Christie's, said Chinese collectors' move into Western art was "a hugely significant trend". At its New York art auctions earlier this month, he said, "we saw Chinese bidding in both evening and day sales, and at every price level."

Both Sotheby's and Christie's have been actively courting business on the mainland in recent years, conscious of the growing wealth of China's elite and entrepreneurial classes.

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&gt;Christie's this year became the first foreign auction house to be granted a licence to operate in mainland China, holding its first auction in Shanghai in September. Sotheby's has entered the China market as part of a joint venture with state-owned Beijing GeHua Art Company, and on Sunday will hold its first commercial auction on the mainland.

Melanie Gerlis, art market editor of the Art Newspaper, said the Chinese were showing more interest in Western art after rubbing shoulders with international super-rich. "It seems the Chinese want to be part of the global elite - the people who want an apartment in Battersea Power Station, wine from a vineyard in Burgundy or paintings from a dealer in London. It's more that, rather than a genuine love of Old Masters."

Does the shift imply London and New York would soon be supplanted by Beijing? Ms Wong rejects the suggestion. "This trend has everything to do with London and New York. Chinese participation in those cities' art markets is going to increase. People think it's happening in a silo in China - it's not."

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Sweden's TeliaSonera cleared out its senior management on Friday, parting company with its finance chief and firing four employees, after an ethics review into its business transactions found some that had not been conducted properly.

"The board's conclusion is that some senior employees no longer have the trust of the board," Marie Ehrling, TeliaSonera chairman, said in a statement. "They have been notified that their employment with TeliaSonera will be terminated and they will leave their position effective immediately."

In a separate statement it said chief financial officer Per-Arne Blomquist, would leave the company immediately. It was not clear whether he was one of the four employees fired. Christian Luiga, head of Telia's chief executive's office, has been appointed acting chief financial officer.

Shares in Telia were down 2.2 per cent to SKr53.25 in early trading.

The clear-out of senior management comes just months after Telia's chief executive, Lars Nyberg, resigned in February amid sharp criticism over corruption allegations in Uzbekistan.

A review by Mannheimer Swartling, a Swedish law firm commissioned by Telia, found that the telecoms operator failed adequately to look into its Uzbek partner and who its ultimate owners were. It could not confirm claims that Telia had committed bribery or money laundering in the central Asian country but nor could it dismiss them.

Anders Narvinger, the telecoms group's former chairman, resigned in December, succumbing to pressure from the Swedish government, which is Telia's largest shareholder with a 37.3 per cent stake.

Telia said on Friday that its "processes for conducting some transactions have not been in line with sound business practices." The company will continue its Eurasia review which is being conducted by law firm Norton Rose Fulbright.

"Together with the board I have come to the conclusion that the way some transactions in the past were managed does not live up to the high standards of business ethics and transparency that TeliaSonera wants to stand for," said Johan Dennelind, Telia chief executive.

"Going forward we need strong leadership on all levels to create a sound culture," Mr Dennelind added.

The corruption claims surfaced after a TV investigation accused TeliaSonera of paying money to an alleged close friend of Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of Uzbekistan's authoritarian president.

The Mannheimer review said that when Telia was setting up in 2007 in Uzbekistan the telecoms operator intended to "enter into an agreement with Gulnara Karimova's investment team as the local partner".

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European Union leaders failed on Friday in last-ditch attempts to persuade Ukraine's president Viktor Yanukovich to sign a far-reaching agreement that would integrate his country more closely with western Europe.

Mr Yanukovich said he could not sign the trade and political association deals because of Ukraine's "complex economic situation" due to pressure from Russia. His refusal came despite appeals from the 28 EU heads of government and European Commission president José Manuel Barroso.

Several thousand protesters, meanwhile, continued to demonstrate in central Kiev calling for Mr Yanukovich to sign the deal. Protest leaders claimed Ukrainian authorities were bringing groups of pro-government youths into the capital, expressing fears they could stage provocations against the protesters, with demonstrations expected to swell later on Friday.

At a summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius EU leaders insisted the way remained open for Ukraine to sign the deal. But it appeared even a mooted joint declaration that Kiev would reopen talks with the aim of signing a deal at a summit in the Ukrainian capital in March would not be signed.

French president François Hollande told reporters "the partnership remains open, but it is up to the Ukrainians first to want it." He said the EU was not prepared to "pay" Ukraine to sign the deal, by offering more financial support than Brussels had already pledged.

Video footage released by Lithuania, holder of the EU presidency, showed an uncomfortable-looking Mr Yanukovich meeting German chancellor Angela Merkel and Mr Barroso on Thursday night.

Ms Merkel can be heard telling Mr Yanukovich in English, "Nice to see you here. But we expected more."

Mr Yanukovich is heard replying: "The economic situation in our country is very complicated . . . we had very big threats."

"I wanted you to listen to me. I've been alone for three and a half years," the Ukrainian president continues. "In very unequal conditions, with a very strong Russia, I was one on one."

But EU officials on the margins of the Vilnius meeting began shifting blame for the failure to sign Ukraine agreement from Russia and on to Mr Yanukovich himself, saying the president had been too intent on playing Moscow off against Brussels.

"I think he didn't really want to sign with either" the EU or Russia, one senior EU politician said. "He just wanted free money."

The summit salvaged some success for its "Eastern Partnership" programme, designed to export democratic values into ex-Soviet republics, with Moldova and Georgia initialling agreements with the EU. Initialling texts is the final stage before signing, expected to happen next year.

Mr Yanukovich watched the signing ceremony with the Moldovan and Georgian leaders from the end of the second row, where he sat next to the foreign minister of autocratic neighbour Belarus - which has played little part in the Eastern Partnership process.

The summit came eight days after Ukraine's government surprised the EU by suspending preparations to sign the deal, and said it would reopen talks on deepening relations with Russia.

The move followed months of pressure from Moscow, including bans on a range of Russian goods and disruptions to cross-border trade, as well as two closed-door meetings this month between Mr Yanukovich and Russian president Vladimir Putin.

An adviser to the Ukrainian president, however, insisted it was still possible to sign the EU deal in March. He said he hoped a working group could sort out "all contradictory questions" with Brussels.

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China shocked its neighbours and countries further afield when it announced the creation of an air defence identification zone in the skies above a set of islands administered by Japan but claimed by both China and Taiwan. It has promised to establish more of these zones but what is an ADIZ? Why would a country want one? And why are Japan and the US - who both have ADIZs of their own - so set against China's?

What is an air defence identification zone?

A zone that provides an early warning system to help a country detect possible incursions into its sovereign airspace. It stretches beyond the boundary of a country's national airspace. When an aircraft enters an ADIZ without warning, the country in question may scramble fighter jets to visually identify the aircraft and determine whether it poses a threat.

The US and Soviet Union relied on ADIZs during the Cold War to ensure they were not surprised by sudden incursions into their national airspaces.

Which countries have ADIZs?

Many countries have ADIZs, including the US, Canada, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam.

How do you create an ADIZ?

ADIZs are not binding legal agreements covered by international treaties. Countries can create an ADIZ just by providing its GPS co-ordinates. This is what China did on November 23 2013.

Can a country legally shoot down an aircraft that enters its ADIZ without notification?

No. ADIZs are considered to be international airspace.

How does China's ADIZ differ from others?

China requires commercial aircraft flying through its air defence zone to provide advance warning even when their final destination is another country. In contrast, commercial aircraft flying through the US ADIZ are only required to provide advance flight details when they are destined to land in the US.

Do different countries ADIZs overlap?

They can. The new Chinese zone overlaps with both the Japanese and South Korean zones.

Some countries have had ADIZs for decades. Why did China wait until now?

We are not sure. One theory is that China felt it needed an ADIZ for the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands because Japan was publicising Chinese incursions into its ADIZ in an effort to rally public opinion.

Which commercial airlines are complying with the new Chinese restrictions?

Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines and Taiwanese airlines have acknowledged complying.

Are any commercial airlines refusing to comply?

Yes. Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways originally complied, but reversed course following pressure from the Japanese government. Korean Airlines and Asiana Airlines are reporting their flight plans to China only when they fly through Chinese airspace, not when they fly though the country's ADIZ.

Additional reporting by Mitsuko Matsutani and Jennifer Thompson in Tokyo, Simon Mundy in Seoul and Sarah Mishkin in Taipei

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Japan is on track to win its war on deflation with the latest consumer price inflation figures showing the highest reading since the country slipped into deflation 15 years ago.

Core consumer price index inflation, which excludes fresh food but includes energy, hit 0.9 per cent in October, up from 0.7 per cent the previous month and in line with economists' expectations. Excluding both fresh food and energy, it reached 0.3 per cent, the highest reading since 1998, indicating that rising energy costs alone were not the sole factor in inflationary pressure.

The figures will be a fillip to Shinzo Abe, prime minister, and the Bank of Japan, suggesting the country is on track to hit the 2 per cent inflation target set almost a year ago and that monetary easing efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Separately industrial output also increased in October - by 0.5 per cent - for a second straight month.

Since returning to power last December, Mr Abe has gone all out to overturn more than a decade of deflation through the "three arrows" of aggressive monetary easing, extra doses of fiscal stimulus and a host of measures to boost Japan's competitiveness.

After the BoJ left its policy framework unchanged at a regular policy meeting last week, Haruhiko Kuroda, governor, said "we are making steady progress on the path to realising our goal".

The bank has bought trillions of yen of government bonds from banks and other big holders, seeking to push them into riskier instruments such as loans, stocks and foreign assets.

So far, prices have been rising in line with the BoJ's forecasts, thanks largely to the steep fall in the yen since the end of 2012, which has pushed up the cost of fuel and other imports.

The headline CPI figure of 0.9 per cent was a reconfirmation that Japan was starting to put deflation behind it, said Junko Nishioka, chief Japan economist at RBS in Tokyo.

"All in all, CPI data are developing fully in line with BoJ's view," she added.

Japan's Government Pension Investment Fund announced on Friday that its assets had reached a record high of Y124trn at the end of September, the rise of 2.4 per cent over the preceding quarter being spurred in part by the stock market rally unleashed by Abenomics. The world's largest pool of retirement savings has been encouraged to reduce its emphasis on domestic bonds to improve returns.

But many fear that the way ahead may be more difficult, as the effects of a weaker yen wear off.

Three of the nine board members at the BoJ have expressed doubts that the target can be reached by the latter half of the 2015 fiscal year. Two of them - Takehiro Sato and Takahide Kiuchi, both former investment bank economists - have raised particular concerns over the lack of basic wage increases, which they say are necessary to stoke a positive cycle of demand-based inflation.

The October CPI rise will increase expectations of wage rises after the annual round of negotiations between unions and employers are concluded next spring, so that workers' salaries keep pace. There is also pressure to raise salaries given an increase in Japan's consumption tax from 5 to 8 per cent next April.

Sayuri Shirai, another board member who objected to parts of the BoJ's growth and inflation forecasts in October, says she is concerned about the risk of dips in the economy caused by continuing weakness overseas, as well as flat household incomes.

Kiichi Murashima, chief economist at Citi in Tokyo, said: "If, as we anticipate, wages do not pick up in a meaningful manner and the negative impact from the consumption tax increase is larger than policy makers currently expect, it should be difficult for longer-term inflation expectations to rise substantially."

Nomura Holdings said on Friday it would increase the base wages of up to 4,000 of its lowest paid employees, which represents around a third of its Japanese workforce, by 2 per cent in April.

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Twenty years ago I was hanging around a friend's kitchen as dinnertime approached. "Let me cook for you," he offered. "I don't want to put you to any trouble," I said. "No trouble at all," he replied, and in one graceful movement he leaned back in his chair, lifted a tin of baked beans from the shelf above his head, emptied them into a saucepan and turned on the gas. That was dinner.

To grasp how daily life in most western countries has improved in recent decades, food is the perfect case study. True, we have all got fatter. True, we eat too much processed stuff. True, with food prices rising and incomes falling since 2007, poor people can barely afford enough to eat. And yet for most westerners, tastier food now provides everyday happiness to a degree unimaginable when I was growing up.

Back then, most Europeans and north Americans ate bland food daily. Going to a restaurant was a rare treat. There was little ethnic food around - certainly no sushi in the supermarket. A friend of mine raised in a small Dutch town in the 1970s recalls that whereas all their neighbours ate meat and potatoes every evening, his family were considered snobs because they ate meat and rice.

A few mothers and grandmothers produced wonderful home cooking, the stuff of nostalgia today. But most northern European children grew up regarding meals as something to endure. To quote the hysterical English schoolmaster in Pink Floyd's album The Wall (1979): "If you don't eat yer meat, you can't have any pudding! How can you have any pudding if you don't eat yer meat?"

In those postwar decades, attitudes to most goods were utilitarian: nobody needed sensory pleasures. A woman from Gillingham, in Kent, told me that her childhood was made less happy by the ugly surroundings. Tedious eating had the same effect.

Food was possibly even dourer in communist Europe. The summer after the Berlin Wall fell, I lodged with a family in an east German village. Every evening we had pork, potatoes and beer. It got boring within a week - let alone a lifetime.

No wonder East Germans craved the exotic. In 1966 Rolf Anschütz, a restaurateur in a small Thuringian town who had never been to Japan, began serving Japanese food. (You'd have thought that East Germany lagged in exotic cuisine, but in fact London in 1966 had zero Japanese or Thai restaurants.) By 1989, when the Wall fell, several hundred thousand East Germans had eaten Anschütz's Japanese meals.

The fall of the Wall accelerated globalisation, and globalisation tends to improve cooking. Our food has kept getting more exotic. The number of Indian restaurants in Britain, for instance, has gone from 1,200 in 1970 to about 9,000 today. (Indian food, incidentally, epitomises globalisation: chilli reached India from Portugal, tandoori from west Asia, and curry powder, bizarrely, from England, writes Amartya Sen.) Gradually, more westerners came to regard food as more than just fuel. On April 14 1999, Jamie Oliver presented his first cookery show on BBC television. A new generation of "foodies" was born.

The word conjures up images of bearded Brooklynites queueing at food trucks. The "food renaissance" is indeed linked to class, and therefore encourages status displays: the fastest-growing demographic category from Britain to China today is "cheese bores".

However, tastier eating isn't only an elite phenomenon. Enjoying food doesn't have to mean buying £25 chickens or boring on about Amazonian vegetables. Great masses of people now watch cookery shows on TV. They don't all then cook the dishes but they must be influenced. Often they consume the foods in simplified or snack forms: in coffee shops, or as ready-made supermarket meals. There's even a "fresh fast food" phenomenon. Recent TV commercials for Taco Bell in the US, for instance, feature the celebrity chef Lorena Garcia rhapsodising about "beautiful ingredients" while preparing a "burrito bowl" in her kitchen. This sort of thing is easy to mock, but these foods are probably tastier than, say, the Wonder Bread that used to be an American staple.

Immigration is bringing good ethnic foods even to poorer neighbourhoods. And until the current spike in prices, food had been getting cheaper for decades. Americans on average now spend just a tenth of their disposable income on food, says the US Department of ***Agriculture***. That is around the lowest level in human history. Most westerners can now afford to think about food as a source of everyday happiness.

I live in Paris, where this attitude has been taken for granted for centuries. Every lunchtime I toddle to one of dozens of restaurants around my work flat, and sit down alone to a two-course meal. Often it's the highlight of my day. Once, over dinner with expat friends, we debated the question: would we stay in Paris if the food was bad? Nah, we concluded. I may never leave this city, so the quest for happiness through food has shaped my life.

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BRUNO LOUBET

Frenchman Bruno Loubet created a splash this summer with vegetables - the star ingredients at his new London restaurant The Grain Store, set in a rejuvenated quarter of King's Cross. Loubet, who also runs an eponymous bistro at the Zetter Townhouse hotel, uses veg with style, as seen in this pumpkin prize-piece.

Roast pumpkin with mulled wine sauce

Serves 6 people

1 pumpkin

6 parsnips

6 carrots

500g Jerusalem artichokes

6 potatoes

1 celeriac

4 red onions

4 red beetroots

500g soft goat's cheese

8 cloves garlic

1 tbs pickled rosemary

5 sprigs thyme

6 sage leaves

100ml olive oil

Mulled wine sauce

350g fruit chutney

750ml red wine

¼ orange zest

¼ cinnamon stick

2 cloves

1 tbsp sliced ginger

5 crushed cardamom pods

1 fresh bay leaf (2 if dried)

8 black peppercorns

1 bag English Breakfast tea

Sherry vinegar to taste

Maple syrup to taste

For the mulled wine sauce

- Place the wine, tea bag, orange zest and spices in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, lower the heat to a light simmer and reduce the liquid by half; take off the heat and cover with a lid to infuse. When the liquid is tepid, pass through a fine sieve and discard the tea bag and spices; add the chutney and bring to the boil. Once boiled, add sherry vinegar and maple syrup to taste. Set aside to cool.

For the stuffed and roast pumpkin

- Preheat oven to 180C. Cut all the vegetables (except the pumpkin) into large chunks. Cut a lid from the top of the pumpkin, scoop out the seeds in the middle and discard. With a strong metal spoon, scrape out the pumpkin flesh into a bowl, making sure to leave a layer (about 1.5cm). It is important not to scrape right back to the skin. Place the pumpkin with its lid off and its lid (separate from each other) in the oven for 20 minutes, then remove and keep aside.

- Place the carrots, artichoke, parsnips, celeriac, potatoes, red onions and beetroot in a roasting tray, toss with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place in the oven and roast for about 20 minutes (until a nice golden colour), then add the pumpkin flesh, crushed garlic, rosemary, thyme and sage. Cook for another 20 minutes. Drain the vegetables, place on a clean kitchen towel and pat dry. Layer the vegetables and crumbled goat's cheese inside the pumpkin. Place the pumpkin and the lid (again, separately) in the oven for a further 10-15 minutes.

- Serve with the lid on the pumpkin and the rich mulled wine sauce on the side.

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TOM KERRIDGE

Tom Kerridge's 2013, featuring a successful BBC television series, has been a "huge year" for the chef at the Hand & Flowers pub in Marlow. "Pub" is a loose term here; Kerridge's menu has two Michelin stars and is all about beautiful English ingredients - roast quail, venison, crispy pig's head - in a relaxed setting. Christmas for Kerridge growing up meant "turkey roll, cheap port and rubbish movies". This year his mother-in-law will be doing the honours but Kerridge "will help out - I love cooking".

Slow roast venison haunch with shallots, cranberries and chestnuts

Serves 6 people

2-2½kg venison haunch from the top end (bone in)

12 banana shallots, peeled but whole

100g dried cranberries

150g vac-pack chestnuts, crumbled

300ml red wine

50g redcurrant jelly

750ml dark chicken/beef stock

2 tsp dried sage

200g bacon lardons

400g brussel sprout tops (washed)

Vegetable oil for cooking

Venison rub

2 tsp juniper

8 cloves

1 tbs cracked black pepper

2 tbs flaky sea salt

1 tbs cumin seeds

2 tbs thyme leaves

This fantastic slow-cooked dish is perfect for this time of year - a great Christmas alternative.

- Lightly score the venison haunch with a sharp knife. In a pestle and mortar or spice grinder blend together the venison rub ingredients. Rub them all into the haunch and leave it to sit for 1-2 hours to take on the flavours.

- In a large casserole pan, heat a layer of vegetable oil and cook the bacon lardons until crispy and brown.

- Add the shallots and cook until they start to brown. Add the dried sage and stir. Put in the redcurrant jelly, red wine and the stock. Bring to the boil and then place the venison on top. Turn the heat off and place a lid on the top or cover with tin foil. Place in a preheated oven at 150C for 2 hours. After 2 hours, remove from the oven and take off the lid. Check the stock level to make sure it is not burnt, and add a little more if needed.

- Place back into the oven for a further 1½-2 hours, until the venison is cooked, tender and can be flaked from the bone. Leave to rest for half an hour.

- Gently lift the venison from the shallots and stock and place on the serving plate or board. Place the pan on the hob and heat up. Add the flaked chestnuts and dried cranberries. Stir and season. Then add the brussel sprout tops and stir until wilted - about 1 minute. Serve with the venison and some roast potatoes. There should be enough stock and red wine to act as a gravy.

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KARAM SETHI

Food is a family business for Karam Sethi: his sister Sunaina is sommelier, his brother Jyotin is business partner and together they have raised the game for contemporary Indian cooking in London, both at Trishna in Marylebone and at their new colonial-style Mayfair restaurant, the excellent Gymkhana. Its menu is a novel curry paradise - pepper partridge, spiced pig cheek vindaloo - and here Sethi's turkey biryani, aromatic trimmings and mince pie samosas should make for a perfectly spicy Christmas supper.

Turkey biryani with potatoes, spinach and root veg

Serves 4 people

750g skinless and boneless turkey, cut into dice (approximately 4cm)

500g long-grain basmati rice

250g onions blended to a paste in a food processor

Ground seeds of 2 black cardamoms

85ml ghee mixed with oil

2 tbsp ginger paste (50g ginger with 1 tbs water)

1 tbsp whole black peppercorns

½ tbsp cumin seeds

7 cloves

½ g (small pinch) saffron threads

1l whisked yoghurt

125ml milk

284ml water

Salt, fresh coriander, mint andcrispy fried onions, to taste

Dried rose petals, for garnish

Atta bread (for sealing the pan, optional)

250g dry atta (chapatti flour or whole-wheat flour)

125ml water

1-2 tbs oil (optional)

- This dish can be made using atta dough to seal the pan. To make the atta dough, combine the flour, water and oil, then knead together.

- Place the skinless, boneless turkey in a large bowl or tray. Rub on the saffron and onion paste and leave to marinate at room temperature for 2 hours (24 hours if you can). During this time, dry roast the black pepper, cumin and cloves separately in a hot pan. Allow the spices to cool and then grind in a pestle and mortar.

- Once the spices are cool, add half the whisked yoghurt and ground black cardamom seeds. Then rub the mixture into the turkey before placing it in a heavy-bottomed pan. In a separate pan, heat three-quarters of the ghee/oil mixture and, once warmed through, pour it over the turkey.

- Wash the rice by running it through cold water to remove some of the starch [I use Amira's "Superior" rice]. Leave to soak for 20 minutes. Strain the rice and mix it with the remaining yoghurt, 284ml of water and two teaspoons of salt, then add the rice to the turkey mixture.

- Cover the pan with a tightfitting lid and seal the edges with the atta dough to stop any steam escaping. Alternatively you can cook your turkey in a pressure cooker. Cook over a high heat for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat to low for approximately half an hour. Uncover the dish and pour over the remaining ghee/oil mixture before sprinkling the milk on to the rice.

- Cover the turkey once again and cook for a further 15 minutes or until the meat is tender and the rice grains have separated. Before serving, garnish with dried rose petals, crispy onions, chopped fresh coriander and mint.

Roast potatoes with cumin, ginger and coriander

1kg potatoes

1 tbs cumin seeds

1 tbs cumin powder

1 tbs fresh grated ginger

1 green chilli

Salt to taste

30g fresh coriander

1l water

- Preheat oven to 180C. Bring the water to a rolling boil and add the washed potatoes. Boil for about 20 minutes, until the potatoes are soft. Drain and place in a roasting tray. Add the cumin seeds, cumin powder, ginger, diced green chilli and salt to taste. Roast for approximately 45 minutes, until golden brown. Toss with fresh coriander.

Creamed spinach

4 bunches spinach

1 tbsp cumin seeds

1 tbsp oil

1 green chilli, finely chopped

½ medium onion

1 clove garlic

Salt to taste

½ cup cream

- In a pan, temper cumin seeds in oil, then add chopped green chilli, chopped onion and garlic. Cook until softened.

- Boil the baby spinach until soft, then strain it and purée in a blender. Remove from the blender and add to the pan of cumin, chilli, onion and garlic. Continue to cook for five minutes, then add the cream and season with salt.

Mashed root vegetables

1kg beets, parsnips, squash, celeriac

1 tbs oil

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tbs mustard seeds

2 curry leaves

1 tsp asafoetida

1 red chilli

5 shallots

1 tbs fresh grated ginger

1 tbs butter

Few sprigs coriander

- Heat the oven to 180C. In a tray, roast beets, parsnips, squash and celeriac in the oven with oil, salt and pepper until tender. Then strain and mash very coarsely.

- In a pan, temper mustard seeds, curry leaves, asafoetida and whole red chilli in oil. Add diced shallots and ginger, and soften. Pour this mixture on to the veg and mix in. Finish with a dollop of butter and roughly chopped coriander including the stems.

Mince pie samosa

The filling

200g mince pie mix

100g chenna curd cheese

50g roasted almond flakes

Pinch cardamom

The pastry

500g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

1 tbs sunflower oil

1 tsp salt

500ml water

A little melted butter

- Place flour, oil and salt in a bowl and make a well in the centre of the mixture. Add water slowly and knead dough until smooth, then make eight dough balls, about 5cm in diameter. Cover with a cloth and leave to rest for 10 minutes.

- In the meantime, preheat oven to 180C. Mix together the mince pie mixture, chenna, roasted almond flakes and cardamom.

- Once the pastry balls have rested, roll each one out on a lightly floured surface to a circle shape, about 10cm thick. Cut into quarters and layer the quarters on top of each other. Make sure to dust each layer lightly with flour so that they do not stick together.

- Add a spoonful of the mince pie mixture to the centre of the pastry quarters and brush the edges with melted butter. Then layer another pastry quarter on top and seal edges of pastry together. Cook until golden brown.

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SARIT PACKER

There is nobody we'd entrust our sweet-tooth cravings to more than the woman who used to be head pastry chef for Yotam Ottolenghi. Sarit Packer, who with her husband Itamar Srulovich now runs the tiny but totally delicious Honey & Co restaurant on London's Warren Street, makes sweet things for all hours - doughnuts, lemon and saffron cakes, and this fabulous honey and quince trifle, which we could eat at any time.

Quince, honey and hazelnut trifle

Serves 6-8 people

Honey and ginger sponge

225g caster sugar

250g plain flour

Pinch of salt

½ tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

100g water

100g honey

100g vegetable oil

2 tbs demerara sugar, to sprinkle

This is a great cake recipe, and tasty even before it goes in the trifle. You can, of course, use a bought sponge, but this is so easy that there is no reason to be lazy - it is literally a two-step cake.

- Line the base of a shallow rectangular baking tin (approximately 400cm x 20cm) with greaseproof paper. Preheat your oven to 180C.

- Mix all the dry ingredients together and pour them over all the wet ingredients. Mix to combine and tip into the lined tin. Smooth down and sprinkle the demerara sugar over the top - it will bake into a great crunchy crust. Place in the oven for 25-30 minutes. Allow to cool on a wire rack. Once cooled, cut in half and use one half to line the base of your serving bowl. The other half I like to cut into dice and lay on a tray to dry a little, then use to garnish the top of the trifle.

Quince and jelly

3 large quinces

1 cinnamon stick

3 cardamom pods, slightly crushed

1l water

500g sugar

Juice of 2 lemons

6 gelatin leaves (or use producer's guidelines to set 750ml liquid)

3 tbsp sweet Muscat wine

I like to leave the skin on the fruit as it has loads of flavour and helps it keep the shape. The cooking liquid will become the jelly - I like to add the sweet Muscat wine but it is up to you.

- Combine the water, lemon juice, sugar, cinnamon and cardamom in a large pan.

- Cut the quince into wedges - 8-10 from each fruit, then with a sharp knife remove the core. Place all the wedges in the water and bring to a boil on a medium-low heat. Once it has reached boiling point, reduce the heat to low and cook for 15 minutes. Soak the gelatin leaves in 200ml cold water. Very carefully, using a ladle, remove 500ml of the quince cooking liquid to a jug, then add the water and soaking gelatin to the hot liquid and stir till combined. Set aside. Leave the remaining quince and liquid to cook for a further 30 minutes until the quince is fully cooked and the colour has deepened to a warm orange.

Cardamom cream

400g milk

6 cardamom pods, crushed

100g sugar

4 egg yolks

50g plain flour

½ tsp ground ginger

You can, of course, buy a ready-made custard and use that to top the trifle, but try to go to the extra effort and make this pastry cream yourself. I use cardamom instead of the more traditional vanilla, as I think it works amazingly well with the flavour of quince and honey.

- In a small pan, combine the milk, sugar and cardamom and heat slowly. Once it has almost come to a boil, turn the heat off and wait for 10 minutes to allow the flavours to infuse. In the meantime, mix the egg yolks with the flour to make a thick paste, and add the ginger. Reheat the cream and, using a small tea strainer, remove the cardamom pods, mix a ladleful of the milk into the egg mix and return to the pan. Set the pan on the stove and, while stirring constantly, thicken the custard mix. Once it is thick, remove from the pan to a bowl, cover with cling film and allow to cool in the fridge.

To assemble the trifle

2 tbsp sweet Muscat wine (optional)

200ml double/whipping cream

75g roasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

1 tbsp honey

Pinch sea salt

- Douse the sponge you have set in the serving bowl with the sweet wine, if you are using it. Lift the quince wedges out of their now thick syrup and layer them over the sponge. (You can reserve 3-4 wedges to use as a garnish later). Pour over the mixed jelly and set in the fridge - it will take 3-4 hours to set fully.

- In the meantime, whip the cream and fold it into the custard base until you achieve a silky-smooth mixture that holds in peaks. Set in the fridge. Mix the roasted hazelnuts with the honey and the salt.

- Once the jelly has set, scoop large dollops of the cardamom cream and spread it all over the top, garnishing with the hazelnuts, the cubed sponge pieces and the retained quince wedges cut into small dice.

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Mary-Anne Boermans opens the door of her little terraced house in Kidderminster and it is instantly clear that this will be the perfect day. The air is scented with spice, a drift of nutmeg and mace coiling enticingly through the front room. Set on the dining table are festive treats, all "traditional" but with the historical twist that gives Boermans' baking its fascinating character.

Here are pretty little shortbreads, not plain but dotted with orange peel. Here is gingerbread, not cakey but cracklingly fragile and bittered with treacle. Here are Chelsea buns but entirely without the crowds of currants we've come to associate with that treat. It's shocking. They look naked. But turn to Boermans' new book, Great British Bakes, and you will discover why - for she has traced the true 18th-century origins of the "Royal Chelsea bun" with a diligence that would put many a historian to shame.

Boermans - who played rugby for Wales in the late 1980s, and who has travelled the world in the course of her teaching career - is perhaps the most wonderfully unlikely contestant The Great British Bake Off has seen: and lucky for us. Let's face it: the programme is kitsch, pure and simple, and so it's a wonder to discover that an amateur who got her professional start there - she was a runner-up in 2011 - has produced a book that's as fascinating to read as it is to bake from. Its recipes are drawn not only from her collection of hundreds of second-hand, antique cookbooks but also from the Wellcome Library - which, being a ***medical*** library, keeps recipe books because they contain home remedies. But there's no reason you can't find a cheesecake in there, too. What Boermans has done is to choose her favourites and then modernise them both for our present-day kitchens (we take it for granted that our ovens will run at a constant temperature - a fairly recent development) and for the fact that we cook for ourselves rather than asking a kitchen maid to keep whisking a batter for eight hours solid. (Thank heavens for the Kenwood.)

And so where better to come than Boermans' neat galley kitchen to find a version of a Christmas cake that will bring us back to the essence of British baking? For that's what she was after. When her daughter, now eight, was born, she says, "I wanted her to taste pure flavours. I know myself how delicious artificial flavours can be. When I was a child a real treat was Angel Delight - because we had to have home-cooked meals! You didn't buy biscuits or cake - 'boughten' stuff was looked down on. So it got me thinking: but which apple pie is the best apple pie - and who first thought of apple pie?"

It was this that led her to start picking up second-hand cookery books in shops and on eBay. "I began to think: it's wrong to dismiss 400 years of baking and cooking in general." And, she adds, "It can be new if we haven't done it for 200 years." In these old recipes, the newly trendy nostrums of eat fresh, eat local, eat nose-to-tail, be self-sufficient, were all right there, waiting to be rediscovered.

As we chat, we make Wood Street Cake - a lightly yeasted fruitcake with a rosewater icing originating in the City of London. Wood Street is just between Cheapside and Cripplegate, and, in the 17th century, was famous for its cakes. So when, in 1648, Lady Anne Murray helped to smuggle the future King James II out of captivity and off to the continent, she not only provided him with women's clothes as a disguise but also his favourite treat, a Wood Street Cake. In her book, Boermans admires Lady Anne's devotion: "I must admit that, were I to be intimately involved in the rescue of royalty in a time of civil unrest, the provision of snacks might be pretty low on my checklist of important tasks."

We can only be thankful that political calm has enabled Boermans to focus on such snacks. Having folded a mixture of dried fruit and currants into the dough, which is deliciously enriched by butter and cream, we need to give it an hour to rise - time enough to eat lunch, for which she has made little oval cheese and potato pies, their crusts made meltingly delicate by cutting plain flour with a good dose of cornflour. Normally, such a pie wouldn't be what I'd choose for my lunch: but these are straight-up fantastic. It doesn't surprise me when Boermans confesses a secret love for savoury baking - here's to a follow-up volume, I say.

Hot water crusts for pork pies were something she'd never made until GBBO - an experience which, all in all, she loved. "There was a lot of laughter in that tent, a lot of funny people. I'm really glad I met all of them, it was just a shame that one went every week." She is full of admiration for Mary Berry - "At first I wanted to impress her; then I didn't want to disappoint her." Paul Hollywood's name doesn't elicit the same admiration - not least because he called her everlasting syllabub ­"revolting", which I rather agree is beyond the pale. She admits, however, that the kind of baking she's interested in was perhaps not the perfect fit for GBBO - their loss is our gain.

After the cake has risen, we set it in a tin lined with parchment that rises above the springform walls so the fruit doesn't scorch. Once out of the oven, the cake is iced hot - egg whites, confectioner's sugar and rose water, that's it. It's a perfect, simple Christmas cake, one that comes with the romance of history attached. We can be sure there's more to come from Boermans. "Think of the stories I haven't managed to find yet!" she beams.

'Great British Bakes: Forgotten Treasures for Modern Bakers' by Mary-Anne Boermans (Square Peg, £20)

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Wood Street Cake (1675)

The cake itself is light and delicately spiced.

The high fruit content means that only a relatively small amount of sugar is needed and, like most of the fruited cakes of this era, it is iced hot. And so, without further ado, please enjoy a cake fit for a king.

Serves 10-12

For the cake

600g plain flour

2 sachets (14g) fast-action yeast

112g caster sugar

1 tsp ground mace

½ tsp ground cloves

1 tsp ground nutmeg

2 tsp ground cinnamon

450g currants

150g raisins

150g butter

200ml double cream

2 egg yolks

1 egg

1-3 tbs rose water, to taste

For the icing

2 egg whites

1-2 tbs rose water, to taste

225g icing sugar

A 24cm springform cake tin

- In a large bowl, mix together the flour, yeast, caster sugar, spices, currants and raisins.

- Put the butter and cream into a saucepan over a low heat and warm gently until the butter is melted. Set aside to cool slightly.

- In a separate bowl whisk the yolks and egg with the rose water, then continue to whisk while slowly adding the cooled cream mixture.

- Stir the liquids into the dry ingredients. The texture should be rather wet and similar to a modern fruit cake mix - too wet to knead. When thoroughly mixed, cover and set aside to rise in a warm place for 1 hour.

- Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6 and grease and line the base of the cake tin with baking parchment. Line the sides with a double layer of parchment and make sure it stands above the level of the tin itself by several centimetres. This will help keep the top of the cake from scorching and also prevent the icing from colouring too much.

- When the cake mix has risen, pour it into the prepared cake tin. Smooth the mixture but don't press down or you'll squash out all the air bubbles. Bake for 45-50 minutes.

- While the cake is baking, prepare the icing by whisking the egg white to soft peaks and then adding the rose water. Gradually add the icing sugar and whisk to stiff peaks. Set aside.

- When the cake is fully baked, remove it from the oven and, while it's still in the tin, spoon the icing over the top. Return the iced cake to the oven and turn off the heat. Let the icing set for 15 minutes then remove the cake from the oven and leave to cool in the tin.

- When it's completely cold, remove the cake from the tin. Run a knife around the edge of the icing to loosen the baking parchment and slowly peel away the paper.

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History joys

Mary-Anne Boermans chooses three favourites from her collection of historical recipe books:

Good Things in England by Florence White (1932). 'Her pioneering efforts attempted to "capture the charm of England's cookery before it is completely crushed out of existence". Over 800 recipes dating back 700 years.'

The Housekeeper's Pocket Book by Sarah Harrison (1739). 'Includes a "food-in-season" planner, with recipe suggestions for each item. Interesting West Country perspective.'

A New System of Domestic Cookery by Maria Rundell (1806). 'The first (in my opinion) practical household book. It was a huge success, remaining in print for 35 years and over 40 editions.'

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FT reader offer

Readers can buy Great British Bakes: Forgotten Treasures for Modern Bakers by Mary-Anne Boermans (RRP£20) for the special price of £17, including free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the reference 'FT'.

Offer dates: 30/11/13-31/01/13

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Copas Turkeys

In 1957, 17-year-old Tom Copas was given some turkeys by his father and told to "get on with it"; he sold 157 birds that year. Today his daughters carry on the business. The Copas family dry-pluck the carcass and hang it intact (with the head on) for two weeks for a better flavour. They also offer condiments and stuffings, as well as a handy plug-in widget that you insert before cooking to tell you when the bird's done.

Kings Coppice Farm, Grubwood Lane, Cookham, Berkshire SL6 9UB; 01628 499980; [*www.copasturkeys.co.uk*](http://www.copasturkeys.co.uk)

Kelly Bronze Turkeys

Stunning, tasty birds that - due to their maturity and fat marbling - take a lot less time to cook than an average turkey. Every Kelly Bronze includes a meat thermometer as well as cooking instructions. If a whole bird is too much for you, they also offer a stuffed breast, turkey crown or half a bird. Available via mail order or at a range of farm shops and butchers; check website for details.

Springate Farm, Bicknacre Road, Danbury, Essex CM3 4EP; 01245 223581; [*www.kellyturkeys.co.uk*](http://www.kellyturkeys.co.uk)

Goodman's Geese and Turkeys

What started as a winter hobby in 1982 for the asparagus-growing Goodman family has turned into a business producing 4,000 bronze turkeys each year. The birds are fed on natural foods containing no additives or growth promoters. Both turkeys and geese are available via mail order as well as selected suppliers.

Walsgrove Farm, Great Witley, Worcestershire WR6 6JJ; 01299 896272; [*www.goodmansgeese.co.uk*](http://www.goodmansgeese.co.uk)

Botteril's Turkeys

Proper old-fashioned birds, these bronze turkeys are reared on the Belvoir Estate, slaughtered on site and dry-plucked. They're then hung for 14 days for depth of flavour. The turkeys have a decent fat cover, which renders during cooking to make for a really succulent roast. They also offer large cockerels if you'd rather have chicken than turkey. Available from the farm or via The Ginger Pig ([*www.thegingerpig.co.uk*](http://www.thegingerpig.co.uk)).

Lings View Farm, 10 Middle Street, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG32 1QP; 01476 870394; [*www.freerangebirds.co.uk*](http://www.freerangebirds.co.uk)

Hostingley Farm Free-Range Turkeys

Tim and Lynne Lindley ***feed*** their free-range birds on homegrown grain. The birds are processed directly on the farm, eliminating the stresses of live transport. They are dry-plucked by hand, then hung for at least 10 days. Collect from the farm or via selected stockists.

Hostingley Farm, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. WF12 0QJ; 01924 272 570; [*www.hostingleyfarmfreerange.co.uk*](http://www.hostingleyfarmfreerange.co.uk)

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Andrew Webb is the author of 'Food Britannia' (Random House)

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Does America have too many immigrants? That is a question which sparks heated political debate in Washington. Little wonder. Earlier this year Barack Obama pledged to make immigration reform a central plank of his second term as president.

But while that won him support among Hispanic voters, it infuriated many Republicans, particularly in the South. And with the unemployment rate remaining stubbornly high, the issue is doubly controversial due to a perception - or fear - that immigrants are stealing American jobs.

Last week a curious new salvo was fired into this fiery debate from none other than the Dallas Federal Reserve. In recent years, this institution has earned a reputation for being one of the more independent-minded parts of the Fed: its president, Richard Fisher, has demanded policies to slash the size of banks, and its officials take a free-market, conservative view. (Indeed, as a sign of this Wild West heritage, it is the only western central bank I have ever seen where an official notice tells customers to put their guns aside before entering.)

But when it comes to immigration - of the legal and illegal kind - the Lone Star Fed is not sitting with the Tea Party core. On the contrary, it has just published a paper - under the provocative title "Gone to Texas" - arguing that immigration is good for the local economy. And it rebuffs the idea that immigrants are stealing jobs from native-born Americans. On the contrary, it insists, they tend to boost growth in a win-win way.

Now, if this conclusion had emerged in a state with few immigrants and plenty of unfilled jobs (think North Dakota), that might be unsurprising. But the picture that Fed researchers paint of Texas is eye-popping. Since 1990, the number of foreign-born people living there has jumped from 1.5 million to 4.3 million, they say, noting that "Texas [now] has more immigrants than Oklahoma and New Mexico have people", and that "among large states, none has experienced a surge like Texas has, with immigrants rising from 9 per cent of the population in 1990 to 16.4 per cent in 2012".

Some immigrants are highly skilled, lured by the fast-growing energy sector, for example. But most are not: two-thirds do not have a high-school diploma, two-thirds come from Mexico, and almost half - or 1.8 million people - are illegal, according to the Fed's number crunchers. If you want to find a poster child for the vision of Mexicans flooding illegally across the border to work in American fields and factories, Texas is perfect.

But that has not hurt native-born Americans, the Fed insists. "When immigrants flow into the labour force, it is not just a matter of adding more workers. As long as immigrants differ from natives - which they do to varying degrees - specialisation occurs," the report observes. Furthermore, "Less-educated US natives have a comparative advantage in communications-intensive jobs, and less-educated immigrants in manual-labour jobs." Or to put it another way, Mexican tomato pickers do not compete with American receptionists (not least because almost half of the immigrants in the study apparently have few or no English-language skills).

What immigration does do is lower the price of "immigrant-produced goods and services", which equates to an income gain of $3.4bn-$6.6bn a year, the study suggests. And while this needs to be offset against the rising strain on public infrastructure and services, this is not such a big issue in bare-bones Texas, which has "a skimpy safety net and lower levels of publicly provided services than other large states".

. . .

I daresay such conclusions will horrify many observers on both sides of the political divide. To Tea Party supporters, it seems hard to believe that illegal immigrants do not displace American jobs; to leftwing economists, it seems even more abhorrent to think that businesses could be booming on the back of unprotected cheap labour. In any case, as both left and rightwing economists might point out, Texas is something of an exceptional case: its economy has been unusually fast growing in recent years, partly because of the energy boom, which has created plenty of new jobs - for immigrants and non-immigrants alike.

When it comes to immigration, the state is also unusual in political terms in that the influx of newcomers has occurred under governors of both the Democrat (Ann Richards) and Republican persuasions (George W Bush and Rick Perry). As president, Bush was also a strong advocate for immigration reform.

If nothing else, the results of the study are intriguing, particularly given that immigration reform will almost certainly rear its head in Congress soon, as Obama tries to define his legacy. The only pity is that the Dallas Fed paper did not look at another curious and counter-intuitive recent development: namely, that in the past year it seems that the flow of those unskilled Mexicans north has slowed, if not stalled. And if that continues, it could twist the immigration debate yet again - not just in the Lone Star state but in Washington too.

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Foreign powers have a lot riding on the 75-year-old former Sorbonne law professor who runs Guinea.

For the west, Alpha Condé represents a west African bulwark against the jihadists of the Sahara and the perennial eruptions of Guinea's neighbours. For China, the president might prove a partner for a new infrastructure-for-resources deal of the sort that has spearheaded its thrust into Africa. For the multinational mining houses, Israeli tycoons and Russian oligarchs vying for Guinea's mineral wealth, he is regarded as everything from a dedicated reformer to an asset-grabber.

It is a heavy burden for a life-long opposition activist who until he narrowly won elections in 2010 - regarded by many as both shambolic and Guinea's freest since independence from France in 1958 - had never held public office.

In exile in France, he was sentenced to death in absentia by Ahmed Sékou Touré's repressive regime. Once home, after twice failing to dislodge Lansana Conté at elections the long-ruling strongman was accused of stealing, he was thrown in jail. After two years of brutal rule by the military junta that took power on Conté's death before giving way to civilians, Mr Condé took the helm of a country that was listing badly.

"It's not easy," Mr Condé told the Financial Times in an interview during a visit to Paris last week that included a meeting with a fellow francophone socialist, President François Hollande. "With 50 years of misrule, of corruption, bad habits have set in. But I think there is now truly the will to change things."

Critics have suggested the old ways are creeping back. They point to what they say are sweetheart mining deals struck by Guinea's new rulers, although most experts agree that nothing has emerged on the scale of the corruption that went before.

"Habits built up over 50 years are not changed in two or three days. But time is also against us," says the president, whose energy, his aides say, belies his years. "People are impatient. They want to see something concrete."

A pariah state for half a century, Guinea endures some of the world's grimmest living standards. Of every 100 children born, 13 die before the age of five, twice as many as in Myanmar. Yet in terms of heavyweight foreign interlopers per head, the nation of 11m people ranks highly.

Mr Condé counts among his advisers Tony Blair, the former UK prime minister, whose governance initiative is tasked with improving Guinea's threadbare bureaucracy, and George Soros, the hedge fund billionaire. Mr Soros has been instrumental in making Guinea what Mr Condé acknowledges is a "laboratory" for a global campaign, led by the US and EU, to open up the oil and mining industries to greater scrutiny.

Under Mr Condé, the government has published mining contracts, overhauled the mining code and is nearing the completion of a review of deals signed under past dictatorships.

The contract review has made the president enemies, notably Beny Steinmetz, the Israeli diamond tycoon. BSG Resources, the mining arm of the Steinmetz family conglomerate, has responded to allegations that it paid bribes to officials in previous regimes to win rights to a $5bn iron ore deposit by claiming that Mr Condé's "illegitimate government" is seeking to expropriate its assets.

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&gt;Mr Condé steers clear of discussing his clash with Mr Steinmetz. Instead, he declares a target to bring in $30bn-$40bn in mining investment over the next five years - about five times Guinea's annual gross domestic product.

It looks an ambitious goal, given that many in the industry believe that big miners such as Brazil's Vale and Anglo-Australian Rio Tinto are more inclined to plant flags in choice deposits than to bring them into swift production.

Yet Guinea is already Africa's biggest producer of bauxite, the ore used to make aluminium, despite an often fraught relationship with Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska's UC Rusal, one of the sector's biggest investors. Abu Dhabi and Dubai this week agreed to invest $5bn in Guinean bauxite mining and refining.

While Mr Condé is keen to welcome investors from overseas - including Chinese state-owned groups, seen as the most likely to find the billions required for rail and port infrastructure to tap Guinea's iron ore - he bristles at what he sees as foreign meddling in domestic politics.

Donors' fiscal conditions imposed as part of a debt-relief deal frustrated his plans to invest in Guinea's crumbling infrastructure, the president says.

Asked about the "breaches and irregularities" reported by foreign observers including the EU, UN and west African bloc in September's legislative elections, Mr Condé says: "There was a great deal of interference by the European Union. Elections should be a symbol of a country's sovereignty." He adds that the results, which were approved this month by Guinea's supreme court and left his party short of an absolute majority, give the opposition a larger presence in the national assembly than in other recent African polls.

Faultlines remain. Violent clashes during the election campaign were a sign that Guinean politics still runs on ethnic lines. Responding to reports that mercenaries, no strangers to west Africa, have been conducting covert recruitment missions for an anti-government mission to Guinea, Mr Condé says: "With the reform of the army that we are in the middle of doing, all the attempts at destabilisation - which are real - don't worry me because we can cope with them."

The difficulty of bringing to heel an army that slaughtered 156 opposition demonstrators in the national stadium in 2009 was underscored in July when Mr Condé survived an assassination attempt seemingly linked to the military.

The president believes he faces "a coalition of interests against us who do not want to see reforms", especially in mining. But he pledges to press on. "That exposes me to a great deal of risk, politically and personally," he says. "But in life you have to take risks."

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When Irish gangster Paul Meehan was jailed three years ago for smuggling cigarettes and conspiracy to acquire drugs and guns, his conviction was hailed as a huge success for police in the UK and Northern Ireland.

Called 'Wobbly Boots' for his dependence on crutches ever since he crashed a stolen car, Meehan, 39, had previous convictions in the Republic of Ireland for crimes including violent disorder and "assault causing serious harm".

Also nicknamed Dr Coke by one Irish tabloid for fuelling the cocaine boom during the heady Celtic Tiger years, he played a key role in the organised gangs that have wreaked havoc in Dublin in recent years.

Meehan's international criminal organisation extended all the way to southern China, a Financial Times investigation has established. Although the detail was never revealed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, one of the force's most celebrated gun and drug seizures of recent years began as an investigation into Chinese counterfeit factories.

The FT has also learned that a Hong Kong private investigator who assisted in the hunt for Meehan remains in a Chinese prison, after initial efforts by the PSNI to secure his release failed.

The plight of Danny Tsang Chi-fai, 53, highlights the dangerous work done in China by private investigators, many of them with UK links. Mr Tsang, a 20-year veteran of the Royal Hong Kong Police force, entered the investigations industry shortly after the former UK colony reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

In July 2013, Peter Humphrey, a private investigator and UK citizen, was detained by police in Shanghai. On the eve of a long-delayed visit to China by David Cameron, UK prime minister, Mr Humphrey and his wife, a naturalised US citizen, remain in custody without charge.

According to documents seen by the Financial Times, the 2008 PSNI investigation was code-named "Eclat" and cracked a criminal enterprise that dealt in counterfeit cigarettes, weapons and narcotics. The PSNI were helped by Mr Tsang, who is now serving a 10-year prison sentence in southern China after an apparent mix-up with local police.

The China connection highlights the global reach of cigarette-smuggling rackets. Customs officials say one in seven cigarettes smoked in Ireland - and one in 10 in the UK - are illicit, costing the two countries EUR2.5bn in lost taxes in 2011. The EU estimates that the illegal tobacco trade costs the bloc EUR10bn a year.

The counterfeit cigarettes Meehan imported came from Fujian province in southern China. As Operation Eclat unfolded, Mr Tsang was working for a small Hong Kong investigation firm that took on contract assignments from large multinational companies such as Japan Tobacco International.

When Meehan visited southern China in 2007, JTI executives informed the PSNI which then set up Operation Eclat. "My father did many private investigations in China and Thailand," Mr Tsang's son Pakko told the FT. "He often worked undercover, approaching the bad guys as a buyer so he could find out where their counterfeit factories were. Sometimes he would take a bag with a hidden camera."

For Operation Eclat, Mr Tsang posed as the head of a Chinese counterfeit cigarette factory while an undercover UK officer acted as middleman. The PSNI was thus able to fool Meehan, who thought he was dealing with a real counterfeit cigarette ring.

In the summer of 2008, Meehan and his associates were caught in a trilateral sting by UK, Irish and Dutch authorities that led to the seizure of more than 250 handguns, 2,000 rounds of ammunition, three hand grenades, 14kg of heroin and 5kg of cannabis.

At the time of his arrest, Meehan was carrying more than EUR146,000 in cash, with which he had intended to purchase counterfeit cigarettes. He later pleaded guilty to ten counts including conspiracy to possess weapons and drugs and evade duty on imported cigarettes. When the Crown Court in Northern Ireland handed Meehan a 21-year prison sentence in June 2010, Mr Justice Stephens found that he had "played a significant and integral role in dealing at the highest scale of organised criminals".

Back in China, however, Operation Eclat had gone badly wrong for Mr Tsang. Chinese police had seized a shipment of counterfeit cigarettes bound for Northern Ireland as part of Operation Eclat and arrested Mr Tsang. "For a long time we didn't know why my father had been arrested. He just disappeared," said Pakko.

The PSNI initially tried to help Mr Tsang, according to emails seen by the FT. Between January and July 2009, PSNI officers repeatedly told JTI executives that they had lobbied on his behalf. "[M]eetings have been arranged in London next Thurs[day] at the Chinese Embassy and at the UK Home office," one officer wrote. "We will again make the case for Danny and confirm to the Chinese that they can travel to the UK to interview Meehan. We hope that this will persuade the Chinese to again reconsider Danny's detention."

It is not clear what efforts, if any, PSNI made on Mr Tsang's behalf after that. "Criminal proceedings as a result of Operation Eclat have concluded in Northern Ireland," the PSNI told the FT earlier this week. "The Police Service of Northern Ireland does not comment on named individuals."

The Home Office declined to comment, saying that questions should be directed to the PSNI. The Chinese embassy in London did not respond to a request for comment.

In a statement to the FT, JTI confirmed that Mr Tsang was identified as someone who could help the PSNI on Operation Eclat.

"PSNI undertook to inform the Chinese authorities [about Operation Eclat] . . . and to secure Chinese approval," JTI added. "We simply do not know what, if anything, transpired between the authorities of Northern Ireland and China that would have led to [Mr Tsang's] arrest."

In December 2010, six months after Meehan's conviction in Belfast, the Zhangzhou Intermediate People's Court in Fujian sentenced Mr Tsang to ten years in prison for offences related to counterfeit cigarettes. The Chinese court rejected his defence that he had been involved in a PSNI operation.

"Hong Kong and China are different," Pakko said. "As a Hong Kong police officer, I have to prove what you did and you don't have to say anything. China is not like that. In China, my father has to prove that he is innocent."

Additional reporting by Jamie Smyth in Dublin

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The Bank of England is to stop providing cheap finance for home loans amid growing concerns about the pace of house price growth. Experts said that mortgage rates were likely to rise in the medium term, while savers should benefit from higher deposit rates.

The BoE's Financial Policy Committee also warned that it could require banks to test borrowers' ability to withstand larger interest rate rises than they currently do, as it unveiled an arsenal of possible tools to calm the housing market.

"Activity in the housing market is picking up and house price inflation appears to be gaining momentum. As a result there is no longer a need for the FLS to provide further broad support to household lending," the Bank said.

House prices rose 6.5 per cent in the year to November, according to the Nationwide house price index - the highest rate of growth since July 2010. Mortgage approvals are up 34 per cent to their highest level since March 2008.

One senior policy maker said: "The BoE no longer wants to put its name to devices that stimulate the mortgage market."

Funding for Lending was launched in July 2012 and has been widely credited with bringing down rates and increasing lending volumes. It was originally destined to run until January 2015, but the provision of government finance for mortgage lending will now cease a year earlier.

Cheap funding through FLS has had a marked impact on rates. According to Bank of England data, the interest rate on two-year fixed-rate mortgages for those with a 10 per cent deposit has fallen from 5.6 per cent to 4.4 per cent over the past 12 months.

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&gt; "Before FLS if you had a 10 per cent deposit there weren't a huge amount of options. Now it's quite common to get a 10 per cent deposit mortgage below 4 per cent," said Aaron Strutt, a mortgage broker at Trinity Financial Group.

Thirty high street lenders now offer mortgages with rates below 2 per cent. Barclays will lend from £500,000 to £2m at only 1.79 per cent.

FLS will continue to support lending to small businesses, where growth has been much slower.

Mortgage brokers said the early end of the scheme would increase the cost of funds for lenders which would eventually ***feed*** through into interest rates

"We might not see a complete reversal, but I think as the months go by, we may see a gentle drift upwards for interest rates," David Hollingworth, a broker at London & Country, said.

Aside from government funds, the other main sources of finance for mortgage lending are wholesale markets and retail deposits. Rates in the savings market are expected to inch upwards as banks are forced to compete more aggressively for savers' money.

"Banks will now be looking for extra funds, and therefore savings rates should increase particularly in the long term fixed rate market," said Charlotte Nelson at Moneyfacts.

The BoE also emphasised the range of tools at its disposal to combat future risk in the housing market, which include making recommendations on bank capital requirements for residential real estate lending, recommendations on maximum loan to value ratios and recommendations to the Treasury regarding Help to Buy.

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Economic crises are difficult to manage. But recoveries aren't a breeze, either. Increasingly, investors are having to negotiate rising stock prices and valuations - which are running well ahead of the improvement in fundamentals. Germany's Dax, for example, hit an all-time high this week, led by industrial and bank stocks. In the US, the S&P is trading at 25 times its 10-year average earnings, a level which presents investors with few easy wins and requires them to remain very alert. In the UK, the government and Bank of England, sensing a potential housing bubble, withdrew a stimulus measure that had been pumping up mortgage lending and personal loans. Housebuilders' shares fell on the news.

Yet, for all this, the crisis hangover lingers. Nowhere more so than at Italian bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena, which has drafted in a veritable Who's Who of banking advisers to get away its EUR3bn rights issue. Royal Bank of Scotland, rescued by British taxpayer money and now 82 per cent government-owned, also remains under assault over its small business lending practices - a controversy that has done little for its investors, who have seen a flat share price performance this year. And on the industrial front, French carmaker Peugeot, battered by the recent plunge in European car sales, is still trying to find a long-term partner - and perhaps some extra cash - to help drive more internationalisation. It has brought in ex-Renault executive Carlos Tavares as its next chief executive.

Still, there is light at the end of some tunnels. Cinda, founded in the 1990s to take on bad debt in China's banking sector, is heading to the stock market.

Dealmaking remains fairly subdued. But Germany's Bayer continued the trend for large pharma companies to effectively buy in new drugs. It made a $2.4bn offer for Norway's Algeta, which has developed prostate cancer treatment Xofigo. That looks to be on the cheap side, though. Meanwhile, in the US, cable consolidation continues, with Charter Communications circling larger rival Time Warner Cable. But if the smaller company buys the larger, one danger could be another big debt pile. And if that leads to scrimping on services, it could be a customer turn-off.

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The Bank of England's regulatory arm backed away from tough capital demands for bank-specific risks as it set out the detailed implementation of new EU rules.

The Prudential Regulation Authority on Friday said lenders' so-called Pillar 2A capital requirements will not have to be met entirely with the highest quality capital. Regulators tailor secret Pillar 2A requirements to cover each bank's individual risks.

The move comes after banks urged the PRA not to pile on excessively onerous capital demands as it brings in EU-wide rules aimed at improving the resilience of the banking sector by implementing the new global Basel III standards.

Some analysts had estimated that the PRA's original capital proposal, set out in a consultation paper in August, could have forced UK lenders to hold an extra £100bn of equity capital as they push towards ratios of as much as 13 per cent compared with an existing norm of 10 per cent. The Pillar 2A requirement would have been a big part of that additional equity.

But the PRA has now changed tack, saying in a new paper that it would impose the same mix of capital as for banks' Pillar 1 requirements.

However the regulator insisted banks would still have to hold some top quality capital against risks associated with their pension liabilities - another bone of contention in its dialogue with the industry.

The PRA also said on Friday it would phase out the double-counting of capital held between subsidiaries in a banking group by 2019.

"These decisions will enhance the stability of the financial sector and strengthen the capital regime in the UK," the PRA said.

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Low inflation and high unemployment continue to weigh on the eurozone economy, although data published on Friday showed a slight improvement in conditions across the currency bloc.

Inflation in the eurozone hit 0.9 per cent in the year to this month, up from October's low of 0.7 per cent but still well below the European Central Bank's target of just under 2 per cent, according to a flash estimate from Eurostat, the European Commission's statistics agency. The figure was slightly higher than most analysts expected.

Core inflation, which does not include more volatile items such as food and energy prices, rose from 0.8 per cent to 1 per cent.

Unemployment in October was 12.1 per cent, down from 12.2 per cent in September, with the number of people without jobs falling by 61,000 to 19.3m. It is the first time since the beginning of 2011 that unemployment has fallen.

László Andor, European Commissioner for employment, social affairs and inclusion, said the fall was encouraging, but the jobless rate remained unacceptably high.

Marie Diron, senior economic adviser to the EY Eurozone Forecast, said it was too early to call a turning point. "The October fall is concentrated on only very few countries, mainly France," Ms Diron said. "The French government has put in place a scheme to create jobs for the young but, beside this scheme, there is no evidence yet that the private sector is creating more jobs."

In Germany, the bloc's biggest economy, unemployment was 5.2 per cent, compared with 27.3 per cent in Greece and 26.7 per cent in Spain.

The publication of the inflation and unemployment figures follow the release of worse than expected consumer spending figures for France. Spending in the bloc's second-largest economy fell by 0.2 per cent in October, against expectations of a slight rise.

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&gt;"The outlook for private consumption continues to be challenging," said Diego Iscaro, principal economist at IHS. "The labour market situation remains tough, while low consumer confidence and tighter fiscal policy will also put downward pressure on spending."

The ECB's rate-setting governing council will unveil its latest projections for growth and inflation in the currency bloc next Thursday.

The governing council is not expected to announce any further monetary easing to follow a cut to its benchmark interest rate earlier this month, despite expectations that its forecasts for inflation will be well below target for 2014.

James Ashley, economist at RBC Capital Markets, said: "These latest outturns are also unlikely to prompt any significant change in rhetoric from the ECB, with inflation readings of around 1 per cent seemingly baked-in to the governing council's expectations."

Mr Ashley added: "We expect the press conference to show the council still talking about balanced risks to price stability, still reiterating its forward guidance and still maintaining its downwards bias and thus emphasising that it still has many weapons in its arsenal."

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Bangkok has been gripped this week by the biggest anti-government protests since 2010 demonstrations that paralysed parts of the city for two months and ended in the deaths of scores of people. Both pro- and anti-government faction leaders are promising shows of strength this weekend.

What are the protesters trying to achieve and how are they going about it?

They want to oust the government and - according to their leader, Suthep Thaugsuban - replace it with an unelected "people's assembly". They held mass rallies in Bangkok of up to 150,000 people on Sunday and have spent every day since occupying or blockading official buildings, bedding down in the ministry of finance and - on Friday - taking a brief stroll on the lawn of army headquarters.

Their rallying cry is for the end of the "Shinawatra regime" - a reference to Yingluck Shinawatra, the prime minister, and her older brother and predecessor, Thaksin, who still wields huge political influence despite living outside Thailand since he was convicted on corruption-linked charges in 2008. Mr Thaksin's opponents say he and his colleagues have bought their way to four successive election victories since 2001, governing corruptly and incompetently. (Mr Thaksin's supporters say the opposition - and in particular the wealthy cosmopolitan elite within it - just can't accept losing power to a new money plutocrat, who won by pouring funds into healthcare, ***agricultural*** subsidies and other schemes in Thailand's poor rural heartlands).

So Mr Suthep is an anti-establishment warrior against graft and abuse of office?

Not exactly. Until he resigned from parliament a few weeks ago, he was pretty much the ultimate insider's insider, brokering power in parliament and the opposition Democrats for almost 35 years. He is also no stranger to the kind of charges he levels at his opponents. He resigned from government in 1995 amid allegations - which he denied - that he had used land reforms aimed at the poor to benefit the wealthy instead. He is also facing a murder charge over the killing of some of the 90 people, many of them Thaksin supporters, who died in 2010 when the army opened fire on demonstrators in Bangkok. The boot was on the other foot then: Mr Suthep was the deputy prime minister facing down the anti-government mob whose demands he rejected.

Protesters occupying ministries and other official buildings would not be tolerated in many countries. Why are the Thai government and security forces not stopping it?

Partly because the Yingluck government wants to avoid 2010-style bloodshed - or worse (although it's worth noting that Mr Thaksin's administration oversaw the killings of an estimated 2,500 or more people in 2003, in a brutal crackdown supposedly aimed at the drugs trade). Perhaps more important are political calculations that make it in the administration's interest to play this softly. First, Ms Yingluck has no desire to worsen instability that will damage the country's already weakening economy as the tourism high season begins. Second, she needs to cool a situation sparked by her ill-conceived and abortive efforts to push through an amnesty that critics - including some of her own supporters - said would have given Mr Thaksin a ticket home, at the expense of whitewashing him and other politicians accused of serious crimes. Third, Bangkok is in many respects natural opposition territory: people, including civil servants who have welcomed demonstrators into their departments, tend to be wealthier and better educated than the more than 50m Thais outside the metropolis. Finally, Ms Yingluck needs to be careful in her handling of the security forces - in particular the military, who deposed her brother in 2006 and owe their ultimate loyalty not to the government or parliament, but to the ageing King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

So how will this all end?

If Ms Yingluck sticks by her refusal to hold an election, Thailand's recent history suggests three potential outcomes. One is that the demonstrations fizzle out, restoring some of the premier's damaged authority and underlining the opposition's inability to mobilise a majority of Thais. A second possibility is that an agency outside politics intervenes to depose the prime minister (as the courts did in 2008, as well as the army two years previously). The final, disturbing, prospect is of violence on the streets of Bangkok again, either between pro- and anti-government supporters, or security forces and demonstrators. Whichever it is, it is unlikely to end the existential struggle between the old and new political establishment, in a country where the exercise of parliamentary democracy is complicated by powerful competing influences - not least monarchy, military and money.

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As David Cameron, UK prime minister, heads off to Beijing with a trade delegation, another UK citizen is helping to promote commercial ties between the two countries in a rather less visible way.

Sir Tom Hunter, known for being Scotland's first billionaire, is funding two students from the UK on a full-time MBA programme at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business. Rory Bate-Williams and Jeremy Solomons started at the school in Beijing four months ago funded with annual bursaries worth £50,000 each, to cover the cost of doing the MBAs.

"It's been an absolutely extraordinary experience," says Mr Bate-Williams who says he has been enjoying the school's emphasis on networking. He says CKGSB alumni visit the school twice a week and there are many opportunities for meeting people outside scheduled hours.

"We find ourselves sitting on the same table as Chinese politicians and CEOs," says Mr Bate-Williams, adding: "The access we've been given here is amazing."

Now the school has launched its quest for the next two Hunter scholars, who will join CKGSB's 2014 intake on its full time MBA. Although both this year's Hunter scholars are from UK, this year the school is keen to hear from applicants from anywhere in Europe.

The opportunities being enjoyed by Mr Bate-Williams are exactly what Sir Tom intended. "It used to be go west young man, now it should be go east," he says.

Sir Tom says he was "just blown away" when he made his first visit to China last year. "I thought, my goodness, there's not a lot of knowledge in the UK about China." His decision to fund the scholarship programme comes from his conviction that there should be more people in the west who do understand how things work in China.

Oliver Shiell, chief representative for Europe at CKGSB echoes his views.

"There's a massive knowledge deficit in the west on China. But if you're going to be a future CEO you're going to have to have a core competence on China and east Asia or you're not going to make the cut."

This year's scholars form part of a cohort of 40 students on the 14-month, full time programme. Only four are westerners, there are also two Koreans and three Hong Kong Chinese. The school is aiming to recruit more international students, but Mr Bate-Williams feels he has benefited enormously from the networking opportunities offered by having so many Chinese people on the course.

He says he dreams of setting up a company in China and hopes to identify a potential Chinese partner by the end of his time in Beijing.

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The yen hit fresh five-year lows against its main rivals this week, with the best performance against the Japanese currency coming from the pound.

Japanese consumer price data on Friday continued to show the deflation-fighting policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe were reaping results, as the annual rate of inflation rose to 0.9 per cent in October, from 0.7 per cent in the previous month.

This helped slow losses for the yen on Friday, but over the week, the yen was down 1 per cent against the dollar at Y102.24 and fell 1.4 per cent to Y139.16 against the euro.

"In circumstances of aggressive monetary easing, which is coinciding with moderately higher inflation, we believe the decline in the real level of yields in Japan is a more important influence, and this points to the potential for further yen weakness," said Takahiro Sekido at Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi UFJ.

Sterling's main boost this week came on Wednesday after the second reading of third-quarter UK growth confirmed annual GDP of 1.5 per cent, driven mainly by domestic consumption. Exports, however, were weak, falling 2.4 per cent.

"The much sought-after 'rebalancing' of the UK economy, one that relies less on domestic consumption and more on net exports has yet to evolve," said Robert Lynch at HSBC. "Market participants and policy makers should be quick to recognise that sterling's strength is impeding exports."

The pound rose 1.7 per cent against the yen over the week to Y167.07. Against its larger trading partners, the pound's rise was less marked. The euro fell only 0.3 per cent over the five trading sessions to £0.8326, while the dollar lost 0.7 per cent to $1.6341.

Analysts also pointed out that the Bank of England's decision this week to end its Funding for Lending Scheme for the UK mortgage market helped lift the pound.

Hungary's central bank on Wednesday cut its benchmark rate by 20 basis points to 3.2 per cent and said the economic environment remained "supportive overall" for easing.

The Hungarian forint fell 1.1 per cent over the week against the euro to Ft301.50, and was down 0.6 per cent to Ft221.44 against the dollar.

"This is in reaction to the latest cut in interest rates, expectations of further cuts to come and concern that the cuts could be excessive," said Stephen Leach at Citigroup.

The euro climbed 0.4 per cent over the week against the dollar to $1.3611.

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India's economy grew slightly faster than expected in the latest quarter and appeared to be recovering from a low point earlier this year, but one of the country's two main business organisations said it was "worrisome" that gross domestic product had again expanded at less than 5 per cent.

GDP in Asia's third-biggest economy grew 4.8 per cent in the three months to September over the same quarter a year earlier, up from 4.4 per cent the previous quarter, according to the Central Statistics Office on Friday.

Indian growth has halved in the past two years amid a grim investment climate, and the Congress-led coalition government of Manmohan Singh, prime minister, is hoping for a recovery before a general election due to be held by May next year.

A good season of monsoon rains has boosted farm output, and the country is fast reducing its current account deficit after a sharp decline of the rupee. But persistent inflation of about 10 per cent and the threat of higher interest rates to tackle it have lowered expectations for growth. The International Monetary Fund forecasts annual growth of only 4.3 per cent in the fiscal year to March.

"The growth of GDP at sub-5 per cent level for the fourth consecutive quarter is worrisome," said Chandrajit Banerjee, director-general of the Confederation of Indian Industry. "The two drivers of growth this year - good monsoons and exports - are insufficient to pull the economy out of the present slowdown, as mining, ***manufacturing*** and service sector output remain subdued."

Naina Lal Kidwai, president of Ficci, another business group, called the latest numbers "encouraging" but expressed concern about high inflation and the high cost of credit for companies.

Miguel Chanco, Asia economist for Capital Economics, said Indian growth appeared to be "bottoming out", but he warned that India's road to recovery would be "slow and bumpy".

With the central bank hawkish and the government determined to control its budget deficit, neither monetary nor fiscal policy would provide much support for growth. "Investment activity is likely to stay subdued as the government's efforts so far have not had any visible success in reinvigorating appetite for new projects or in clearing project bottlenecks."

Narendra Modi, prime ministerial candidate for the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalist opposition, has made growth and development the centrepiece of his election campaign and mocked Congress leaders for failing to deliver prosperity to India's 1.3bn people.

P. Chidambaram, finance minister, said on Friday he expected the economy to grow 6 per cent in the next fiscal year, 7 per cent in 2015-16, and 8 per cent the year after that, but independent economists' GDP forecasts are about a percentage point lower in each case.

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The Dutch football club Ajax once ruled Europe. Graced by Johan Cruyff, the team won the European Cup three times in a row in the early 1970s. Victory over a below-par Barcelona this week aside, Ajax now struggles against football's equivalent of core Europe, while retaining the trappings - expectant fans, huge stadium, impressive wage bill - of the elite. Given its bedraggled look, the Dutch economy is a bit like that.

Friday's loss of its triple A rating from Standard & Poor's will be a jolt to Dutch amour propre. The Netherlands has an investor fan base that sees it as an integral part of the eurozone core. Its 10-year bond yield at about 2 per cent is half that of Italy or Spain. Yet perhaps it flatters to deceive. The Dutch economy is struggling to keep up with Germany; indeed, it has been the worst performer of the core eurozone countries for the past two years, a pattern that is likely to continue in 2014.

The problem - one that has flown mostly under the radar - is that the Netherlands is suffering the consequences of the bursting of a housing bubble. House prices have fallen 20 per cent from their peak. That is not nearly as bad as Ireland or Spain, where house prices fell 50 and 30 per cent respectively. But it has created a troublingly large burden of household debt - 110 per cent of gross domestic product, S&P estimates (the country's sovereign debt level of 71 per cent of GDP is well below the eurozone average).

A sharp bout of deleveraging by households, coinciding with tough government austerity measures, is the reason the Dutch economy is stalling. This is not going to end soon: Deutsche Bank estimates that Dutch GDP growth will be the slowest in the eurozone in 2014 at just 0.4 per cent.

The Netherlands has many strengths, including a bulging current account surplus and social and political commitment to reform and fiscal common sense. Still, it is ironic, and a little disturbing, that the creditworthiness of the core eurozone should be called into question just as that of the periphery is starting to recover.

Now that the Netherlands has been expelled from the triple A club, only three eurozone countries - Germany, Luxembourg and Finland - retain the top S&P credit rating. And on the day it cut the Dutch, S&P raised its outlook for Spain - where things are improving - and upgraded poor, benighted Cyprus. For the Dutch, perhaps, the eurozone crisis is just beginning.

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China scrambled fighter jets on Friday to respond to Japanese fighters and surveillance aircraft that entered the controversial Chinese "air defence identification zone", as tensions escalate even further over the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

State media on Friday evening said China's air force deployed Su-30 and J-11 fighters after detecting 7 batches of 10 Japanese planes that included F-15 fighters, E-767 Awacs (airborne early warning and control) aircraft and P-3 surveillance aircraft. Xinhua said the jets were also responding to US surveillance planes without making clear whether the American aircraft had also entered the zone.

The apparent growing number of military aircraft entering the contested area highlights the concerns voiced by experts who say the risk of conflict - either accidental or deliberate - is rising quickly.

"This is a dangerous game of chicken," Ian Storey, a security expert at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, before the Chinese revealed details of their latest fighter missions. "China is testing the limits of the US-Japanese relationship, and the message from the US and Japan has been loud and clear".

Earlier Japan said it would not hold talks with Beijing over the controversial new air defence zone as that would amount to accepting Chinese sovereignty over the contested Senkaku Islands, according to the Japanese defence minister.

"Under the Chinese air defence identification zone, the Senkaku Islands become Chinese territory, so Japan cannot accept it," Itsunori Onodera, Japan's defence minister, said on Friday. "Under this assumption, we cannot accept any negotiation request from Chinese side over how the ADIZ should be operated."

China last Saturday created an "air defence identification zone" (ADIZ), requiring foreign aircraft flying near the Senkaku, which are controlled by Japan but claimed by China, to file flight plans with Beijing and remain in radio contact with Chinese authorities while in the area.

Japan and the US reacted angrily to the move, which they saw as an attempt to change the status quo over the islands, which China calls the Diaoyu.

The Chinese military on Thursday flew fighter jets into the ADIZ, which partly overlaps with Japan's air defence identification zone, on Thursday, as tensions escalate in the region.

Earlier this week, the US flew B-52 bombers near the islands without telling China. Japan and South Korea have also continued surveillance missions in the area.

China on Friday hit back at Japanese criticism, saying Tokyo's actions were "entirely unreasonable and have ulterior motives".

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said Japan was "merely allowing itself to set fires while forbidding others to even light a lamp". He repeated China's mantra that the ADIZ was "not directed against any specific country or target" and added that over the past week, "flights over the East China Sea were not affected at all".

Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines have acknowledged complying with the new Chinese rules, but Japanese and South Korean carriers are refusing to file flight plans, unless their final destination is China.

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&gt;China's move to create an ADIZ comes decades after the US, Japan, South Korea, Russia and others created similar zones. Many non-Chinese experts say the creation of an ADIZ in itself is not a problem, but they say China has stoked tensions by creating a zone that marks another bid to weaken Japan's control of the Senkaku.

In another sign that the Chinese move could cause tensions to ripple further, South Korea on Friday said it was considering expanding its air defence zone to include Socotra Rock. a submerged rock in the East China Sea that is claimed by both South Korea and China.

The rock, known as Loedo in South Korea and Suyan in China, has long been claimed by both nations, which have failed to reach agreement on their maritime boundary despite years of sporadic negotiations. The rockfalls within the air defence zone announced by China last Saturday, but not within the corresponding zone currently claimed by South Korea, which has installed a research base on it. During a meeting in Seoul on Thursday, Chinese officials rejected a request by South Korea's vice-minister for defence to redraw their air defence zone.

Sino-Japanese tensions have mounted over the past year, after the Japanese government bought three of the islands from their private Japanese owners. The move sparked widespread anti-Japanese demonstrations in China and damaged trade relations as Chinese consumers boycotted Japanese cars and other products.

Barry Desker, dean of the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said the Chinese move amounted to an "own goal".

"While East Asian states are increasingly linked economically to China, they will be attracted to the United States politically and will strengthen bilateral ties with the US to balance China's growing influence in the region," said Mr Desker. "Even those sceptical of the US role in the region will acknowledge that regional support for the US policy of rebalancing will now increase."

Additional reporting by Tom Mitchell

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Houston, we have lift-off. After spluttering on the launch-pad, the UK economy has finally taken off and now appears to be approaching what economists have dubbed "escape velocity".

Output expanded 0.8 per cent in the third quarter and the Bank of England has been revising higher its growth forecasts. Gross domestic product is still almost 3 per cent below its pre-crisis peak, but some think the gap can be closed next year.

Indeed, an apparently temperate combination of rising output and still subdued borrowing costs makes for an unusually pleasant backdrop for George Osborne, UK chancellor, when he presents his "Autumn Statement" to parliament next week. After years of gloomy speeches and spreadsheets drenched in red ink, Mr Osborne could be forgiven for whistling Rocket Man when he steps up to the dispatch box on Thursday.

The markets reflect this growing confidence in Britain's recovery. The rising optimism has buoyed sterling - which rose this week against the dollar, euro and yen - and the stock market. But it has weighed heavily on UK government bonds.

After plumbing historic lows over the past two years, the 10-year gilt yield, which moves inversely to prices, has climbed steadily since early summer to near 3 per cent. The spread between gilts and German government bonds is now the highest since 2005.

Indeed, gilt investors have lost 2.8 per cent this year, compared to 2.3 per cent for US Treasuries, and a 3 per cent gain for holders of eurozone government bonds. There are fears of a repeat for gilts in 2014.

"The outlook is not particularly positive," says Alan Bridges, UK investment director at Scottish Widows Investment Partnership. "Growth is the highest in G7, and real yields are too low Gilts look expensive."

Indeed, given the rising feeling that the Bank of England could be the first major central bank to be forced to raise interest rates, some are even asking if 2014 could be the year of a great gilt rout.

The answer to that is probably not. While the gilt market will not be a great money-spinner next year, it is unlikely to be trounced. For all the optimism surrounding the economy, few asset managers and analysts expect growth to accelerate so fast that inflation becomes a real worry and leads to a sharp rise in interest rates.

"The consensus seems remarkably rosy at the moment, and that makes me suspicious," says Michael Hampden-Turner, a strategist at Citi. "It might only take one bad data point for people to get more sceptical again."

With household debt still high, the Bank of England will be reluctant to move aggressively. Alberto Gallo of RBS says such high levels of household debt may only be sustainable as long as long-term interest rates remain low.

True, the Bank has shown it is concerned about the risk of Britain's property boom and consumer debt getting out of hand. This week, in an effort to prevent the housing market overheating, it ended its support for mortgages and personal loans through the Funding for Lending Scheme. But it is unlikely to hike rates soon.

Mike Amey, head of sterling portfolios at Pimco, says the Bank will not lift interest rates until 2015 and possibly 2016.

"The economy is simply not strong enough to withstand higher rates yet," he argues. Extremely long-dated gilts may still prove vulnerable to shifting expectations, but anchored interest rates will help support most of the market.

Moreover, the UK's large institutional investor base is likely to help keep any increases in gilt yields relatively subdued.

Many pension funds and insurers remain keen to shift their portfolios more towards bonds, which better match their liabilities. Rising yields would actually make bonds more attractive to these investors, points out Robert Brown, chairman of Towers Watson's global investment committee, which advises investors.

"It's probably an inexorable trend," he says. "Real rates could of course go much higher, but there is a lot of structural demand in the UK that would put a lid on the move."

Gilt supply is also falling. John Wraith, a strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, estimates that the UK's net issuance will slip below £100bn over the next fiscal year, compared to the £110bn or so indicated by the March budget. That would be the lowest net borrowing since 2007.

Alan Wilde, head of fixed income and currencies at Baring Asset Management, expects the 10-year gilt yield to be closer to 3.5 per cent by the end of next year. But he, too, is far from convinced that the economy is approaching escape velocity quite yet. "The numbers are better, but not racy enough to really damage the gilt market," he predicts.

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British retailers are stepping up promotions in a move that emulates Black Friday in the US, as they seek to fire up spending ahead of the crucial Christmas trading period.

Hundreds of customers queued outside Asda stores on Friday, ahead of deals being unleashed on toys and electricals at 8am, as well as outside John Lewis department stores. John Lewis, as well as matching competitors' prices, was for the first time offering its own savings on some electrical appliances and televisions.

"It's clear that Black Friday has stretched across the pond and is no longer just an American phenomenon," said Ed Connolly, buying director for electricals and home technology at John Lewis.

A plethora of promotions was evident online and across the high street, with some well-known names offering savings on clothing, homewares and beauty, as they try to capture Christmas spending in the crucial weekend after payday.

"Lots of people are trying to kick-start Christmas," said Christine Cross, the independent retail adviser. "I think we will probably see a seamless run [of promotions and sales] from now until the end of January."

Among the chains advertising savings, Debenhams was offering 10 per cent off beauty products and VAT savings on individual bottles of fragrances. Hobbs, the fashion chain, began its sale on Thursday, with savings of up to 50 per cent across the store.

Some retailers are concerned that by emulating the US with Black Friday deals, British store groups are importing a damaging and unnecessary promotional event, ahead of the crucial Christmas trading period.

Neil Saunders, managing director of Conlumino, the retail research group, said: "There is real logic in the US as to why Black Friday exists, coming the day after Thanksgiving. There is no logic in the UK, and it is a terrible time to be discounting."

But Andrew Moore, head of Asda's general merchandise business, defended the supermarket's decision to bring Black Friday across the Atlantic from its parent Walmart.

"They said a similar sort of thing about Halloween, that Halloween was not a UK phenomenon, but look at it now," he said.

"These are not products that we have had in store, that we are going to do [price] cross-offs on. These are new products that have been sourced specifically, and they represent our outstanding value for money," he added.

The high street promotions come after a poor October for fashion sales, according to senior retailers. However, the past few weeks have been better, they said, as the weather turned colder.

Nevertheless, Mr Saunders said Christmas trading had been sluggish so far, with consumers leaving it later to do their shopping. Conlumino found that only 53 per cent of people had finished their gift shopping, compared with 70 per cent this time a year ago.

Despite the proliferation of promotions, some retailers, such as Fat Face and New Look have been moving away from discounting.

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The potential of crowdfunding to unleash a nation of angel investors is being held back by the regulator's refusal to allow people to use these platforms to back start-ups created by friends and family, according to venture capitalist Jon Moulton.

Mr Moulton, founder and managing partner of Better Capital, which specialises in company turnrounds, says the Financial Conduct Authority was mistaken to limit the ability of "unsophisticated" investors to use crowdfunding services to invest in companies.

"Investors want to support UK companies at a time when high street banks aren't lending," he says.

"However the FCA rules propose stopping those that are not classed as 'sophisticated' or 'high net worth' investing more than 10 per cent of their net investible portfolio in unlisted shares, unless advised. This is wrong."

His views are echoed by crowdfunding website operators. Jeff Lynn, chief executive of Seedrs, says US law was a lot more accommodating to people who wish to put money into ventures started by friends and family.

"Most people who want to get a portfolio of investments pass the [FCA] sophisticated investor test," notes Mr Lynn.

"Where we have concerns is where there are people who probably shouldn't be investing in start-ups generally but are good friends with someone who is starting a business and wants to put £50 into it as an investment."

A poll of 1,000 active investors, not classed as sophisticated or high net worth, conducted by crowdfunding platform InvestingZone found that two-thirds wanted more control over their investments and a third were frustrated with broker and adviser fees.

Richard Brockbank, co-founder of InvestingZone, says he welcomes the FCA's regulation of crowdfunding because it standardises the rules and gives investors confidence to use it.

However, he claims that the benefits should not be limited to those classed as sophisticated investors or high net worth.

"At InvestingZone, we have gone to great efforts to make sure that the risks inherent in early stage investments are clearly presented on our platform and that only investors who understand those risks are admitted.

"With regards to limiting the amount that can be invested, we feel that this is patronising to investors who can demonstrate that they know what they're doing but just don't happen to be rich."

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&gt;Tom Ball, founder of NearDesk, a web business that enables people to rent desk space by the hour, was approached by an angel wanting to invest £50,000, who ended up investing through the company's £84,500 crowdfunding campaign on Seedrs.

"Having the crowd attracted the angel and gave him confidence," says Mr Ball. "Seeing a large amount go in gave the crowd confidence, so the two worked well together."

The lines between angel investing and crowdfunding are and should be getting increasingly blurred, adds Mr Ball.

"The Seedrs nominee structure means that smaller investors are amalgamated into one shareholder so the old paperwork and communication problems go away."

Another keen supporter of crowdfunding is Caspar Craven, co-founder of business analytics provider Trovus.

"We needed more working capital earlier this year [and] the offer from our bank frankly didn't make sense for us," he says.

"We turned to crowdfunding and raised all we needed within one hour. It was unbelievably quick and easy."

The growth generated by the investment round has meant that Trovus is now looking at further financing rounds using crowdfunding platforms, adds Mr Craven.

"I'm on a mission now to share with fellow entrepreneurs how crowdfunding is a game changer for the entrepreneur."

David Cross, an FCA spokesman, says the proposed rules would not prevent people from putting money into their family members' start-ups on a one-to-one basis, but would limit the potential risks to individuals of losing money.

"I understand Mr Moulton's criticisms, however, there is nothing in the example he cites stopping kin from investing in their family member's venture," Mr Cross explains, adding that the FCA's proposed rules related to the promotion of unlisted shares through a crowdfunding platform.

"We want to make sure that those who are investing in quite high risk equities have the ability to either have access to advice or are sophisticated investors and have a limit on how much they could potentially lose," he adds.

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Luxury brands have been flourishing for the past few years, fed by demand from affluent Chinese consumers even as the financial crisis and debt woes have ravaged markets in the US and Europe. However, a combination of the slowing of the Chinese economy and a government crackdown on gift-giving is forcing marques to rethink their strategies and face the threat of a drop in valuation premiums.

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Until about a year ago, a Chinese official might have been able to get away with wearing an expensive wristwatch in public.

But since China launched a crackdown on corruption and ostentation, a flashy watch - traditionally a popular gift given by those seeking to curry favour with Chinese businessmen and politicians - has become more of a liability than an asset.

No one knows this better than Yang Dacai, a safety official in Shaanxi province who first entered the public consciousness after he was photographed smiling at the scene of a nasty road accident last year.

Outraged by his apparent insensitivity, users of China's microblogging site Weibo posted pictures of Mr Yang wearing an array of luxury watches, earning him the moniker "Brother Watch" - and the attention of the Chinese authorities. In September, he was sentenced to 14 years in prison for corruption.

The clampdown has had a big effect on the Chinese watch market, which has powered the watch industry for the past three years. In 2012 Chinese imports of Swiss timepieces were worth SFr1.65bn, up from just SFr94.2m in 2002. However, in the first seven months of this year, they were down 12 per cent, and have since recovered only slightly.

"The clampdown has basically killed gifting in mainland China," says Jon Cox, an analyst at Kepler Cheuvreux. "I assume that this accounted for one-third of the watch market on the mainland."

However, while Mr Cox does not expect gifting to re-establish itself, he expects the Chinese market to grow more robustly in 2014 than it has this year.

"First of all, the comparisons with this year will be easier. And second, the number of millionaires and rich households in China is rising faster than anywhere else. So I think we will see demand pick up again," he says.

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Third-quarter retail results have been grim for many US and UK mass market retailers, such as Target and Walmart, and analysts are growing increasingly concerned about the Christmas season. Analysts in the UK downgraded expectations for Marks and Spencer this week, and Retail Metrics, a US research group, says earnings at the 120 retailers it follows are forecast by analysts to rise by just 2.2 per cent year on year for November, December and January, compared with a 11.8 per cent jump for the same period last year.

Their pessimism comes despite overall economic data that suggest the two economies are on the recovery trail. UK third-quarter growth was recently confirmed at 0.8 per cent, the highest rate since 2010, and business investment is rising. The US economy grew at an annualised rate of 2.8 per cent in the same period. The problem for retailers and other companies that sell to consumers is that ordinary people appear to be experiencing little if any of the prosperity. In the UK, Markit's index of household finances, which measures perceptions of wellbeing, recently hit its lowest level since April, and the Conference Board's index of US consumer confidence fell to a seven-month low this week.

So far the main response by the retailers has been to roll out high-profile discounts pegged to Black Friday, the big shopping day after US Thanksgiving, and to flood email in-boxes around the world with special offers aimed at tempting consumers to open their wallets. These are so prevalent that some analysts are now calling Thanksgiving "red Thursday" to reflect all the loss-leading promotions.

But there might be another way. Back in the 20th century, when Henry Ford's car company set the model, many ***manufacturers*** consciously sought to link their product prices and their employees' wages so that the latter became a natural market for the former.

"Fordism" fell apart when global competitors began offering similar products at lower prices - think of the Japanese car invasion. But now wages and prices have become so decoupled that many workers cannot afford the goods they build and sell. In a much discussed example, an Ohio Walmart holds an annual Thanksgiving food drive to help employees who are having personal financial issues.

While retailers are in the spotlight because of Christmas, the same story applies to the car industry. Sales are strongest in countries such as the US and UK, where leasing has taken hold and low interest rates make nicer cars relatively affordable. The UK has also seen a jump in sales because of the £14bn payment protection insurance scandal - many consumers are using their compensation money as the deposit on a new car. Once interest rates begin to rise, the monthly payment on a new car may again climb out of reach.

In today's cost-cutting environment, raising worker salaries is not something many companies do voluntarily. But such a step is not out of the question. Japan's largest brokerage, Nomura Securities, announced on Friday that it plans to increase pay for 4,000 staff members. Aimed at fighting deflation, the pay rises are targeted at younger employees who are more likely to go out and spend.

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Shaun Pulfrey, 51, launched his Tangle Teezer detangling hairbrush in late 2007, having been turned down for an investment by the panel on BBC2's Dragons' Den. Today, his company's turnover is £8.5m, with total sales of six million hairbrushes in more than 60 countries. The Tangle Teezer won the company the Queen's Award for Enterprise in Innovation in 2012.

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Shaun Pulfrey CV

Born: Grimsby, 1961?

Education: Matthew Humberstone comprehensive school, Cleethorpes

Career: Worked for a local hairdresser before training as colourist at Vidal Sassoon in 1982. He went on to work for them in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles and Boston before leaving to launch the Tangle Teezer

Lives: South London. He is single

Other interests: Supports breast cancer charities

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Did you think you would get to where you are?

It did not totally surprise me that I am running my own company. I had no aspirations to own a salon but once I had the idea for the product and began the research I was driven to make it a reality. Until then I had always wanted to be the best colourist possible.

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When you had made your first £1m did you want to slow down?

During our financial year ending in March 2011 we generated sales of £2.2m. The previous year it was £813,000. I was aware of the money but I always look at the number of products. We could not slow down. It is like a beast that you have got to ***feed***. You have got to keep up with it, especially as we had managed to get our tooling capacity up. All I wanted to do was to increase our distribution. In the next five years we want to achieve a turnover of £50m per annum.

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How did you fund your invention?

Largely by working as a hair colourist. In order to find £98,000 I basically did not go out, I did not buy any new clothes and I did not go on holiday for three years. When I needed more money it came from remortgaging my two-bedroom flat in Brixton, which gave me £25,000, six months' capital that was make or break. I worked four days in the salon and the rest of the time I was doing Tangle Teezer. The research and development seemed to go on forever.

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What is the secret of your success?

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&gt; It is to share my good fortune - empowering staff, encouraging them to develop as the company grows at such a rapid rate, to travel and see different countries and cultures. The reason I am selling well in Brazil is that the distributors there are so enthusiastic. They get as passionate about the product as I do. I am also driven, and constantly looking to develop and grow the brand.

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What did you ask for on Dragons' Den?

I pitched for £80,000 in return for 15 per cent of the company. I realised after a very short time that they were not interested. They just did not get it, though my product was visual and I could show viewers it worked. Peter Jones said it was a hair-brained idea! It was interesting because I already had a route to market, and the way I looked at the Dragons is that they were a pleasant distraction. They now regard Tangle Teezer as the idea that got away.

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What was the most challenging period of your career?

After doing almost everything on my own, it was finding people around me from 2008 onwards to come and take the business further. We now have 15 staff in the office. I had to trust them to do the job. We are quite a varied bunch, including a chief operating officer, a sales team, in-house marketing/media team, two accountants, a lawyer, and four logistics people.

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How much did it cost to take out patents worldwide?

We put about £20,000 into the patents and intellectual property when we had not even sold one single product. It was very risky. The patent and IP fees have to be constantly renewed. We spent £200,000 last year enforcing our intellectual property rights.

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What is your basic business philosophy?

To be honest it was to develop products to solve the problem of tangled hair. We put the technology into the hairbrush, the teeth design allows it to flex over tangles. It was a commitment to the customer.

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Have Facebook and Twitter been a strong boost to sales?

Massively. While we focused on advertising in the trade press, nearly all our sales have been through print and social media. That's how we have become global within five years. We had Victoria Beckham tweet about us, and Emma Watson and Cara Delevingne praised it in magazines and on podcasts.

For the first two years it was like a runaway train, trying to keep a grip on managing the supply to meet the ever-growing demand. It was the mothers of young daughters with tangled hair who kick-started our sales, then the product appealed to hair salons and teenage girls, and even men.

Interest from China came through a blog nearly three years ago. A famous Chinese model and make-up artist bought a Tangle Teezer in Boots and tweeted about it. Then distributors in Shanghai approached us.

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Do you want to carry on till you drop?

I want to carry on because I owe it to those around me, for them to enjoy the success as well. There are still lots more things for me to do. In about five years' time it will be in the interests of the business for me to sell it. Then I would like to ask all my close friends to join me in sailing around the world.

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Have you made any pension provision?

When you get to a certain level and the company starts turning over so much money, you do get advice from the banks. I took out a private pension when I was 48 because I simply did not have the spare cash to put aside before then. I pay in the maximum possible, and I would like to think that when the business is sold the proceeds will be part of my pension pot.

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What is your commitment to charity?

I support breast cancer charities both as a company and an individual, as my mother was diagnosed with cancer when I started the business. Mum has survived and now I can treat her to anything she wants. One of our Compact Stylers we made specially to support breast cancer care, with 20 per cent of the retail price going to charity.

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Do you allow yourself the odd indulgence?

I have bought myself some nice Bottega Veneta "man bags". I spent £2,200 on the last one. I have bought a lovely three-bedroom house with a garden, which I never thought I would have in London. My latest indulgence is an Audi R8 Spider with a V10 engine.

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How have you survived the recession?

The recession did not affect us, though it was just kicking in when I quit my job in London and launched the Tangle Teezer in October 2007. I was ready and everything was in place. It was then or never.

At the outset my limited company paid me £549 a month, which had to cover the mortgage and everything else. By the end of year two I was earning more than I had earned as a colourist. In a recession people spend their money cautiously. One American woman said the product looked like it cost 20 cents but it gave a $20 benefit. The Original hairbrushes retail at £10.20.

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France may be caught up in a fraught national argument over its underperforming economy but that has not stopped a passionate debate breaking out over a government-backed proposal to clamp down on prostitution.

In a country renowned for a near-obsession with sensuality - every other television advert seems to be a dreamy, sex-charged pitch for perfume - the plan to penalise people who pay for sex has evoked an ardent response, from politicians and feminist groups to celebrities and prostitutes themselves.

One prominent contribution came from a group of self-styled "343 bastards" - all men, several of them well known - who signed a petition organised by a magazine against the proposed law under the banner "Hands off my whore" (Touche pas à ma pute).

It was meant as an ironic reference to a 1970s pro-abortion campaign by "343 bitches". However, it backfired, provoking a furious response from, among others, France's Union of Sex Workers (Strass), which also opposes the new law.

A sheepish Nicolas Bedos, comedian and film director, apologised for signing the petition. But he said: "To want to abolish prostitution is like wanting to abolish rain."

The bill's supporters disagree.

The proposed legislation, which the National Assembly began debating on Friday, would scrap a 10-year-old law against soliciting and replace it with a provision outlawing payment for sex, punishable by a EUR1,500 fine. A similar step was taken by Sweden in 1999.

Also included are provisions to help women leave prostitution and a move to force internet providers to block access to foreign websites offering prostitution services.

President François Hollande's government is not sponsoring the bill. The president, already deeply unpopular as he struggles to get the economy moving, wants to avoid anything like the public furore that erupted when the government pushed through a law enshrining same-sex marriage.

Nonetheless, the government is backing the bill. "After the abolition of the slave trade, we must abolish the trade in prostitutes," declared Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, minister for women's rights.

The Paris brothels of the belle époque may still evoke a certain romantic image but the modern-day reality is more about foreign prostitutes controlled by criminal gangs plying their trade in streetside vans and city parks, such as the Bois de Boulogne.

Official estimates indicate that there are at least 20,000 prostitutes in France. "We think there are many more than that," says Morgane Merteuil, secretary-general of Strass.

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&gt;Some 85 per cent are said by the authorities to be from outside France, from Africa, eastern Europe and Asia. Police say 52 pimping networks were broken up last year, two-thirds of them foreign.

Unlike in some neighbouring countries such as Germany, where there are systems for licensing prostitution, there are already tough laws in France against pimping and running brothels, although prostitution itself is legal.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former head of the International Monetary Fund, is awaiting trial on pimping charges, which he denies, linked to his admitted participation in "libertine soirées" that allegedly involved prostitutes.

He has protested that he is the victim of a confusion of morals and the law. A similar argument is made by many opponents of the prostitution law. A group of celebrities, including the actress Catherine Deneuve and singer Charles Aznavour, have signed a protest petition that declares: "We reject the criminalisation of those who prostitute themselves and those who seek their services."

Ms Merteuil says: "If someone wants to work in the street she should be able to. If girls want to share a flat or a place to work, that should be allowed as well."

But supporters of the bill insist the overwhelming number of people working as prostitutes are doing so under duress, at risk of violence and disease.

Maud Olivier, one of the members of parliament who drew up the legislation, says there is a need to shift the criminal emphasis on to the client to ensure that "the prostitute is no longer treated as a delinquent but a victim who needs help".

The bill, which has split opinion across party lines, does not seem to have won popular backing: a recent TNS Sofres poll showed just 22 per cent public support for targeting the client.

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The EU issued a stern rebuke over Russian interference on Friday after Ukraine failed to sign a hoped-for deal to integrate more closely with western Europe, throwing the ex-Soviet republic's future direction into question.

EU leaders meeting in Lithuania had urged Ukraine's president Viktor Yanukovich to put the planned agreement back on track, a week after his government froze preparations for signing the deal and reopened talks on closer ties with Russia.

Ukraine's move followed months of trade, energy and security pressures from Russia against it and other former Soviet states pursuing integration deals under the EU's so-called Eastern Partnership programme. Moscow also banned dairy goods from Lithuania, the summit host and one of only three ex-Soviet EU members.

"Actions taken by Russia [towards] Eastern Partnership countries are incompatible with how international relations should function on our continent in the 21st century," said Herman van Rompuy, European Council president. He added Russia's actions breached international treaties giving sovereign countries the right to "freely define relations" with other states.

José Manuel Barroso, European Commission president, said the "times of limited sovereignty in Europe are over".

The EU's unusually blunt words came as thousands of Ukrainians demonstrated in Kiev over their president's failure to sign the European deal, with more expected to gather through the day. The issue has sparked the biggest rift in EU-Russian relations since the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, which followed efforts to put Ukraine and Georgia on the path to Nato membership.

The EU managed to salvage some success for the Eastern Partnership as both Moldova and Georgia shrugged off Russian pressure and initialled integration agreements, in what German chancellor Angela Merkel called a "very brave step". The two countries are expected to reach the final stage and sign deals next year.

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&gt;Armenia had been due to initial a deal, too, but U-turned in September, saying it would instead join a Russian-led customs union that Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, is also trying to entice Ukraine to join.

Mr Yanukovich said Ukraine could not proceed with an EU deal as his country needed "decisive steps" from Brussels to deliver a "programme of financial-economic aid" to help Kiev deal with a severe cash crunch and offset Russian trade retaliation.

EU leaders failed even to sign a mooted joint declaration with Mr Yanukovich committing the two sides to work towards signing the deal at a summit in Kiev in March, which officials had discussed on Thursday.

Video footage from inside the summit showed an awkward-looking Mr Yanukovich being greeted by Ms Merkel with the words, "Nice to see you here. But we expected more."

Mr Yanukovich replies: "The economic situation in our country is very complicated . . . we had very big threats.

"I've been alone for three and a half years . . . in very unequal conditions, with a very strong Russia," he adds.

But Dalia Grybauskaite, Lithuanian president, accused her Ukrainian counterpart of using Russian pressure as an "excuse".

"The whole experience of Lithuania shows that if you have the political will to resist and not to give in, pressures are not working," she said. "Here probably we see external pressure being used as an excuse for stopping the integration process with the EU by the leadership of Ukraine themselves."

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Thames Water has given up on its attempt to impose a one-off inflation-busting increase in customer bills from April.

But Britain's biggest water and sewage service provider will still raise its prices by the maximum allowed under the regulator's five-year pricing formula - in spite of pledges from other water companies to soften price rises next year.

As a result, next April, Thames Water bills will rise by 1.4 percentage points more than the rise in the retail prices index measured in November - taking the average bill from £354 to £360 plus inflation.

On Friday, chief executive Martin Baggs defended Thames Water's position on pricing, saying: "We are very much aware of the current focus on our customers' cost of living . . . this [average bill] is the second lowest in the industry at about £50 below the average."

Stuart Siddall, chief financial officer, added that Thames Water was still considering whether to pursue its right to eventually claw back its proposed surcharge, which was rejected for a second time by industry regulator Ofwat earlier this month.

However, he confirmed that it was now too late to impose the proposed 8 per cent additional surcharge on bills by April. He added that any cost overruns would have to be recouped in the next five-year regulatory period from 2015 - if the regulator allowed it.

Thames had argued that a combination of customers' bad debts, extra responsibility for private sewer maintenance and preparations for a £4.1bn London "super-sewer project" had justified its plan for an 8 per cent price rise.

Its tough stance on attempting to claw back costs came as Ofwat and Owen Paterson, the environment secretary, were calling for companies to moderate their price increases over the remainder of the decade.

All companies in England and Wales are scheduled to submit five-year pricing and investment proposals to Ofwat on Monday that run from 2015.

This week, South West Water announced a two-year price freeze, while United Utilities said its April increase would not exceed inflation. Severn Trent is already committed to below-inflation increases next year. Wessex Water has also committed to reducing prices in real terms over the next six years.

In April, Thames raised average prices by 5.5 per cent, increasing a typical household bill by £18 to £354 a year. That led to a rise in turnover from £903m to £977m in the six months to September.

Operating profit advanced from £311m to £349m but a £16m increase in net financing costs, to £211m, moderated the rise in Thames Water's pre-tax profits, which climbed from £113m to £134m.

The company attributed the rise in finance costs to the increase in its net debt from £8.4bn to £8.7bn over the period.

A jump in tax credits from £15m to £99m, attributed to the fall in the marginal rate of corporation tax on deferred liabilities, prompted a near doubling of post-tax profit from £128m to £234m.

Even so, Thames Water denied that shareholders would profit from the declining tax burden. "The reduction in the deferred tax provision has not resulted in any tax refund or rebate to the company and will, in the long term, benefit customers and not shareholders," it said.

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David Cameron will visit China next week as the prime minister looks to celebrate the reopening of top-level ties with the world's second-largest economy.

The prime minister will lead the UK's largest trade delegation as he embarks on a two-day visit during which he will attend dinners with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang.

The visit brings to a close 18 months of diplomacy as London tried to reopen routes into Beijing closed off after Mr Cameron met the Dalai Lama, an incident that infuriated the Chinese. Number 10 is billing the trip as an opportunity to "turn the page" after that row.

Mr Cameron has long stressed the importance of the UK-China trade relationship, promising in 2010 that he would double British trade there by 2015 to £62bn. So far, the policy has not paid off - a Foreign Office study in January showed the UK share of the Chinese market had fallen to just 1 per cent in the past decade.

In an attempt to reboot the trading partnership, Mr Cameron will take 120 businesspeople with him next week, the largest British trade delegation put together, much larger than the one he took to China in 2011.

The delegation will include Ralf Speth, chief executive of Jaguar Land Rover, who is opening a new training centre in Beijing, as well as a string of other FTSE 100 executives. They include George Weston, chief executive of Associated British Foods, Jorma Ollila, chairman of Royal Dutch Shell, Xavier Rolet, London Stock Exchange chief executive and Peter Sands, head of Standard Chartered bank.

Stephen Crisp, JLR's global director of government affairs, said the trip represented a "huge opportunity" for the companies involved. "It shows the UK's long-term commitment to the country. But also the prime minister will be followed by Chinese politicians wherever he goes, and that will make sure they notice us."

Sir Andrew Witty, chief executive of GlaxoSmithKline, will also join the trade mission despite the company having admitted it may have violated Chinese law with its sales practices.

The company is being investigated by the Chinese authorities over allegations that it bribed Chinese doctors to prescribe its ***medicines***, but has since said it will change its commissions model. Mr Cameron may use the opportunity to lobby Beijing on the pharmaceutical group's behalf during the four-day visit.

The visit is expected to produce deals, but it is as important for its symbolism as it is for signing contracts. For the last 18 months, the prime minister has not been able to meet his Chinese counterparts, while more junior ministers, such as Lord Green, the trade minister, and Jeremy Browne, the former Foreign Office minister, have had meetings in Beijing cancelled at the last minute.

The official deep freeze began in May 2012 when Mr Cameron met the Dalai Lama in London, which the Chinese foreign ministry said "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people".

That damage was only repaired when Mr Cameron told the Commons in May that the UK did not support Tibetan independence, a statement that paved the way for George Osborne, the chancellor, and Boris Johnson, the London mayor, to travel to China last month.

Western diplomats in Beijing however say the UK has given up too much in its bid to attract Chinese money. One senior Beijing-based Asian diplomat called Britain's position over the Dalai Lama "total capitulation".

Downing Street insists it has sacrificed relatively little to win its way back into Beijing, pointing out that the Tibet statement was merely a restatement of the government position. The statement also falls well short of the joint statements with Beijing that both France and Germany had to sign after they suffered a similar reaction following meetings with the Dalai Lama.

Having secured separate dinners with both Mr Xi and Mr Li, British officials may now feel the sacrifices they did make were justified.

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Rio Tinto is to shut an alumina refinery in Australia in a sign of the prolonged tough conditions facing the aluminium industry.

The economics of producing aluminium have been transformed by the rapid expansion of refining and smelting capacity in China. Rio's $38bn acquisition of Alcan in 2007, and subsequent huge writedowns on the overpriced deal, have come to epitomise the problems of the world's largest diversified mining groups in dealing with the aluminium sector's transformation.

Aluminium also has one of the worst oversupply problems among globally traded metals.

Rio is to close the Gove refinery after failing to reduce the plant's energy costs by securing a supply of natural gas from the government of Australia's Northern Territory, where the plant is located.

"The refinery is no longer a viable business in the current market environment . . . there is nothing more the Northern Territory government could have done to help secure a long-term future for the refinery," Rio said. The miner said the decision was also based on continuing low alumina prices, a high exchange rate and substantial after-tax losses for the refinery.

The closure, which will begin next year, was announced a day after Rio stepped up its commitment to another part of its Australian operations, saying it would expand output over the next four years at its iron ore mines in Western Australia's Pilbara region.

Rio said on Friday it planned to maintain its bauxite mines at Gove. Bauxite is the raw material refined into alumina, which is then smelted into aluminium, and the miner has been more optimistic over the global market for bauxite than for the finished metal. "We have a firm belief in the potential of the bauxite operation, a quality asset with a long-term future," said Sam Walsh, Rio's chief executive.

Gove was part of a set of aluminium assets known as Pacific Aluminium that Rio failed to sell this year, underscoring the poor outlook for the sector. The Gove refinery produced almost a quarter of Rio's 7m tonnes of alumina in the first nine months of the year.

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New data on Friday from the Bank of England were welcomed by economists as evidence of a strengthening housing market and improving household finances, but the numbers also contain an unpleasant truth.

That is, households in the UK who need low rates most are probably not getting them, even after the combined effect of the Funding for Lending Scheme and the Help to Buy programmes.

These schemes may be lifting house prices but are doing nothing to boost the spending power of heavily indebted households. Since January, average rates on a 2-year fixed rate mortgage with a 25 per cent downpayment have fallen 0.63 percentage points to 2.48 per cent. But standard variable rates (SVRs) have fallen by exactly 0.02 percentage points to 4.36 per cent.

Surprisingly, neither the Bank of England nor the Financial Conduct Authority has data on how many of these mortgages remain outstanding. Yet with nearly two full percentage points between new, fixed-rate mortgages and standard variable rates, one would think that most households who can afford to refinance, have.

The relatively low level of remortgaging activity last year points to very little refinancing of existing debt. That may be because spreads between existing and new debt were relatively narrow. However, in recent months, the spread has been blown apart (see chart).

It may well be that those who have not remortgaged are those who simply cannot. There may be too little equity in the home to qualify for the best rates or incomes are not high enough. Some portion of them may be households who had been transferred to interest-only mortgages as a means of avoiding foreclosure.

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And it is precisely these credit-constrained households that would be most likely to step up consumption if they had the benefit of lower rates. Just as refunds of Payment Protection Insurance were judged to have had higher multipliers because they went to the cash-poor, so too would reductions in SVR.

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Confidence in Spain's economic recovery received a fresh boost on Friday when Standard & Poor's revised its country credit outlook from "negative" to "stable" and signalled that it was less concerned about Spanish debt than before.

The credit rating agency said it still rated Spanish sovereign debt at triple B minus - only one notch above junk - but that there was now a much smaller chance of a further downgrade in the next two years.

"We see improvement in Spain's external position as economic growth gradually resumes," said an S&P statement.

The change comes weeks after Fitch, another credit rating agency, made a similar move, shifting Spain's credit outlook from "negative" to "stable", and adding that the economy was now on a "surer footing".

Both actions reflect growing confidence among analysts and investors that Spain is on a path of slow but stable economic recovery, thanks to a surge in exports and the gradual restoration of competitiveness in the private sector after years of wage restraint and job losses.

The recent shift in market sentiment was confirmed last month when the national statistics office said Spain had emerged from more than two years of recession in the third quarter of this year. The Spanish economy was found to have grown 0.1 per cent in the three months to September - a tiny improvement compared with the previous quarter, but a potentially crucial break in the economic trajectory.

S&P made clear in its statement that Spain continued to face severe economic challenges, warning in particular of the country's high unemployment rate and the severe debt problem hanging over the private and public sector.

"Domestic demand is weak and constrained by further declines in disposable income due to high unemployment, reduced wages and budget consolidation. In addition, investment activity remains subdued as the private sector deleverages its balance sheets and credit activity continues to decline," said the agency.

The broadly positive stance taken by S&P was mirrored in a research report on the Spanish economy released by Barclays on Friday.

"The economy is turning around, unemployment is stabilising, and the internal devaluation appears to be working, as demonstrated by strong export performance and the gains in export shares of world markets," said the Barclays analysis.

"However, the recovery is very mild, and is likely to remain subdued throughout 2014 as the private sector deleverages, fiscal headwinds remain strong and credit conditions remain tight in 2014 and probably in 2015."

The Spanish government believes that the economy will grow 0.7 per cent next year, and will start creating jobs in the first half of 2014. Spain's unemployment rate stands at 26 per cent - among the highest in the western world.

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What is crowdfunding?

One of the dramatic changes that the internet has created on commerce is the ability to make it much easier and cheaper to connect those with something to sell with those with money. Crowdfunding applies this matchmaking process to people with a need for cash and donors or investors.

Who is doing this?

The two largest crowdfunding marketplaces are New York-based Kickstarter, which focuses on creative projects, and San Francisco-based Indiegogo, which has a wider remit, enabling people not just to put money into creative projects but to donate to charitable causes and take stakes in commercial start-ups. Seedrs, which has its headquarters in London, focuses only on companies seeking equity backing.

What is in it for the crowdfunding platforms?

They charge a fee, which tends to be a percentage of the amount raised. Seedrs, for instance, has a fee of 7.5 per cent of the total. Kickstarter will apply a 5 per cent fee, plus payment processing fees of 3 to 5 per cent, for successful campaigns. It charges nothing if the target is not hit.

Is crowdfunding the same thing as peer-to-peer lending?

Not according to those who call themselves this, such as Zopa, Thincats and Funding Circle. Like crowdfunders, these peer-to-peer lenders use the vast reach of the internet to bring together people with money and those that need it. Unlike crowdfunding companies such as Kickstarter and Seedrs, the peer-to-peer lenders are focused on enabling people to lend money, as opposed to investing or donating cash.

How do you get involved as an investor/lender?

Investors can search the websites for projects using keywords. They then click to make an investment, much as people buying something online after completing a sign in and giving their bank details. Money is taken when the pledges reach the target set by those seeking funding.

What kind of return, if any, can you expect?

Investing, whether in the conventional sense or through crowdfunding websites, is a risky venture. Even with traditional venture capital financing, investors in start-ups lose their shirt up to 75 per cent of the time according to some studies. Crowdfunding is still in its infancy so there is little data on actual return rates, although angel investing, which is comparable, has been found to produce, on average, an annualised rate of return of 22 per cent.

Many people backing Kickstarter projects are donating the money. They may get an early prototype of a product they are backing or some other "reward", but not an equity stake.

Peer-to-peer lending may offer better returns to savers than traditional bank deposit accounts. For example, Ratesetter has been offering a pre-tax five-year fixed interest rate of 5.7 per cent on loans, compared with 3.1 per cent from a conventional savings account, according to the price comparison website Moneysavingexpert.com. Funding Circle, which organises loans for businesses, not individuals, claims to offer an average net return of 5.7 per cent after fees and the bad debt rate.

What is the timescale for a return on the investment?

Given that crowdfunding is aimed primarily at the very early stage rounds of funding, investors should expect to wait for at least five years until they see any return.

How quick can companies raise money?

Crowdfunding exercises are usually run over a period of weeks, but campaigns that capture people's attention can hit their target much more quickly. Kano, the UK-based start-up behind a cut-price computer that is designed to be as simple to build as Lego, raised more than $140,000 in crowdfunding in a matter of hours for its $99 kits.

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There are few executives who, in their entire careers, have experienced troubles of the magnitude that Repsol's Antonio Brufau has faced in the past two years.

This week, with a surprise offer of compensation from Argentina for nationalising Repsol's YPF subsidiary last year, it would appear that one of his biggest headaches has finally disappeared.

Yet questions remain over the relationship between Mr Brufau and his biggest shareholders - Caixabank, the powerful Catalan lender, and Pemex, Mexico's state oil company, which had pushed hard for a deal to be struck on their terms - and what this dysfunctional relationship will mean for the Spanish oil company's long-term future.

At the start of last year, Repsol's Madrid board room was a happy one. The company had fended off an insurrection by two of its largest shareholders and was basking in the discovery of one of the world's largest shale gas formations by its Argentine YPF subsidiary, known as Vaca Muerta.

Only months later, armed guards arrived at YPF's headquarters in Buenos Aires to renationalise the company, forcing Repsol executives to flee the country, and sending its share price into free fall.

Mr Brufau had been attempting to reposition Repsol from a sluggish former state-run operation recovering from a scandal linked to overstating oil reserves into a honed explorer focused on world-class oil discoveries, but was forced to tear up his plans.

To avoid a credit rating downgrade, Repsol, which gained a fifth of its 2011 net profits from YPF and almost half of its proven reserves, was forced to sell assets and rework its strategic plan.

To make matters worse for Mr Brufau, Caixabank and Pemex had again started agitating against him behind the scenes as he pressed ahead with suing Argentina in international courts for at least $10.5bn in compensation.

Mr Brufau, while open to striking a deal with Buenos Aires at the right price, had become persona non grata to Cristina Fernández, Argentina's populist president, who had refused to grant him an audience when he had flown out to try to persuade her against seizing YPF.

For Caixabank, Mr Brufau - a former employee of the lender - had become an obstacle to a deal.

Isidro Fainé, Caixabank chairman and at turns one of Mr Brufau's oldest friends and bitterest rivals, took matters into his own hands, travelling to Argentina to meet Ms Fernández in secret with the aim of striking a deal he could then present to the Repsol board.

When a deal brokered by Mr Fainé offering a $3.5bn stake in the seized assets and $1.5bn that would have to be reinvested in Argentina was finally tabled in June, it was voted down unanimously by the Repsol board as unacceptable.

This prompted Pemex, which stood to gain a stake in Vaca Muerta, to openly attack Mr Brufau for the size of his salary, saying he had mismanaged the company.

A new preliminary deal struck this week, based on $5bn of Argentine bonds and no forced reinvestment in the country, is undoubtedly an improved offer. For Mr Brufau's supporters, it was a vindication of his aggressive legal pursuit of an intransigent Argentina. His critics say his large shareholders forced his hand against his will.

It is not clear whether Mr Brufau has been weakened by recent developments. But Repsol's smaller investors feel that if Mr Brufau, Mr Fainé and Pemex are all going to have a future at the company, they must learn to be friends again.

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Thai protesters have made themselves so at home in the Nonthaburi government office complex that it is hard to see what they are demonstrating against.

The activists have kitted out the vast facility northwest of central Bangkok that they occupied this week with tents, a mobile kitchen and even a concert stage for rallies. The police and other arms of the state they are meant to be confronting are absent.

It makes for a strange but not untypical skirmish in this battle for the soul of southeast Asia's second-largest economy, in which both sides have opted for passive resistance - and trying to lure the other into a false move.

"We will stay here until we achieve victory," said Sumalee Choothoad, a 35-year-old housewife as she perched in front of a green-domed tent pitched on the hard floor of the main building's cavernous interior on Friday. "We will not use violence."

Ms Sumalee is part of protests across Bangkok that have lasted nearly a week and are aimed at toppling the government. They started on Sunday with rallies that attracted as many as 150,000 and continued with the occupation of the finance ministry and other government offices. Demonstrators fan out each day in groups around the city and often favour short but high-profile guerrilla actions, such as Friday's stroll on the lawn of the army's headquarters.

The mood may be light for now but it is underlaid by fears of a repeat of violence in 2010 that led to street battles in the capital and scores of deaths. Like other protests before and since, that crisis was an act in an ever darker drama dividing Thai society between supporters and opponents of Thaksin Shinawatra, a fugitive former prime minister - and older brother of Yingluck Shinawatra, the current premier.

The latest Bangkok stand-off has set up a tense weekend at the start of the peak tourist season, at a time when the economy is weakening. Protest leaders have rejected an offer of talks by Ms Yingluck, who triggered the demonstrations through a failed effort to introduce an amnesty law that critics say would have allowed Mr Thaksin and other senior politicians on both sides to escape accountability for alleged crimes.

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The tabular content relating to this article is not available to view. Apologies in advance for the inconvenience caused.

&gt;"Now we have to fight," exclaimed Sakol Duangkaew, a 67-year-old former merchant seaman, who prowled the Nonthaburi precincts with a string of Buddhist religious icons round his neck and loud denunciations of what anti-government protesters call the "Thaksin regime".

"There are mistakes, and corruption - something like a cancer."

The latest protests are led by Suthep Thaugsuban, a former deputy prime minister. He is one of many longtime members of the opposition Democrats struggling to deal with the electoral dominance achieved by Mr Thaksin and his allies since they came to power in 2001 on a surge of votes from the rural poor.

Mr Suthep smiled broadly amid the crowds and cameras as he strode about the shopping area of the Nonthaburi development, leaving Akanat Promphan, his spokesman and stepson, to field the trickier questions.

Mr Akanat, a 27-year-old Oxford university graduate and former MP and adviser to Mr Suthep, whipped out a smartphone in an effort to scotch the allegation from some critics that the demonstrations are being driven by a Bangkok-based anti-Thaksin elite. The device displayed a map of Thailand split into colour-coded blocks, with the green and blue segments dotted around the country showing, according to Mr Akanat, that demonstrations are under way in about 30 of the 77 biggest population centres.

"It's a very organic, very natural movement," Mr Akanat said. "Tens of thousands of people are surrounding city halls in the south."

It is true that the opposition includes southern rubber farmers squeezed by falling world commodity prices, as well as Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Democrat leader and friend of Boris Johnson, the London mayor, from their Eton College days. Twelve turbulent years of Thai politics dominated by pro-Thaksin parties have stirred genuine anger about alleged government abuse of power - as the Democrats also faced during their period of hegemony with Mr Suthep now fighting murder charges over the shootings of protesters when he was in government in 2010.

At Nonthaburi, protesters claim something will give soon - perhaps before the natural pause offered by King Bhumibol Adulyadej's birthday on Thursday. But even the partisans are vague in their predictions of the outcome of a cat-and-mouse conflict still defined in good part by absences - first among them Mr Thaksin himself.

"We want to end this in the next two or three days by getting this government out," said Pantarak Kongnak, a 37-year-old construction business owner. "Then we will see from our leader what we plan to do next."

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David Cameron once described his willingness to conduct policy U-turns as a "sign of strength"; at the end of a week of retreats, by his own definition the prime minister is looking stronger than ever.

To his critics, however, Mr Cameron's about-turns on payday loans and plain cigarette packaging and his attempt to counter Labour's promise of an energy price freeze have left him looking weak and ideologically adrift.

Yet his closest advisers say the week reflects a crude and pragmatic electoral plan whereby Mr Cameron intends to pick off every popular Labour policy "where they have a point" and embrace it. "We will take the meat and leave them with the gristle," said one senior Tory strategist.

So Labour's campaign for a cap on payday loans - previously rejected by the Treasury - was adopted and rebranded as a "cross-party idea". Previously "dead" plans for plain cigarette packaging backed by Labour were put back on the agenda.

Meanwhile, George Osborne will next week set out plans to cut energy bills through a shake-up of environmental levies, in an attempt to offset the success of opposition leader Ed Miliband's call for a 20-month price freeze after the next election.

"Barely a day goes by without the Tories trying to steal one of our policies," said Jon Ashworth, a member of the Labour campaign team. "It shows Ed Miliband is setting the agenda and David Cameron is dancing to our tune."

Mr Cameron's team insists that introducing policies that are popular with the voters - even if they are associated with Labour - is better than soldiering on with the prospect of parliamentary defeats. "All this talk about U-turns doesn't bother voters," said one aide.

This willingness to change course is also consistent with the edict of Lynton Crosby, the Tory election chief. Mr Crosby said "barnacles" - or policy distractions - should be "scraped off the boat", in favour of a focus on areas voters are most interested in.

As a lobbyist for a tobacco company, Mr Crosby had become a barnacle - as long as Labour could claim he was influencing policy on cigarette packaging. In the end, Mr Crosby went full-time for the Tory party at the start of November.

The Australian strategist wants the party to concentrate on just two simple messages: the economic recovery and the choice between Mr Cameron and Mr Miliband as the next prime minister.

Clearing away policy debris this week will allow the Tory leadership to focus on those two themes next week: Mr Cameron will be performing on the world stage at the head of a trade delegation to China and Mr Osborne will be presenting the most optimistic autumn statement for years.

Britain's economic rebound is also playing its part in recent policy shifts. With the recovery gaining momentum, the Conservative side of the coalition is more willing to adopt populist policies that might irritate business.

The decision to take on the payday lenders and tobacco companies this week was accompanied by confirmation that the coalition will introduce up to 50 weeks of shared parental leave in 2015, a Liberal Democrat-inspired policy described by the Institute of Directors as an administrative "nightmare".

These socially popular measures will reassure disgruntled Tory modernisers, who have seen the prime minister forced to make spending cuts and tack to the right as the recession hit.

One backbencher said the about-turns were designed to remind voters of the Conservatives' caring side. "We have done the heavy lifting on the economy and now it is important to remind voters that we . . . care about creating a fairer society."

Trying to get a fix on David Cameron's political position becomes harder by the day. In the past week he has toughened his stance on EU migrants, "rolled back" the green levies he once supported. At the same time he has promised a crackdown on payday lenders and tobacco companies and signed off new rights for fathers to take parental leave.

It is a pragmatic, political mish-mash that drives many Tory MPs to distraction but the prime minister's team claim to be following a template of electoral success: "It's what Tony Blair did very effectively," said one strategist. "You have to neutralise your opponents' attacks."

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Looking back at predictions of industry trends and evaluating their worth in later months or years can be a painful exercise, but it can also be instructive in this era of structural change.

With the spotlight shining on equities, and sales flows into equity funds strengthening, I thought it might be interesting to revisit the somewhat relentless active/passive debate, in the light of a prediction I made in FTfm in January, which related to the expanded potential for low-cost passive funds when investors began to swing back to equities.

My precise words were: "Cost has become a key differentiator in the fund selection process and as investors migrate to equities, their allocations to core regional or global products are likely to be weighted towards ETFs [exchange traded funds] or low-cost index trackers."

The migration to core regional equity funds, particularly those investing in European stocks, is under way. It started in July and has been gaining momentum ever since. In the last quarter, European equity funds, including those investing in small and mid-sized stocks, generated net inflows of more than EUR15bn, compared with small redemptions of EUR500m in Q2 and EUR3bn or so of inflows in the equivalent period last year.

This latest quarterly volume data deliver two surprises, the first linked to sheer scale. The figure was not only substantial compared with recent periods, it was the best on record. Only in 2006 did sales volumes for European equity funds come close, reaching EUR13bn during the first quarter.

The second surprise brings us back to the active/passive issue and the fact that there was very little evidence in the data to suggest any increased support for passive products.

The same data set showed a mere 17 per cent of sales flows were garnered by passive funds, of which just 10 per cent was attributed to ETFs and the remainder to index funds - not what I, nor many other pundits expected.

This lack of passive interest also flies in the face of the increasingly vocal comments from fund selectors on their search for lower-cost funds, particularly in relation to beta, or market, exposure.

Of course, there is a distortion in the data that requires explanation; the inclusion of small and mid-cap vehicles will inevitably weight the results in favour of the active segment.

However, these sectors are modest in asset size and even if we focus on the core European equity sector that accounted for nearly EUR11bn of quarterly net inflows, the passive share was less than EUR2bn or 18 per cent of the total.

My reluctant conclusion is that the passive steamroller has yet to flatten demand for active funds or, to put it another way, the impact of fees on client portfolios has yet to be felt by European fund selectors.

Outside the UK, a ban on commissions is not yet in place (meaning distributors can receive retrocession payments from asset managers for selling their funds), although it is expected sooner or later by many distributors. So is it the case that their retrocession-fuelled decisions are driving investors into high-cost active funds?

If true, the UK sales data should have a greater weighting in favour of passives. The comparison is a difficult one to make. UK investors have traditionally treated European equity funds as a marginal, rather than a core, portfolio play. Thus, in the most recent quarter, net inflows into these sectors were just EUR648m, and index trackers accounted for just 4 per cent of the total. Unfortunately, a measure of ETF activity in the UK is problematic because all ETFs are listed on multiple stock exchanges so it is not possible to know where their sales volumes are derived, nor how much is sourced from UK investors.

A better test of UK passive appetite is to look at the groups that are winning business across all equity sectors.

In such a ranking, BlackRock was the sales leader in the third quarter with Vanguard ranked a close third. For both groups net inflows were almost entirely devoted to index trackers (excluding ETFs for thereasons explained above).

Those groups that feature low-cost tracker offerings clearly have a following but the chase for alpha, or market-beating returns, was still much stronger. In the entire equity space, net sales were EUR440m but a mere EUR73m of this was invested in trackers. This suggests that fee scales are not going to be the big driver to passives that many might have expected. It could also mean, of course, that the criteria of fund choice has not changed much, ie it is more to do with the potential to deliver performance than a commission grab by distributors.

There is another issue - a matter of speculation rather than measurable fact: investors have been visibly absent from equity funds for so long that their immediate response to market opportunity is to pump up their investments with alpha products to make up for ground they have lost on deposit returns or elsewhere.

Possibly the more stable beta component of their portfolios is already in place so the action we are seeing now is in the satellite arena. The fact that small/mid-cap funds have had such a good recent run, seems to support this hypothesis.

Any judgment on the issue is probably precipitous but we should not ignore the potential effect of regulation on fees in driving greater demand for passives. It may yet come.

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For the past few years, as financial chaos tore through the US and a sovereign debt crisis crushed growth in Europe, the world's luxury goods groups have done the best business in at least a decade. The reason? China.

Between 2010 and last year, brands from the comparatively small and exclusive Hermès to the bling of Louis Vuitton have seen the mix of China's emerging wealth and its population's love of all things luxury fatten an entire industry - during the leanest times almost anyone can remember.

But the mighty Chinese engine is moderating - at least by its own high-revving standards - and the new government is cracking down on exuberant personal spending and gift-giving by officials.

As a result, people in the EUR217bn-a-year luxury industry find themselves staring at an uncomfortable but inescapable question: is the era of double-digit growth over?

The answer has huge implications for brand strategy in the world's most populous country - as it does for luxury groups' approaches in other markets. It also has direct implications for the valuation premium that investors have placed on the sector compared with other companies.

"Just a few years ago, a slowdown in Chinese consumption would barely have produced a ripple in the luxury sector," says Luca Solca, a sector analyst at Exane BNP Paribas. "Today, it has the potential to produce a tidal wave."

For the past three years, revenue in the luxury sector has grown at an average of more than 11 per cent a year in euro terms, spurred on by Greater China, where revenue grew a heady 19 per cent in 2012, according to a study by Fondazione Altagamma and Bain & Company. But this year, growth in Greater China is expected to fall to 4 per cent, dragging down overall revenue growth to just 2 per cent.

The falling growth numbers in China caused by the slowing economy and the government's crackdown - or what Rémy Cointreau, the Paris-based spirits and liqueurs group, calls "anti-extravaganza measures" - have been so marked that the Americas this year surpassed Asia as the luxury sector's main growth engine.

One of the problems for the brands that produce the world's most expensive and desirable watches, jewellery, fashion and bags is that China finally matters. Greater China now accounts for a quarter of Louis Vuitton's revenue, 35 per cent of Cartier's, and a whopping 45 per cent in the case of Omega, according to Exane BNP Paribas.

Hermès, famous for its Birkin and Kelly bags, recently estimated that Chinese consumers could account for more than half of global sales in the coming years.

The effects of the slowing growth have started to hit home. Rémy Cointreau, maker of $3,000-a-bottle Louis XIII cognac, this week warned investors that operating profits would fall at least 20 per cent this year compared with 2012 as a result of what it described as "a sharp slowdown in China".

Revenue at the fashion-and-leather-goods unit of LVMH, the world's largest luxury goods group by sales and the parent of Louis Vuitton, suffered a small decline during the third quarter this year compared with the same period last year. The poorer than expected figures provoked a 6 per cent fall in the group's share price, wiping EUR4bn of its market capitalisation.

Frédéric Pflanz, Rémy Cointreau's new chief executive, is convinced that the slowing of growth in China is temporary. "It will come back," he says of demand. "And when it comes back we will be there." Mr Pflanz's business card is printed on both sides - in English and in Chinese.

Other groups point out that even if sales growth is deflating in China, Chinese tourists are still buying abroad. Altagamma and Bain estimated that while sales of luxury goods in Greater China are only about 13 per cent of the global total, the Chinese account for 29 per cent of all luxury customers. In 2005, by contrast, they accounted for less than 5 per cent.

However, luxury groups are now trading at an estimated 2014 price-to-earnings ratio of about 18.5 times, which is roughly 50 per cent higher than the Stoxx 600 index of European companies. That may be in line with historic valuations for the sector, but it also represents a huge increase since the collapse of Lehman Brothers, when luxury and Stoxx 600 p/e ratios were level pegging on seven times.

Léopold Authié, an analyst at Oddo Securities in Paris, asked in a recent report "whether the sector deserves to trade at the same valuation level as in the past since its growth profile is now less attractive".

Luxury companies are reacting to the slowdown in several ways.

One response has been to command higher prices by going upmarket. Gucci, which is owned by Paris-based Kering, is producing more bags made from exotic skins, such as python. LVMH's Louis Vuitton is also looking to establish higher price points for its products.

Others are heading in the opposite direction, highlighting the difficulty of formulating an effective brand strategy in the face of China's newfound disdain for luxury gifting. Shuijingfang, one of China's most exclusive brands of the spirit baijiu, the Communist party's favourite tipple, will now sell half its product range at Rmb500 a bottle or less - a price point at which the company previously sold nothing.

Analysts say luxury groups also have to start looking elsewhere for growth. Mr Luca of Exane BNP Paribas believes that one area is increasing the number of directly-operated stores. Another is ecommerce, where he argues that luxury goods groups have been slow to develop effective strategies.

For now, though, Mr Luca says that one thing is clear: "The low-hanging fruit has mostly gone."

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Producer prices fell in France and Italy, while Spain registered a current account surplus of EUR3bn ($4.1bn) in September, putting the country on track for its first annual profit in decades.

Europe

UK

According to the GfK Consumer Confidence Index, UK consumers were less optimistic in November than in the previous month, with the index dropping one point to -12. Consumers' opinion about the country's general economic situation in the past 12 months has grown gloomier, while expectations for the next 12 months increased slightly. Consumers were less in the mood to make major purchases in November than in September.

France

Household consumption of goods decreased 0.2 per cent in October compared with the previous month, after having decreased by 0.1 per cent in September. The decline in October was influenced by a 4.9 per cent decrease in expenditure on energy products. However, household expenditure on durables rose 0.8 per cent month on month.

Industrial producer prices declined 0.2 per cent in October month on month, after increasing 0.3 per cent in September. Prices for refined petroleum dipped 0.8 per cent, after three months of rises. Following two months of stability, import prices of industrial products fell 0.3 per cent - affecting all products, except textiles and apparel, which went up 0.8 per cent due to the new winter collections.

Turkey

According to provisional data, foreign trade deficit increased by 31.8 per cent in October year on year, reaching $7,375m. While exports decreased 8.2 per cent to $12,105m, imports went up 3.7 per cent to $19,480m.

Sweden

GDP increased 0.3 per cent in the third quarter compared with the third quarter last year. While household consumption expenditure increased 2.1 per cent non-adjusted, production of goods dropped 2.1 per cent. Seasonally adjusted, GDP increased 0.1 per cent from September to October.

Exports of goods went down 2.9 per cent in volume in the third quarter year on year - mainly due to a decline of 23 per cent in exports of mineral fuels, with the exports of petroleum products going down 21 per cent. Meanwhile, imports of goods decreased 2.6 per cent year on year, with the dominating sector in imports - machinery and transport equipment - decreasing 0.5 per cent.

Italy

Producer price index decreased 1 per cent from September to October with respect to the previous month. In the domestic market, the index decreased 1.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent on the non-domestic market. Year on year, the index decreased 2.2 per cent, with both domestic and non domestic markets going down, by 2.7 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively.

In the third quarter, the number of unemployed people rose 14.6 per cent year on year, with the unemployment rate reaching 11.3 per cent of the population. The situation is particularly critical in the south and on the Italian islands, where 18.5 per cent of the population is unemployed.

Spain

Having emerged from a two-year recession in the third quarter, Spain registered a current account surplus of EUR3bn ($4.1bn) in September, putting the country on track for its first annual profits in decades. A year ago, Spain recorded a EUR15.7bn current account deficit. The year-on-year change was mostly due to a EUR15.5bn fall in the trade deficit, with Spaniards buying fewer imported goods and domestic companies searching for new markets abroad.

Asia

Thailand

Current account registered a surplus of $376m in October, after a deficit of $530m in September. Year on year, exports dropped 0.5 per cent year, much less than the 6.3 per cent decline registered in September. Imports went down 4.6 per cent year on year in October and 6.1 per cent in September.

Taiwan

In the third quarter, GDP expanded 1.66 per cent year on year. The country has cut its 2013 full-year growth forecast for the second time in three months, from 2.31 per cent to 1.74 per cent. In a statement, the government attributed the downward revision to uncertainties arising from the restructuring of the Chinese economy and the US Federal Reserve's exit from its quantitative easing programme. Thailand has also cut its growth forecast this week.

India

GDP grew 4.8 per cent from the second to the third quarter - the fourth successive quarter of economic expansion below 5 per cent. However, the growth was slightly higher than the 4.4 per cent registered in the second quarter, partly due to an expansion in farm output.

Americas

Canada

GDP expanded 0.7 per cent in the third quarter, following 0.4 per cent growth in the previous quarter. Both household final consumption expenditure and business gross fixed capital formation rose 0.6 per cent. After three quarters of growth, exports fell 0.5 per cent, with exports of goods and services declining 0.5 per cent and 0.4 per cent, respectively. Month on month, GDP grew for 0.3 per cent in September, a third consecutive monthly increase.

Africa

South Africa

In October, the trade deficit went up to 12.4bn ($1.2bn), after a 11.9bn deficit in September. The deficit was, though, smaller than economists expected due to a rebound in car exports following the end of a four-week strike by workers in the vehicle-***manufacturing*** and auto-component industries.

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Signs of an improvement in business sentiment are emerging in Egypt despite continuing political instability as the military-backed authorities continue their crackdown on Islamists ousted from power in July.

After a disastrous summer for the country's businesses after the coup that toppled Mohamed Morsi, the elected Islamist president, gloom still overshadows the economy but entrepreneurs in some sectors are now reporting a pick-up in activity and a gradual return of confidence.

Figures published earlier this month by HSBC tracking activity in the non-oil private sector showed a sharp increase in the purchasing managers' index, PMI, from 44.7 in September to 49.5 in October, its highest level in eleven months. Fifty marks the separation between contraction and expansion.

Billions of dollars in cash injections from Gulf countries, two stimulus packages announced by the government and hopes of a recovery in tourism have helped generate optimism.

However, analysts caution that the return of activity has not been accompanied by any significant new investment.

"I think sentiment for local businesses has improved a lot but it is difficult to separate their relief at Morsi's departure from cold business decisions," said Simon Kitchen, strategist EFG-Hermes, the Cairo-based regional investment bank. "They are relieved not just because Morsi was not doing a good job managing the economy, but they felt that their businesses were under threat from his Muslim Brotherhood group trying to nurture an alternative economic elite."

He said that foreign investors remained wary of instability in Egypt. In addition, the deferral of big economic reforms such as the reduction of costly fuel subsidies continued to hamper a strong return of interest in the country.

Foreign investors are adopting a "wait and see attitude," according to Mr Kitchen, though some international companies are now happier to send staff to Egypt after the US allowed the families of embassy employees to return having ordered their departure in the summer.

The lifting of a nightly curfew on Cairo and other provinces in mid November helped restore an image of normality in the capital and eased pressures on retailers and local companies transporting goods overnight.

Although many ***manufacturers*** have shut down or are struggling with debt, Ihab Derias, chairman of the Egyptian Furniture Export Council, said there has been "a complete turnround" in sentiment within his industry.

He argued that the expectations of a recovery in tourism has injected new momentum in hotel projects that had faltered over the past two years. Many European countries have now lifted or eased travel bans on Egypt, and officials say they expect tourist numbers to start climbing next year.

"Stalled projects are now moving," said Mr Derias. "We have new orders. Jobs which take six months to complete, we are being asked to finish in one month. Hotels which were reluctant to spend or were spending slowly now have target dates to open. For my company, the last quarter in 2013 will improve results for the whole year. We had a horrible third quarter."

During their year in power, Brotherhood officials spoke of promoting tourism, but according to Mr Derias, investors were put off by comments from within the larger Islamist movement calling for alternatives to sun and sea tourism, the biggest draw in Egypt.

"We are hoping 2014 will be better, and that at least hotels will break even instead of making losses like before," said Sameh Sobhi, general manager of the Semiramis InterContinental, one of the worst affected establishments because of its location near Tahrir Square, the iconic centre of protests since the 2011 revolution.

The recent turmoil in Egypt has severely damaged demand for office and retail space, but the housing market has been resilient as more Egyptians decided to put their savings in bricks and mortar rather than risk a further devaluation of the currency which lost 18 per cent of its value this year.

Ahmed Badrawi, chief executive of SODIC, a high-end developer, said his company has had a record year in 2013, with some E£2.5 bn in sales, higher than their "best year before the 2011 revolution."

"In the last two or three months we have seen a big surge," he said. "There is liquidity, there is appetite. Maybe the recent reduction in interest rates encouraged more people to buy."

Mr Badrawi cautioned, however, that the sector would be held back unless the government could stop the "settling of scores" with real estate companies. After the 2011 revolution contracts awarding land to developers came under legal scrutiny amid allegations of corruption by the government of Hosni Mubarak.

Car sales are also rising said Menatallah Sadek, corporate finance director of GB Auto, which assembles and distributes a range of passenger vehicles and industrial equipment. September and October were "phenomenal," she said.

"As management we had two theories," she said. "Either this is pent-up demand after the summer or the start of a recovery. Sentiment is much better. As long as there are no major surprises or disasters, we see early signs of a recovery for consumer demand."

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After Scotland and England united in 1707, Scots took advantage of free trade with England and access to the British empire. Scotland was transformed from a poor peripheral state to one of the world's richest regions. Steam technology made it a global leader in building ships and locomotives. In the mid-19th century it was common to talk about North Britain.

But Scotland's performance was less impressive in the 20th century. The ***manufacturers*** of west central Scotland failed. Nationalism revived and, in the 1970s, its adherents adopted the unsentimental slogan "it's Scotland's oil!" - most of the UK's North Sea wealth was within what would be the territorial waters of an independent Scotland.

In the 1980s, the strident tones of Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, grated on Scottish nerves. She swept to electoral victory in the UK as a whole, but eroded Conservative support in Scotland. When Labour won power in 1997, not a single Tory MP was elected north of the border. Labour quickly implemented an election pledge to establish a Scottish assembly.

In 2007, when Labour's popularity was at a low ebb, the Scottish National party became the largest party in the Edinburgh parliament. Alex Salmond, its charismatic leader, led an SNP administration more competent than the coalitions that had preceded it. So he was re-elected in 2011 with a mandate to hold a referendum in Scotland on independence - a poll that will be held in September 2014.

The speed with which independence for Scotland moved from a vague aspiration to a live issue wrongfooted politicians on all sides. The SNP had few specific ideas of what independence would imply. Mr Salmond and the SNP are consistently more popular than their signature policy, and have struggled to win over moderate voters to it. They have attempted to make the case that nothing would really change while everything would be better. The problematic nature of this position is seen in the 667-page blueprint for independence published this week.

It seeks to reassure that an independent Scotland would have the same queen, the same relationship with the EU and the same currency. Her Majesty would no doubt be amenable to remaining Queen of Scotland. Spain and Belgium - each contending with their own separatist movements - might be unhelpful, but Scottish accession to the EU could certainly be negotiated.

Where the document does promise change, it is long on pledges and short on how they would be paid for. Its headline-grabbing proposal - the extensive provision of free childcare - is one Scotland already has the power, if not the financial resources, to implement.

The biggest outstanding question is over which currency an independent Scotland would use. Monetary union with the rest of the UK is the most sensible course - and the one the Scottish government proposes. But in the context of the troubles of the eurozone, the Treasury and Bank of England might be expected to seek extensive control of both Scottish fiscal policy and banking supervision. Yet with Scotland representing only 8.5 per cent of the monetary union, it is hard to imagine them conceding many such rights back to Scotland. While Mr Salmond insists that there is no currency plan B, Scotland would have no negotiating power without one and the rational plan B - a Scottish pound pegged to sterling - is also the likely outcome.

Scotland has income per head broadly in line with the UK average, making it the richest part of the UK outside London and the southeast. Its industrial and employment structure differs little from that of the UK. Unlike Wales and Northern Ireland, Scotland is plainly viable as an independent country.

Scottish government revenue is currently principally derived from a block grant from the UK Treasury, which supports public expenditure per capita in Scotland at a level 10-12 per cent higher than the UK. An independent Scotland would lose this subsidy, but gain most UK oil income. These revenues are uncertain, enabling both sides of the debate to find support for conflicting claims about the fiscal consequences of independence. But a more important question is whether Scottish business would perform better in an independent country.

Scotland has suffered from a drain of corporate headquarters activity. The pull of London would remain, but an independent Scotland would have better opportunities to compete. Devolution since 1999 has been associated with a revival of self-confidence that might gain strength in an independent country. Even small growth effects would have economic consequences far larger than fiscal balances.

But the centre of political gravity in Scotland is far to the left of that of the UK and that is at the centre of the concerns - widely held but little expressed - of Scottish business over independence. It is possible to imagine a future for an independent Scotland characterised by reactionary municipal socialism - and the crony capitalism that brought Ireland and Iceland close to economic collapse.

The polls suggest independence will be defeated. A narrow margin leaves the issue alive - Quebec has done well by being always on the point of leaving Canada. A heavy loss would raise questions over the future of the SNP and its leadership. Yet arguments over independence that have caused strife elsewhere - from Ireland to Kosovo - have not been about small economic benefits. That this issue dominates discussion in Scotland demonstrates that this debate is not deeply serious. For the degree of economic independence a small European country can enjoy in a global marketplace is inevitably limited. Nothing that happens in Scotland in September 2014 will change that reality.

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The former owner of Whyte & Mackay said on Friday he would bid for the Scotch whisky brand if Diageo is obliged to sell it for competition reasons.

Vivian Imerman, a serial entrepreneur who now chairs Vasari, a London-based private equity firm, expressed interest on Friday in buying back Whyte & Mackay, which he used to run as chairman and chief executive before selling it to United Spirits in 2007.

Diageo said this week it had told the Office of Fair Trading it was prepared to dispose of most of Whyte & Mackay to allay competition concerns triggered by its acquisition of a stake in India's United Spirits a year ago.

"Whyte and Mackay would make an important addition to the portfolio of spirits and beer businesses in Africa and Asia where Mr Imerman has been concentrating his efforts through his company Vasari," the private equity firm said in a statement.

It said the brand would complement the firm's "strategy of acquiring and growing businesses in these regions to take advantage of rapid consumer growth".

Diageo, which is waiting for the OFT's response to its offer, declined to comment.

Trevor Stirling, analyst at Bernstein Research, estimated Whyte & Mackay could be worth between £450m and £650m. Apart from its own label, Whyte & Mackay produces Scotch for branded companies and supermarkets' own labels.

It owns four malt distilleries and one of the seven large grain distilleries in Scotland, based in Invergordon.

Demand for whisky has accelerated over the past five years, driven by emerging markets. The alcohol accounts for 4 per cent of the global spirits industry but 13 per cent of its value.

South African-born Mr Imerman and Robert Tchenguiz, the property investor, were estimated to have made £420m in profit from the sale of the Scotch business for £595m to United Spirits.

Mr Imerman, a former chief executive of Del Monte, the tinned fruit company, hit the UK headlines three years ago in a high-profile divorce from Mr Tchenguiz's sister, Lisa.

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'Market-sensitive data on economic growth, inflation and employment could be "drip-fed" into the public domain because the Office for National Statistics website regularly fails to publish them at 9.30am.'Financial Times, November 25

What's so bad about drip-***feeding***?

We drip-***feed*** delicate flowers and patients in intensive care - not economic statistics.

I thought the UK economy was no longer a delicate flower?

Recent economic data have looked pretty good - if you could get hold of them. That may have been hard. The business investment data, due to be published on Wednesday at 9.30am, were two quarters out of date for most of the morning. By itself, not such a big thing but this sort of glitch seems to happen too often. It does seem not all is well with the ONS website.

Hence its proposal to drip-***feed*** data?

Careful: it's not an ONS idea. It was put forward by the UK Statistics Authority, which oversees the ONS.

And why did it propose the idea?

Hard to say, especially since I couldn't work out how to download the UKSA report at first. (Its website is a little tricky to navigate, too.) But in a nutshell, some data are sensitive: they can move markets, and a trader with early access to the latest figures would have a big advantage. The ONS is finding it hard to publish these data on time - half the sensitive releases in the first quarter of 2013 were more than a minute late.

A minute late doesn't sound much. Have you tried to catch a train recently?

High-frequency traders are making investments to shave a millisecond or two off the time it takes to send and receive data. Usain Bolt's reaction time in the 2012 Olympic 100 metres final was 165 milliseconds; a minute is 60,000 milliseconds. In context, a minute is a long time.

Why is it hard to publish on time?

Leaving aside the question of what "on time" even means in a world of superfast algorithmic traders, the obvious way to publish promptly is to upload the data to the servers in advance, then reveal them at 9.30am. But the servers aren't secure enough for this, and it would apparently cost several million pounds to fix that. So the ONS begins manually uploading the most sensitive data four seconds before 9.30am and hopes it will go live at about the right time. That process is prone to delay, especially when the data sets are large and eagerly anticipated.

Hence the embarrassing idea of releasing the headlines first and the details later. But does it matter if the market-sensitive stuff goes on the site a few minutes late?

Perhaps not. Serious players probably don't care - they get the data through proprietary trading platforms such as Bloomberg and Reuters.

And the rest of us have to wait.

Yes. Which looks bad. But prompt publication of statistics on the ONS site is more of a matter of pride than of practical significance. Most ONS watchers are complaining about other things; Mark Carney, the Bank of England governor, for example.

ONS watchers are complaining about Carney?

No, Carney is complaining about the ONS. He said this week that he wasn't happy with the quality of its data on investment, didn't put much weight on it and was much more comfortable with the data quality back in his native Canada.

Ouch.

The other complaint is the usability of the website. Big beasts of economics journalism, such as Evan Davis of the BBC, and the FT's own Chris Giles, have complained that the site is hard to use, especially for casual users asking relatively simple questions.

Sounds like a shambles.

The ONS has my sympathy. It has a thankless task: nobody ever notices when things go right. The data sets were crafted and categorised for a pre-web age, and it is no simple matter to preserve the continuity and integrity of the data while making the site swift and simple to use. The problems with the website have been frankly acknowledged, and the ONS is trying to deal with them. But the ONS and UKSA are under severe budgetary pressure: they're heading towards a budget of £150m a year, or £2.50 per person. Not such a lot of money to spend on figuring out the state of the nation.

And UKSA's new idea is bound to embarrass the ONS even more.

Well, perhaps by accident, UKSA's idea has achieved something: it's been a loud, clear cry for help.

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Kingdom Holding, Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's investment vehicle, will lose another high-profile executive, marking the second such departure in recent months.

Shadi Sadeek Sanbar, chief financial officer at Kingdom Holding, plans to leave the company at the end of the year, people familiar with the situation said. His departure comes after the June resignation of Ahmed Reda Halawani, the company's director of private equity.

Kingdom has been in the spotlight this year after Prince Alwaleed became embroiled in a public spat with Forbes magazine over a detailed investigation into his wealth.

The dispute with Forbes emerged ahead of an article which said the value of Prince Alwaleed's stake in Kingdom was much lower than its share price suggested. Kingdom responded with a firm rejection, and described allegations of share-price manipulation as "completely unsupported and biased."

Mr Sanbar's deputy, Mohammed Fahmy Soliman, may be promoted as part of the transition and Mr Sanbar will remain an adviser to the Prince, the people said. Mr Soliman is already more involved in meetings with bankers, they added.

Mr Sanbar became Kingdom's chief financial officer in 2007 and acted as a special adviser to Prince Alwaleed since 2005. People familiar with the company say that working there is demanding, with long hours to match the packed schedule of Prince Alwaleed.

A person familiar with Mr Sanbar said: "He wanted to leave for some time and I am not sure it will have a significant impact on the company." He added Mr Sanbar planned to retire and to spend more time with his family.

Kingdom Holding did not respond to a request for comment. Bloomberg first reported the move earlier on Friday.

An accounting professional, Mr Sanbar started his working life at the Los Angeles office of Arthur Andersen in the 1970s after studying in the US. He worked at the firm for decades, and stayed on after its integration with Ernst & Young.

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From the way Pope Francis discusses sex and money in his first major papal pronouncement, you can tell a lot about his plans for Catholicism. He wants Church leaders to scold people less for their sexual arrangements. He thinks capitalism in its present, lightly regulated state is a "new tyranny".

The Pope's apostolic exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium ("Joy of the Gospel"), was released this week. He calls it a set of guidelines for a "new phase of evangelisation". The election in March of Francis, a charismatic priest serving the working class of Buenos Aires, was a milestone in this phase.

For all the Church's recent difficulties, its leaders believe it has vast potential for growth. They are right. The consumerism and materialism of the past decades have wrought economic marvels, but they have left a spiritual void - what Francis calls "the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart". And yet every time the Church clashes with hedonism, it loses. So, at one level, Francis is making his self-abnegating religion more marketable in this consumerist age. He has figured out that people would rather hear about the joys of salvation than the wages of sin. "An evangeliser," he writes, "must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral."

This shift should not be mistaken for all-out modernisation. On fundamental questions - which include sex and money - the Pope is not revising the Church's beliefs, although he may change dramatically its attitude towards power.

The cornerstone of the Pope's thinking is that the Church is a community of sinners, subject to "self-absorption, complacency and selfishness, to say nothing of the concupiscence which preys upon us all". Francis is harder on hypocrites within the church than without. His tone is occasionally bilious and angry. His fellow clergymen are pretentious. They write lousy homilies. They are cliquish and snobby, which leaves people feeling unwelcome. "The Eucharist," he writes, "is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful ***medicine*** and nourishment for the weak."

Those who follow the Catholic Church primarily to root against its sexual teachings will find little to please them in this document, which lays out a number of non-negotiable points. No women priests, no reconsideration of abortion and (by implication) no gay marriage. The Pope is not at odds with the way previous popes understood these things. He is just a bit more savvy about how, on television and online, "certain issues which are part of the Church's moral teaching are taken out of the context which gives them their meaning".

On economic matters, the Pope's thinking is radical, albeit somewhat less radical than it looks. There are passages in Gaudium that sound like the manifesto of some mid-20th-century revolutionary front. ("Solidarity is a spontaneous reaction by those who recognise that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property.") But the Gospels have always been an uneasy match with free markets. At heart, the Pope is urging believers to pay more attention to the poor. Nothing could be more mainstream than that. The poor, and Christians' duty to them, are all over the Gospels. Latin American theology since the 1960s has stressed that theme tirelessly. "For the Church," Francis writes, "the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one."

These ideas will be harder for the Pope to apply in more prosperous parts of the world, where today there are, broadly speaking, two ways to help the poor. You can help them directly, by giving alms or tutoring or ladling soup. The help this affords is genuine, but it takes the heat off the wider system, centred in the west, which the Pope attacks as a tyranny. The other way to help is indirectly, through politics. In advanced European and North American democracies, however, "the poor" tend not to speak for themselves. They are represented by the more "compassionate" of parties of the relatively wealthy, whose "compassion" often consists of pillaging the other party's voters to compensate their own. The poor wind up an afterthought.

In less-developed political societies, such as, historically, those of Latin America, it is easier to tell rich from poor. And a lot more politically charged, too. Either the first New World Pope understands European and North American politics less well than his predecessors or he has revealed a historic shift in the Church's culture. The Vatican may still be in Rome, but the heart of the church is on other continents. After centuries of projecting its attentions outward, Catholic Europe now finds itself on the periphery. It is missionary territory.The writer is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard

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Pearson has agreed to sell its Mergermarket unit to London private equity investor BC Partners in a transaction valuing the business intelligence and news service at £382m including debt.

The London-listed owner of the Financial Times intends to "redeploy the proceeds from the sale in its global education business", it said in a statement on Friday.

"The company has flourished under Pearson's ownership but it is not part of Pearson's strategy in global education," John Fallon, Pearson's chief executive, commented. "The transaction provides us with additional financial capacity to accelerate our push into digital learning, educational services and emerging markets."

The deal valued Mergermarket at more than 16 times last year's profit before tax of about £23m. Pearson bought Mergermarket seven years ago for £101m.

"The price is good" for Pearson, said Ian Whittaker, an analyst at Liberum, adding that the focus on new acquisitions would dampen some investors' hopes of share buybacks.

Pearson, the world's largest educational publisher by revenue, announced a £200m restructuring programme at the beginning of the year as it seeks to shift away from textbook sales and to digital technologies, particularly in emerging markets.

In July, when Pearson announced the planned sale of Mergermarket, the group also entered a publishing joint venture with Germany's Bertelsmann. Mr Fallon, who took over as Pearson's chief executive this year, has said the pace of restructuring would accelerate into the first half of 2014.

"As we developed our strategy - identifying along the way an increasingly important role for the FT - it was in truth impossible to see how Mergermarket could contribute to Pearson's ambitions in global education," Mr Fallon said in a note to staff on Friday.

BC Partners, the buyout fund manager whose holdings include Phones4U and estate agent Foxtons, is buying Mergermarket after a competitive process that initially attracted interest from 50 companies and private equity groups, including Thomson Reuters, Bloomberg, Fitch Ratings, and Advance Publications, the parent company of Condé Nast. In the end, only BC Partners and New York-based Warburg Pincus remained in the bidding, according to a person involved in the sale process.

BC Partners, which manages a EUR6.5bn buyout fund, intends to help the company grow through "selective" acquisitions, to boost its subscription-based news services, which it described, as "essential to customers given the unique and specialist nature of the information and analysis they contain".

Mergermarket is a "market leader with an attractive business model, strong growth, and loyal customers", said Nikos Stathopoulos, the partner at BC who is leading the investment.

Mergermarket, started in 1999 and headed by Hamilton Matthews, operates brands including Mergermarket, Debtwire, DealReporter, Infinata, Wealthmonitor and Xtract Research in 65 countries.

Pearson's revenues grew 2 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of this year on an underlying basis. It said it expected adjusted earnings per share for the full year to be broadly flat. In December 2011 it sold a 50 per cent stake in FTSE International, the stock index provider, for £450m.

HSBC advised BC Partners while JPMorgan Cazenove acted as financial adviser to Pearson.

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Experian was the sharpest faller in a flat London market yesterday as growth worries led its joint house broker to advise selling.

The credit checking agency lost 2.8 per cent to £11.27 on a downgrade to "sell" from Goldman Sachs. Cyclical weakness in Brazil would weigh on Experian's Latin American business, which provides a fifth of group sales, the broker said.

Experian "remains a structural winner", Goldman analyst Charles Wilson wrote. But the threat of slower growth and slimmer returns meant the stock was at risk of derating from its current record-high multiples, he argued.

Goldman also flagged up the impact from Experian's recent acquisitions, Passport Health and 41st Parameter , which cost $1.2bn.

It made strategic sense for Experian to expand into healthcare and fraud prevention but the benefit to returns would take several years to come through, said Goldman. It also forecast net debt to reach nearly $4bn next year, above management's target range, which made further acquisisions or buybacks unlikely for the next 12 months.

A quiet wider market left the FTSE 100 barely changed for a third straight day. The index was down 3.9 points at 6,650.57, giving it a 0.4 per cent decline for the week.

Barclays jumped 2.3 per cent to 271.7p after the The Bank of England's regulatory arm eased capital requirements to be implemented under EU rules.

Investec Securities called the news "strongly positive for Barclays relative to fearful market expectations", which had hardened earler in the month when Royal Bank of Scotland said it was targeting a core tier one capital ratio of at least 12 per cent by the end of 2016. However, the regulator's proposals matched Barclays' existing plan to hit a 10.5 per cent capital ratio in 2015.

RBS was down 1.7 per cent to 327.2p after the Financial Conduct Authority said it would launch an independent review into allegations that it profited by deliberately pushing businesses into default.

A positive management presentation from Aggreko to RBC's sales team helped the power generator hire specialist add 2 per cent to £16.05. Rupert Soames, Aggreko's chief executive, said trading was still slow but the group's capital cost advantage over competition remained in place, with a strong pipeline of orders waiting to convert.

Rentokil Initial added 3.2 per cent to 106.1p after Merrill Lynch turned positive.

Noting that Rentokil was trading at a discount of more than 20 per cent to peers, Merrill looked to new chief executive Andy Ransom for a refreshed strategy when he delivers full year results in March. "We expect the group to see a meaningful improvement in cashflow in 2014-15, as restructuring costs fall away and capital expenditure normalises," the broker said.

Thin trading squeezed Computacenter 4.2 per cent higher at 670p. Panmure Gordon had a "buy" rating on the IT services group ahead of Microsoft ending support for its Windows XP operating system in April.

Between a fifth and a third of the world's PCs still run XP, according to Panmure, which reckoned users "will need to migrate before being targeted by every piece of villainous malware in the universe".

"As the UK's largest XP upgrade shop Computacenter has a huge opportunity in this market," said Panmure. "A bit like Y2K of old, expect a late flurry closer to the finishing line."

Recycled talk that Topps Tiles might be a takeover target helped lift the retailer 9.3 per cent to 125.8p.

Traders were speculating about interest in Topps from private equity or from sector peer Carpetright, up 3.3 per cent to 602p, though it was noted that similar theories have done the rounds for nearly a decade. Topps shares jumped 38 per cent this week, having on Tuesday reported full-year results that revealed improved trading in October and November.

Speedy Hire dropped 21.7 per cent to 50.5p on news it was investigating accounting irregularities at its Middle East business, which led its chief executive Steve Corcoran to tender his resignation.

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Probably the most inventive setter of UK cryptic crosswords of recent decades, John Graham baffled, tantalised and enthralled generations of solvers. He was the Church of England vicar known as Cinephile in the Financial Times for more than 30 years, alongside a 55-year association with The Guardian, where he took the name Araucaria.

Graham, who has died aged 92, long set most of this newspaper's Saturday prize crosswords. The one published today is his last for the FT and, with one repeated phrase carrying the same meaning throughout, is typical of his themed puzzles that extended the range of what solvers had come to expect.

He invented the alphabetical jigsaw crossword, where the clues are listed in order of the first letters of their answers and must be fitted into the grid wherever they will go. His ability to produce anagrams of long phrases was also remarkable.

There are countless instances where Graham clued phrases that would have defeated lesser compilers and caused astonishment to solvers over the breakfast table, on the train to work or when they later looked up the answers and found that though he may have been devious he was never unfair.

John Galbraith Graham was born in Oxford on February 16 1921 and educated at Manor House School, Horsham and St Edward's, Oxford. He became a classics scholar at King's College, Cambridge, in 1939 but war intervened and he joined the RAF, being made an air crew observer. He flew some 30 operations in Italy before he was shot down, bailed out, was rescued by Americans and was eventually mentioned in dispatches.

On his return to King's he took part in one of the theology tripos. He then studied at Ely Theological College before being ordained in 1948. Various church posts followed before he became priest in charge at St Michael's Beaconsfield in 1955. While there he won the Observer crossword compiling competition two years running and as a result was invited to compile for the Manchester Guardian, where his first puzzle appeared in 1958.

When Graham's marriage broke down in the 1970s, church rules at the time meant he had to leave the ministry. He was not allowed back until the death of his first wife some years later.

In 1982 John Perkin, crossword editor of The Guardian, wrote to the FT saying Graham wanted to extend his compiling by a few puzzles a month. He did not wish to set for The Times because he expected (probably rightly) that his clues would be "pasteurised". As Perkin's FT counterpart, I accepted gladly.

Araucaria meant monkey puzzle; for the FT he chose Cinephile as an anagram of Chile pine, another name for the same tree. Graham admitted to having been influenced (as are all compilers) by Ximenes - DS Macnutt, the legendary Observer compiler - but his clueing was never slavish to Ximenean linguistic strictures. As he put it, "any clue is legitimate which leads, by whatever route, to an answer which, 80 per cent of the time, can be known to be correct as soon as it appears to the mind".

The range was extraordinary. Over recent years his themes included sauces, counties, track-and-field events, Scottish writers, places of worship, composers, flowers, female whodunnit writers, cities of Italy spelt in either English or Italian, Bonnie Prince Charlie, poets, young ***animals***, castles, Gilbert and Sullivan, Scottish towns, police and Tennessee Williams. His Christmas puzzles also roamed widely: one had an Islamic theme, which ruffled a few feathers among more traditionalist readers.

After the death 20 years ago of his second wife Margaret, Graham lived alone in Somersham near Huntingdon, composing his puzzles in an upstairs room while accepting that he would sometimes be called out of retirement to fill in at a parish that had a sudden vacancy.

He was made an MBE in 2005. A lunch in the hall of King's College to celebrate his 90th birthday in 2011 was attended by more than 150 friends, admirers and crossword solvers, including a number of younger compilers to whom he had acted as mentor. In the same year he was a guest on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs .

When diagnosed at the end of 2012 with cancer of the oesophagus, Graham compiled a puzzle for One Across, a magazine he had founded, where answers included those words as well as others such as "palliative care". It was a moving and dignified way to say farewell.

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The government of Spain has told Banco Santander, BBVA, Caixabank and other domestic lenders that they can reclassify EUR30bn worth of deferred tax assets as tax credits, in a move that is designed to bolster their regulatory capital ahead of next year's Europe-wide bank stress test.

The move, approved by the cabinet on Friday, follows months of intense lobbying by Spanish banking chiefs, who warned that the country's financial sector was being put at a disadvantage to other European lenders under the existing regime. Italy already gave its banks a similar helping hand in 2011.

DTAs arise when a bank makes losses or incurs provisions that it can later offset against its tax bill. Under the new Basel III regime, such assets can no longer be counted as regulatory capital - a change that could have forced weakly capitalised lenders to raise billions in additional funding. Tax credits, in contrast, will still count towards a bank's capital cushion under Basel III.

The move comes amid a flurry of action by Spanish banks to strengthen their balance sheets through disposals, listings and by raising fresh capital. BBVA last month sold down its stake in a Chinese lender to avoid the penalty that Basel III attaches to large financial holdings.

Santander and Banco Popular sold their property management arms this month, while Caixabank and the La Caixa foundation have issued shares and exchangeable bonds.

These measures will be dwarfed, however, by the financial impact of the government announcement made on Friday. Across the sector, Spanish banks have amassed more than EUR70bn in DTAs, of which about EUR50bn are linked to their operations in Spain itself - equivalent to 40 per cent of core equity tier one capital.

In the case of Bankia, the nationalised former savings bank, DTAs account for more than 80 per cent of tangible book value, according to research published this year by N+1, the investment bank. The corresponding figure for Santander, Spain's biggest bank by assets, was still about 40 per cent.

Shares in Spanish banks were broadly unchanged on Friday, suggesting investors had mostly priced in the widely anticipated move. Analysts also pointed out that the shift, though welcome, did little to bolster the banks' underlying financial strength.

"This is a change in the regulatory treatment of capital. There is no change to the real equity loss absorption capacity of the banks. This does not change a bank's real ability to withstand losses," said Daragh Quinn, a Madrid-based banking analyst for Nomura, the investment bank.

The main benefit of the Spanish move, analysts said, was that it was likely to reduce the regulatory pressure on banks such as Bankia and Sabadell, two lenders that have been particularly reliant on DTAs, to raise additional capital as a result of the Basel III change.

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There are lots of weird things about global inequality, and about how the world's richest have got ever richer. For instance, there are people who will happily pay $1,500 for a warm goose-down jacket - from stores in steamy Miami and Taipei. That is part of the case for buying into the initial public offering of Moncler, an Italian skiwear maker with revenues of EUR490m last year. In terms of growth, Moncler hopes to apply its French Alps heritage to selling high-tech city-wear to rich young things in Asia and North America.

For its Milan listing, Moncler is going for a glamorous valuation. The midpoint of the proposed EUR8.75 to EUR10.25 per share range would give it a market capitalisation of EUR2.4bn and put the shares on about 20 times likely 2014 earnings. More than that would be unwise. Private equity backers Carlyle, which owns a fifth of the company, and Eurazeo, with about half, would still have half of their stake left to sell after the IPO. They need a stable after-market. And the listing is supposed to be a marker of Moncler's status as a sophisticated brand - that is, not for the brash or nouveau riche.

The big risk for Moncler is that its pricey puffy coats become bling. Since leading a buyout in 2003, chairman and creative director Remo Ruffini has carefully guided the company towards measured growth. That has included building out Moncler's own stores. At about 70 per cent, gross margins in the next few years are likely to rival those of peers in the luxury sector, and its return on capital of 22 per cent looks decent enough.

Mr Ruffini is also sticking around: he will not be selling any of his 32 per cent stake in the offering. And against a bling future, Moncler is next targeting North America, which accounts for only a tenth of revenues, for expansion rather than somewhere riskier, such as China.

The shares of luxury goods companies are not cheap these days; Moncler would not be alone at 20 times earnings. But that sort of valuation would put it at a premium to Burberry. And compared with Burberry, which has gone far beyond its raincoats, Moncler still has to grow past those warm down jackets - including in hotter climes.

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Language is a precious thing for writer and film-maker Atiq Rahimi, the bearer of Afghan and French passports: witness the process he followed to adapt his 2008 novel Syngué Sabour, translated into English as The Patience Stone, for the screen. After writing three novels in his native Dari - one of the two main languages of Afghanistan - Rahimi turned to French for this fourth book, which won France's top literature award, the Prix Goncourt.

He found that the story of an Afghan woman who cares for her much older husband after he is paralysed by a bullet required an earthy language anchored in reality, such as French, as opposed to a lyrical, unworldly one, such as Dari. As the wife confides her years of pent-up frustrations to her prone, speechless husband, her language is by turns loving, crude, determined and fearful. It is all French. So it's interesting that Rahimi decided to revert to Dari for the film version.

"When it was in novel form I started to translate The Patience Stone from French into Dari, but I just couldn't do it," says Rahimi, whose carefully studied appearance - goatee beard, wide-brimmed felt hat and flowing foulard - gives him a swashbuckling air. "Cinema was a way for me to translate my novel, not only into images but also into my mother tongue," he continues. "By using images I found myself able to sidestep my reserve regarding the language and what it can express. Even my actress, Golshifteh Farahani, who is incredibly open-minded, would say to me 'No, Atiq, I can't say something like that in Dari.' So I used images to say things that I couldn't say with dialogue."

We are sitting in Rahimi's work den in Montparnasse, a place of "solitude" to which he can escape. "As I'm an insomniac, it's very difficult for my family [his wife and two children] to see me still up at four or five in the morning ... "

He wrote much of the script for The Patience Stone here, aided by the veteran French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière who was Bunuel's writing partner for many years. "We work well together," he says, alternately munching from a bowl of sesame seeds and sipping on a Scotch. "I came up with the structure and he is terrific with the details. One of the things we discussed at length was how to transform the present into the past in the way Bergman does in Wild Strawberries. Jean-Claude was very adept at incorporating flashbacks without making them too obvious."

Initially Rahimi was worried that Farahani, an Iranian actress who starred in Asghar Farhadi's About Elly (2009) and appeared with Leonardo DiCaprio in Ridley Scott's Body of Lies (2008), might be wrong for the main part. "I didn't want her beauty to detract from the character's story," he says. "But when I'd done some tests and she told me about the things she'd experienced in Iran, I knew I'd found the right actress. Apparently at one time she used to walk around the streets of Tehran with her head shaved, disguised as a boy, so that she didn't have to cover up."

Rahimi's green eyes twinkle as he recounts Farahani's rebellious behaviour. In his captivating film, where myth and reality are constantly in flux, we discover the sadness of a culture in which women are reduced to a question of sexuality not personality. "In Afghan society there is the idea that if a woman's ankle or her hair is visible then it is enticing," he says, momentarily evincing the hint of a stutter now all but mastered. "You have to be sexually obsessed to think that way. So yes, indeed, a woman is reduced to her sexual function."

While many have compared The Patience Stone to the story of Scheherazade it was Gustave Flaubert's classic novel of a fallen woman who dared act out her fantasies, Madame Bovary, that Rahimi says was "a huge indirect influence". Rahimi has had a long love affair with French literature. Born in Kabul in 1962, he was educated at the elite Franco-Afghan Lycée Esteqlal, which still operates in the Afghan capital today. "My father was a germanophone, my brother, sister and mother were anglophones," he explains. "They wanted someone from the family to be a francophone." Later, as a university student in Kabul, Rahimi was censored by the dominant communist youth committee for giving a talk on Albert Camus, whom they accused of being a "bourgeois intellectual".

"For the communists who held power at the time, Camus, Sartre, even André Malraux were all held to have been in foreign pay," he says. "I didn't want to ally myself with the young communist movement, or the royalists who my father supported, I was perturbed by all that." Instead Rahimi sought asylum in France, where he arrived in 1985. After completing his film studies at the Sorbonne he joined a Paris-based production company for whom he directed several documentaries, including one about Afghanistan's exiled former monarch, Mohammed Zahir Shah.

In 2000 he published his first novel Earth and Ashes, a Beckettian tale of thwartedness about an old man and his grandchild set during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which he also crafted into a compelling film in 2004. Two years before that, after the fall of the Taliban, he had ended 17 years of exile by returning to Kabul. There he employed a primitive box camera left behind by the British 150 years earlier to take photographs of his war-wounded city: last year the Victoria and Albert Museum in London purchased six of these pictures for their permanent collection. And his latest novel A Curse on Dostoevsky, which revisits Crime and Punishment in an Afghan setting, has recently been translated into English.

His current projects include another screenplay with Carrière, which is set between Brussels and India, and a Paris exhibition of his photographs and calligraphy, some examples of which he proudly shows me. "When I've written a novel it's very hard for me to throw myself straight into another one," he says. "Yet I can't not work, I have to find something to do. I'm excited by each different art form for the way it can reveal a different dimension of a reality or a thought."

Throughout Rahimi's novels and films we encounter characters who have lost their power of speech or are somehow stymied in the way they express themselves or understand others. It is a theme that Rahimi believes will continue to absorb him. "For centuries there was a pressure, a form of dictatorship which emanated as much from religion as it did from tradition and politics," he says. "The goal was to forbid people from speaking up. Even today in Afghanistan our lips are sealed, our ears and our bodies are sealed. Our problem is not to be or not to be, but to say or not to say."

'The Patience Stone' is released in the UK on December 6

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On a frosty, autumn weekend few places are more magical than the New Forest in Hampshire. The morning sunlight is turning the shaggy coats of the wild ponies the colour of horse chestnuts as they saunter across our path single-file. We make our way through the trees to the edge of the forest where our cottage is waiting, kick off our wellies at the front door and set about building a fire in the wood burner. It's almost lunchtime and I'm feeling peckish, so I pick up the phone. Within minutes, a golf buggy comes trundling up the drive laden with goodies.

Our woodland hideaway may be rustic, but we're certainly not roughing it. It's one of three new cottages recently opened within the grounds of Lime Wood, the five-star country house hotel run by Robin Hutson, co-founder of the Hotel du Vin chain. Hutson felt the hotel was not fully geared up to accommodate families, so he set about converting the former gatehouse and an old stable block of the Regency manor house into three self-contained cottages.

"Everyone loves the idea of a cabin in the woods," says Hutson. "We knew we could never match the nobility of the main house, so it was important to give the cottages a character of their own."

The designer's brief was to recreate the rough-hewn romance of a "woodsman's cottage" - albeit a woodsman with a subscription to Elle Decor magazine and a taste for the finer things in life. Chunky wooden bed frames are softened with the finest white bed linen, dark walls of unvarnished oak are offset with funky gilt mirrors, while the rustic-luxe theme reaches its apogee in the enormous upstairs bathroom with its walk-in shower for two, roll-top bath, Bamford organic unguents and "chill-out zone" with two leather armchairs and a pile of Vogue back issues.

So far, so stylish. But the all-important family-friendly details are in place too: my daughter is captivated by the cosy little bunk room (with a pile of Julia Donaldson books for bedtime reading), there's a stack of board games downstairs, and the tiny kitchenette is just right for heating up some pasta or baked beans. You probably wouldn't attempt to cook a Sunday roast in it, but then, why would you want to, with Angela Hartnett's new restaurant, Hartnett Holder & Co, at the top of the drive?

It's a winning combination: guests get the freedom, space and privacy of their own house, but with the facilities of a five-star hotel on tap, while hoteliers get to add to their bed count without having to carry out disruptive building work on the main hotel. It's no surprise to learn that Hutson is looking for other suitable spots within the grounds of Lime Wood to "sneak a couple more in", nor that the concept is being emulated at five-star hotels across the country, as they look to tap into the increasingly lucrative family market.

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At Barnsley House, a beautiful Cotswold stone manor house in Gloucestershire, expansion within the boundaries of the 17th-century listed building and gardens was out of the question and the room layout of the historic building was far from family-friendly. So when the opportunity to take over the lease of a historic cottage in the village came up, the owners jumped at the chance. Home Farm Cottage opened its doors in August. Unlike many of the cottages found within the grounds of hotels, this one is completely self-contained and fully equipped for self-catering. Guests can immerse themselves in village life, but with the added benefit of luxury fittings and furnishings on a par with those found in the hotel, and access to all of the facilities, including the spa and cinema, a short walk away.

"We live hectic lives and the reality is that we often don't get to spend a great deal of time with our kids. Luxury hotels were missing out on this market, but if you do it well, you can welcome children and it doesn't have to impact on the other guests," says Barnsley House general manager Michele Mella.

It's not a case of guests in the cottages in the grounds being the poor relations to those in the big house - quite the reverse in fact. Prices at these new deluxe cottages usually start well above the rate for a hotel room, so the onus is on hoteliers to come up with something pretty special.

At Cliveden House in Berkshire, for example, guests pay upwards of £1,800 a night to stay in the beautifully restored summer house that reopened earlier this year on the banks of the river Thames. Originally built as a tea room for the Countess of Orkney in 1813, Spring Cottage was a favourite haunt of Queen Victoria. In the 1960s it became infamous as the house where Stephen Ward and Christine Keeler were staying at the time of the Profumo scandal. It had fallen into dilapidation but has now been transformed into a secluded and exclusive retreat for up to six guests, with vaulted ceilings, stained glass windows, landscaped gardens and a private river launch. The hotel can provide a personal butler and guests get full use of the main house, the spa, gym and tennis centre, and free range of the gorgeous National Trust-owned grounds.

While the advantages for families are clear, it's not only parents who value the added privacy that a cottage brings. Dormy House, a hotel close to the Cotswolds village of Broadway, is about to complete a £10m, 10-month renovation, which includes the conversion of a stone outbuilding (once used as a cleaners' storeroom) into Rose Cottage. To be fair, it is on the far side of the car park from the main hotel, rather than lost in woodland on a huge estate, but it is still an ideal retreat for couples, blending pretty floral fabrics with some high-tech gadgets and a luxurious bathroom.

Over the coming months, more country house hotels will be putting their stamp on the humble holiday cottage. The Celtic Manor Resort, near Newport in Wales, will launch 10 four-bedroom wooden lodges with saunas and whirlpool baths in February. And the Isle of Eriska Hotel, a Baronial pile on a private island on the west coast of Scotland, will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year with the opening of two standalone suites on the bluff above the main house. Built to a modern, sustainable design, the Applecrates (which take their name from the company that designs them) will have floor-to-ceiling windows and hot tubs with views of Loch Creran. The new properties join the existing Arnott's House, a three-bedroom beachside house, which the hotel is letting on an exclusive-use basis for the first time this winter.

Back in the New Forest, Robin Hutson is looking into the possibility of creating three new family cottages within the grounds of The Pig, the popular Hampshire bolt-hole credited with reinventing the country house hotel when it opened three years ago.

"It's not like 20 years ago when country house hotels didn't want children running around," says Hutson. "People don't necessarily want to dumb down their travel experience when they have children these days. They want to stay in nice places and be looked after. If we are going to accommodate them, then let's make sure we do it properly."

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Nicola Iseard

Editor, Fall-Line magazine

One of my earliest childhood memories is learning to ski, aged four, dressed in a brand new, baby-blue, all-in-one ski suit from C&A - which, my mum reckons, cost about £15 - with a matching blue hat. Twenty-seven years later and I'm editor of Fall-Line, a skiing and snowboarding magazine, and still wearing matching skiwear: purple top, purple bottoms, purple and white hat. However, the cost of the Norrøna Lofoten jacket and pants I am currently wearing is just shy of £900. But then this is one of the most tech-packed get-ups I have ever worn.

The Norrøna brand dates back to 1929, when a Norwegian named Jørgen Jørgensen, a lover of the great outdoors, began to produce technologically advanced gear that could withstand Norway's often harsh climate and terrain. Fast forward 84 years, and the company, run by Jørgensen's great-grandson, still operates on similar principles.

My outfit, for example, is made with new Gore-Tex Pro fabric, which features a polytetrafluoroethylene multilayer membrane. I'm not sure what that means exactly, except that it makes the fabric up to 28 per cent more breathable than previous versions. This is an essential feature in freeride skiing-specific gear, such as the Lofoten jacket and trouser, which are designed for off-piste forays that usually involve some degree of hiking to virgin powder away from the pistes. (Incidentally, on expeditions like this, regardless of how breathable the fabric is, you are still likely to overheat.)

There wasn't much powder at Snowtrax, the artificial ski slope in Dorset where I tested the Lofoten on a balmy autumn day, so I was concerned about how hot I might feel with a merino mid-layer underneath. But during my climb to the peak I simply whipped open the jacket's underarm vents and the full-length vents on the pants, all of which have easy-pull, two-way zips, and didn't sweat a drop. Rain wouldn't be a problem either: the fabric has the water-repellent properties of cling film; water just beads up and rolls off.

Had I been in a situation where there was waist-deep powder, however, there was also no chance of it getting into my jacket: the removable powder skirt (material inside the jacket that clips together and sits snug to your body) has a good fit, plus a silicon grip to keep it in place, aided with poppers that secure it to the trousers.

In addition, the trousers have an integrated zip-off bib - not normally my favourite feature, as it often feels restrictive, but here it was so lightweight and elasticated that I forgot it was there after the first five minutes. Similarly, elasticated gaiters ensure no snow creeps in down below, while a helmet-compatible, wire-brimmed hood protects the head.

There are two decent-sized pockets on the jacket (one has a handy goggle-wipe cloth attached to the inside), which sit clear of backpack straps, as well as a small interior zip pocket for a phone or money. I would have liked an interior mesh pocket - useful for storing goggles on lifts - but the two thigh pockets on the trousers are roomy enough to serve this purpose. There is also a large back pocket and a small key card pocket at the waist.

When I posted a picture of myself wearing the outfit on Facebook, I got 23 "likes", with several people commenting on the purple and green colour combination. "There's no chance of losing you in a whiteout!" commented one friend. The jacket also comes in green, yellow and two different blues, while the trousers come in green, blue and black.

The fit of both jacket and trousers is relaxed, verging on loose. I tested a medium, which is what I normally wear in ski gear, but given that I could have fitted the photographer down one leg, I would probably buy the small (Scandinavian ski gear often comes up large). Regardless of that, the Velcro adjustable waist tabs ensured the trousers stayed in place.

For those of you who - like me - wore all-in-one ski suits back in the day and feel nostalgic now, the Lofoten range also includes a unisex Gore-Tex Pro one-piece suit. Just don't forget to pair it with a matching hat.

norrona.com

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Tom Robbins

FT travel editor

In the 1980s, when ski racers were gods, their boldly-patterned skin suits and shiny, futuristic helmets inspired the exuberant clothes worn by many a downhill holiday maker. "Then in 2010, freeskiing finally broke through," says Reinhard Schitter, product director for clothing at Atomic, a leading skimaker. "Freeskiing" - skiing off-piste, heading away from the resorts and into the wilderness - "changed the entire world of skiing."

And the world of skiing wardrobes with it, as anyone shopping for new gear recently would have noticed. Out have gone the race pants and tight-waisted neon suits; "backcountry" skiing, walking your way uphill on your skis, rather than using lifts, to access fresh powder fields means getting hot, so you need layers to regulate heat. Padded, traditional ski jackets are useless for this. Instead, skiers need to dress more like mountaineers. The same trickle-down effect that brought the aesthetics of racing to the ordinary slopes has ushered in an era of new, highly technical and far more sober backcountry looks; the novelty hats and poles with inbuilt hip-flasks that once filled the pages of ski-shop catalogues have been replaced by shovels, avalanche probes and rucksacks.

Admittedly, I did feel like my £1,000-plus Arc'teryx outfit was taking it a bit far, especially since I tried it out not in the Alaskan backcountry but on the backstreets of Hemel Hempstead (where the indoor Snow Centre offers the closest pistes to London). Arc'teryx epitomises the modern look, and has impeccable freeskiing credentials. The company started out in 1991 in Vancouver, making climbing harnesses under the name Rock Solid, before diversifying into rucksacks and then, finally, skiwear. Rather than the racing slopes, its ideas came from climbing and camping, straight from the backcountry.

I tried a new version of the Sidewinder SV jacket, which is uninsulated, unpatterned, monochrome - and costs £500. The main difference to its previous incarnation is the lack of lining, cutting weight from 690g to 585g. Cynics might detect a whiff of emperor's new clothes here - you strip a product back to basics, then charge more. But great thought has gone into the tiniest details: the waist pockets are high enough not to be impeded by a climbing harness, while a lift-pass pocket on the left arm can be easily swiped on automated gates. The hood has a strengthened peak; the underarms, long ventilation zips. Warmth comes from wearing layers underneath, either synthetic or down.

I opted for a Cerium LT (£240), part of a new range of down jackets, the first that Arc'teryx has made. Down still offers more warmth for its weight than any other fabric but only if it's dry, so teaming it with a waterproof shell such as the Sidewinder works well, especially since the Cerium uses "down composite mapping" (swapping feathers for synthetic insulation in places prone to condensation or damp: cuffs, underarm and collar).

I was not entirely convinced by the "maize" colour of my Sabre trousers (£370) but, again, the quality and detail were clear: thigh vents to release heat, an inbuilt reflector to help during an avalanche rescue, and instep patches to prevent abrasion. The only problem is the width of the trouser leg (30cm): anyone embarking on serious backcountry skiing will need to wear crampons occasionally, and a leg this wide would get caught in the spikes and would soon be ripped to shreds.

Still, that's a detail unlikely to worry most users, who might aspire to the wilderness but are likely to spend more time on pistes and in après-ski bars. True, there might be something risible about wearing kit fit for the Himalayas on Hertfordshire's faux Alps but if you didn't know its origins, all you would know was the Arc'teryx kit is light, warm and comfortable. The fact is, apart from the price, there's no real downside in wearing backcountry gear for an ordinary ski trip. Plus, on the train back to London, the simple grey jacket blended in far better than a neon one-piece ever could.

arcteryx.com

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In the seventh-floor playroom at Colombia's National Cancer Institute in Bogotá, María Ligia Suárez is huddled with her six-year-old daughter Leidy.

Leidy is being treated for medulloblastoma, a form of brain cancer, and has already undergone two rounds of surgery. Her partially paralysed body is strapped into a walking frame and she is half-watching Beauty and the Beast on a television. "I'm tired, Mummy," she tells her mother every now and again.

María and Leidy are taking a brief break from a very raw battle for survival. The doctors have been frank in their prognosis: one more setback and the little girl is unlikely to live much longer. María is determined to fight for her child, however, and so she has made the sort of "drop everything" decision that parents all over the world have to make when confronted by a child's serious illness.

The family's entire life has been reoriented around Leidy. María has given up her job selling tamales to relocate to the capital and is renting a room near the hospital. For the past few months Leidy's two-year-old sister has been living with her grandmother in the family's home town, five hours west of Bogotá. Leidy's father is out of the picture and does little to help, María says, and she is surviving on about $60 a week from family and friends. Half of this goes on rent.

Every visit to the hospital costs the equivalent of $6 on taxis there and back. "I cannot take her in a minibus," María explains, almost apologising for what she can't help but see as an extravagance.

Yet Leidy is "a source of strength for me and I for her," María insists. "It breaks my heart because I know she could die any minute." Leidy's fight is a heartbreakingly difficult one but María has good reason to maintain some hope.

In many ways, Colombia is an example of what can be done in the developing world to make sure that children with cancer get the best care available. Daunting problems remain but in recent years the future has brightened for children with cancer in Colombia, thanks in part to its work with World Child Cancer, the charity partner for this year's FT Seasonal Appeal.

The country's National Cancer Institute is now far better resourced than many other facilities in the developing world. It houses some of the best doctors in Colombia and the paediatric unit has 26 single rooms and a new intensive care unit. Over the past four years it has benefited from a special partnership with World Child Cancer that has seen ***medical*** staff receive valuable training and mentorship from some of the world's leading paediatric oncologists as part of a "twinning programme".

World Child Cancer was founded in 2007 by the late Geoff Thaxter and colleagues from his time at the UK's largest children's cancer charity, Clic Sargent. Thaxter, who lost his own daughter to cancer, wanted to help children with cancer in developing countries, where little treatment was available. This year WCC will help more than 3,000 children in nine countries and hopes to reach 10,000 children annually by 2018.

The Bogotá institute is a long way from catching up with the results seen in places such as the UK where eight in 10 children diagnosed with cancer survive, but the outside help is making a difference. Since WCC and the US-based Dana-Farber Cancer Institute began working with National Cancer Institute doctors in 2009, the survival rate for cases treated at the Bogotá facility has risen from less than 30 per cent to better than 65 per cent.

Much of the change is attributed to the work doctors have done to reduce the number of families who abandon treatment. Before the partnership with WCC, as many as a third of children diagnosed with cancer abandoned treatment - usually because of the financial strain cancer puts on impoverished families. This year the figure is expected to be close to 2 per cent.

The number of deaths attributed to the toxicity of chemotherapy has also been vastly reduced. Before 2009, when the WCC/Dana-Farber project began, 30 per cent of patients' deaths at the National Cancer Institute were attributed to toxicity, according to WCC figures. This year that is expected to be just 1 per cent.

"We are doing very good things here," says Dr Martha Piña, one of the institute's paediatric oncologists. There is, of course, more to be done, and Dr Piña and her peers bemoan the health system in Colombia which means parents of children with cancer often have to fight to get treatment.

A law passed in 2010 gives all children with cancer a right to integral treatment and requires Colombia's health insurance companies to pay costs without delays. Such political gestures can have a huge impact on the survival chances for children with cancer, says Dr Andreas Ullrich, lead ***medical*** officer for cancer control at the World Health Organisation. He cites the example of Peru, where the treatment of childhood cancer is free and the government has opened a facility in Lima offering first-world treatments such as bone marrow transplants. "They made it very clear that if you have political will, if you have political interest, in cancer it makes a lot of difference," Dr Ullrich says.

In Colombia, doctors and patients' parents complain that the law is often ignored. And, they say, it does little to address the economic burden of cancer on poor families. Child patients are often bounced around the system, receiving fractured care at a time when their lives depend on it.

"The twinning programme [with WCC] has worked but we have already reached a ceiling," Dr Piña says. "Now we have physicians 24 hours a day, we have a new [intensive care unit], we have an established programme to avoid [patients abandoning] treatment, education, good oncologists - a lot of things we did not have before. But the law limits us."

Alejandro Gutierrez, a professor at Harvard ***Medical*** School who has worked with the Colombian institute as part of the WCC/Dana-Farber partnership, voices frustration with the system. "The terrible part is that all of the elements are in place to cure the majority of children with cancer in Colombia," he says. "Yet the people who are profiting from the current health delivery system seem to have no misgivings about letting children die of curable diseases to maintain their profit margins."

The frustration is shared by the parents of patients at the Bogotá institute. They complain that they have been forced to fight their health insurers to secure proper care for their children. All have seen delays during potentially crucial treatment, and all tell stories of a healthcare system that has at some point let their children down. The National Cancer Institute is, however, a ray of hope in this dysfunctional system.

In June, when 11-year-old Donoban Steep López came down with flu, his parents thought nothing of it, largely because his mother and 15-year-old brother were ill at the same time. Donoban, however, didn't get better. "No paediatrician was able to tell us what he really had. They sent him home a couple of times, saying it was nothing but a viral flu" says Donoban's father, Alfonso López.

Eventually, a doctor ordered blood tests, which apparently confirmed the diagnosis but Donoban deteriorated and the mystery grew until a relative who is a nurse took the test results to a paediatrician at the private clinic where she works. "Two hours later, at 8pm, we got a call saying we needed to take Donoban urgently to the [emergency room]," Mariela Sierra, his mother, says. "And at 3am they told us he probably had leukaemia."

That was five months ago. Donoban has acute lymphocytic leukaemia, and the diagnosis brought significant change for the family, who live in one of Bogotá's poorest neighbourhoods. Alfonso, who used to earn some $300 a month as a waiter now earns half that, having cut down his working hours to take care of his son.

The battles with bureaucracy continue and the family occasionally has to wait up to two weeks for approval for ***medicines***. But in the care of the National Cancer Institute, Donoban's fightback is well under way. In the institute's playroom, wearing the yellow jersey of Colombia's national team and playing a football game on an Xbox, Donoban is optimistic: "I feel well now [and] I want to go back home and play football."

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Letter from the editor

This year the staff of the Financial Times have chosen to support World Child Cancer (WCC), a London-based charity that does impressive work in the developing world. It is estimated that in those countries about 100,000 children, who could be saved with comparatively simple treatments, die unnecessarily from cancer each year. WCC's mission is to improve the diagnosis, treatment and care for those children.

FT reporters have visited the charity's projects in Myanmar, Colombia, Ghana and Malawi. We will publish their work in the FT over the next six weeks, aiming to raise awareness and funds for the charity. Allison Ogden-Newton, chief executive of WCC, is hopeful that funds raised can transform the charity. "With the help of the Financial Times and its readers we will achieve a step change in overcoming the crisis in childhood cancer in the developing world."

Since 2005, the FT's seasonal appeals have raised more than £11m. WCC has already received pledges of matching funds from the UK government, Celgene, the Switzerland-based pharmaceuticals company, and the Vitol Foundation.

Justine Greening, secretary of state for international development, says the British government will match all UK donations to WCC. "We will help them improve diagnosis, treatment and care for thousands of children in Bangladesh and Ghana who would not otherwise get help. This means their families can focus on earning money and lifting themselves out of poverty for good," she says.

Samantha Pearce, general manager at Celgene, says that with the additional money "the work of this admirable charity will give hope to even more of the world's poorest children".

I encourage you to follow our reporting of World Child Cancer's activities at ft.com/appeal and to give generously to a life-changing cause.

Lionel Barber

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Ha-Joon Chang's hands are chopping the air like helicopter blades. He whirrs them in a tight 360-degree spin or brings them down on the beat like a conductor. Sometimes he tightens his fists to emphasise frustration, or holds his hands flat - palms upwards, fingers splayed - as though weighing two bags of rice. At one point he stretches both arms over his head before bringing them together as if along an invisible monkey bar. What could be prompting so much passion? You guessed it. We are talking economics.

In Chang's hands, though, economics is not dry. The 50-year-old South Korean-born academic is the author of several bestselling books on the subject, leavened with wit and bearing provocative titles such as 23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism (2010) and Bad Samaritans: The Guilty Secrets of Rich Nations and the Threat to Global Prosperity (2007). His 23 Things, which claims that free markets don't exist and that the washing machine changed society more than the internet, has sold 650,000 copies and been translated into 32 languages. All in all, he estimates, his books have been bought by more than 1.3m people - not bad for an economist who turned up in Cambridge 27 years ago barely able to speak English. Yet in an email sent before we meet, he spells out an irony. "I am one of the most successful economists, according to what markets tell us, though most of my professional colleagues, who are much keener to accept market outcomes than I am, would dismiss me as a crank or - the worst of all abuses among economists - a 'sociologist'."

Chang conducts his guerrilla war against economic orthodoxy from a cramped office at Cambridge university's Sidgwick site. For him, economics is a tool for changing the world, not for explaining why the world is as we find it. He is a reader at Cambridge rather than a full professor, a relative sidelining he attributes to his heterodox approach. "I don't do maths," he says, blinking softly through his round, silver-rimmed spectacles. "A lot of economists think I'm not an economist."

He is, though, a star with a big following. In the wake of the global financial crisis, organisations such as the International Monetary Fund - which used to regard him as "an oddity" - regularly invite him to speak. Still, he reckons the economics profession overall remains resistant to fresh ideas, clinging to its status as a pseudoscience undergirded by unbreakable mathematical rules. "These things do not change overnight. The German physicist Max Planck once said science progresses one funeral at a time."

We have come to the Rice Boat, a Keralan restaurant specialising in south Indian cuisine. A 10-minute walk from Chang's office, it has become his unofficial canteen. The restaurant is large and, when we walk in, entirely empty, though Chang assures me it's heaving in the evenings. The walls are a garish yellow and hung with the sort of Indian paintings you might find at a car-boot sale. The bathroom lights don't work and I am handed a lightsaber-type wand to negotiate the darkness. The food, despite the unpromising surroundings, turns out to be excellent.

Chang recommends chicken, lamb and tuna cutlets as a starter followed by Kerala red fish curry and the restaurant's "famous" Kerala beef fry. "You can have beef here because they are Christians." We also choose appam, a spongy pancake made with fermented rice and coconut milk, some chapattis, and a portion of Kerala boiled rice, which Chang explains is fluffier than the Basmati variety. I wonder if he'd like to join me for a beer. "I don't drink at lunchtime because I'm very weak at alcohol like most Asians," he says apologetically, ordering a sweet lassi instead. I decide not to let down the journalistic profession and select a bottle of Konrad 11, a sharp and tangy Czech lager.

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Chang is dressed in academic casual, an open-neck shirt and slacks. His fringe is as jagged as a graph of booms and busts - absent Keynesian countercyclical spending - and his kindly face boyishly pudgy. As he marshals argument after argument against his intellectual enemies, I think of a teddy bear savaging a Rottweiler.

"The predominant view in the profession is that there's one particular way of doing economics. It's basically to set up some mathematical model, the more complicated the better," he says, advocating instead what he calls a multidisciplinary approach. "In a biology department, you have people doing all sorts of different things. So some do DNA analysis, others do anatomy, some people go and sit with gorillas in the forests of Burundi, and others do experiments with rats. But they are called biologists because biologists recognise that living organisms are complex things and you cannot understand them only at one level. So why can't economists become like that? Yes, you do need people crunching numbers, but you also need people going to factories and doing surveys, you need people watching political changes to see what's going on."

The cutlets arrive with a clatter. Chang squeezes on lemon juice and cuts them up so we can share. The chicken is sumptuously juicy.

Doesn't the success of Freakonomics (2005), written by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, disprove his notion that economics is closed to new approaches? "They don't get huge brownie points for writing for the general public because a lot of economists have a very dim view of what the general public can understand," he says. "But the Freakonomics guys are accepted as part of the mainstream because they have this very particular view of human behaviour, which is 'rational choice'. That is: 'We are all selfish, we basically do our best to promote our self-interest and that choice is made in a rational way.' "

"I don't take that view," he says, cramming in a piece of lamb before he continues. "Rational thinking is an important aspect of human nature, but we have imagination, we have ambition, we have irrational fear, we are swayed by other people, we get indoctrinated and we get influenced by advertising," he says. "Even if we are actually rational, leaving it to the market may produce collectively irrational outcomes. So when a bubble develops it is rational for individuals to keep inflating the bubble, thinking that they can pull out at the last minute and make a lot of money. But collectively speaking . . . " His hands create a bomb blast above the cutlets.

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&gt;He takes a slurp of lassi and smiles beatifically. I ask how the economics profession has been hijacked by a single methodology. "Hijacked, yes. I think that's right," he says, evidently pleased with my choice of word. "Unfortunately, a lot of economists wanted to make their subject a science. So the more what you do resembles physics or chemistry the more credible you become. The economics profession is like the Catholic clergy. In the old days, they refused to translate the Bible, so unless you knew Latin you couldn't read it. Today, unless you are good at maths and statistics, you cannot penetrate the economic literature."

This, he says, leaves economic decision-making to a high priesthood of technocrats and central bankers. "Fat chance that a union official in Bradford will be able to beat the academic spouting rational choice theory," he says. This - and here is his punchline - suits those with money and power. "If you have a professor from MIT or Oxford saying that things are as they are because they have to be, then as a person benefiting from the status quo you can't be happier."

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As our main course arrives the table begins to fill with a fantastic array of curries and breads. I'm famished and eating faster than Chang. The beef, full of competing flavours, is particularly terrific. "A lot of social democrats bought into that fairy tale [of market perfection]," he says. "That's why I am writing these popular books, because people have been told a very particular story and they need some antidote to it. I'm not saying I have some kind of monopoly over truth, but at least you need to hear a different side of the story."

We turn to his childhood, when he witnessed first-hand how economic policies can transform a country's fortunes. He was born in Seoul in 1963. His father was a finance ministry official and his mother a teacher. Two years before Chang was born, Korea's gross domestic product per capita was $82 compared with $179 in Ghana. He remembers how red the soil was in Seoul, now one of the world's most neon-filled cities, because all the trees had been cut down for firewood. "I wasn't deprived," says Chang, who grew up in a house with two maids and the neighbourhood's first television set. "But poverty was everywhere."

Park Chung-hee had recently seized power in a military coup. Korea established a steel industry, a seemingly eccentric choice for a country without iron ore (it had to import it from Australia and Canada) or coking coal. Yet steel became a foundation of Korea's industrial success. Chang believes that Park, though a dictator, made some smart choices and that the only countries to have prospered are those that ignored the siren call of free markets and comparative advantage - the idea that you stick to growing bananas if you're a tropical island - and planned their escape from poverty.

Chang took those ideas with him to Cambridge in 1986, where he studied first for a masters and then a PhD on industrial policy. His first impression was how quiet England was. "In those days, everything closed at five o'clock and nothing was open on Sunday. Coming from Asia, it was like walking into a ghost town." But the UK also had its charms: "I used to joke that I came to England - not to the US where most Koreans go - because I like Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie."

His studies consolidated his thinking. Countries, he argued, needed to develop their capabilities, just as a child's potential is stretched in school. In 1955, for example, when General Motors alone was producing 3.5m cars, Japan had 11 or 12 ***manufacturers*** collectively producing 70,000. "From the short-term point of view, it was madness for Japan to try to develop an auto industry," he says. "Except that the Japanese realised, 'We will get nowhere if we stick to what we are already good at, like silk.' "

But can't the protection of infant industries go terribly wrong? In countries such as Argentina and India, closed economies led to lazy monopolies selling shoddy goods in the name of self-sufficiency. Chang agrees. Only those states that forced their entrepreneurs to compete internationally succeeded, he says. "In Bad Samaritans, I have this chapter called 'My Six-Year Old Son Should Get a Job'. I'm trying to explain that the reason I don't send this little guy to the labour market is because I believe that it pays, in the long run, for him to have an education rather than shining shoes and selling chewing gum. Protection is given with a view to eventually pushing your companies into the world market in the same way that you send your kids to school but [you] don't subsidise them until they're 45."

He tears the appam and hands me a piece. It's airy and faintly sweet and wonderful for mopping up the curry. "We have been led to believe that the market is some kind of natural phenomenon. But in the end, the market is a political construct." The regulations around us - for instance those banning child labour or private money-printing - are invisible, he says. He cites the example of how Park's government engineered a 30 per cent jump in wages through a massive shrinkage of the labour force. It was achieved, he explains, by making education compulsory up to the age of 12, removing at a stroke millions of children from the labour pool. Policy changed the market reality.

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As Chang turns to the fish curry, I ask about his family. He met his Korean wife in 1992 and married her the following year. "As a good Korean I am very impatient," he grins. He has two children. His son, now 13, is still being sheltered at school from a career in shoe shining. His daughter is reading history at Oxford university. So she's broken out of the economics trap, I say. "Good for her," he replies, raising his lassi.

We order a double espresso for Chang and black filter coffee for me. We've been talking for nearly two hours but he still has bags of energy and I still have bags of questions. What's all this about the washing machine and the internet?

"I was not trying to dismiss the importance of the internet revolution but I think its importance has been exaggerated partly because people who write about these things are usually middle-aged men who have never used a washing machine," he replies. "It's human nature to think that the changes you are living through are the most momentous, but you need to put these things into perspective. I brought up the washing machine to highlight the fact that even the humblest thing can have huge consequences. The washing machine, piped gas, running water and all these mundane household technologies enabled women to enter the labour market, which then meant that they had fewer children, had them later, invested more in each of them, especially female children. That changed their bargaining positions within the household and in wider society, giving women votes and endless changes. It has transformed the way we live."

Finally, I ask whether he thinks economics is a moral pursuit. Chang's starting point seems to be that economic policies can make the world better. "Moral dilemmas are unavoidable," he says as I signal for the bill. "Don't forget that, at least in this country, economics used to be a branch of moral philosophy. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter - they're not just writing about economics, but about politics and culture and society and morality." He drains his cup. "How has this wonderful subject we call economics become so narrow-minded? I find that really sad."

David Pilling is the FT's Asia editor

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Rice Boat

37 Newnham Road, Cambridge

Sweet lassi £2.50

Konrad 11 beer £4.00

Cutlet platter £13.25

Kerala red fish curry £10.00

Kerala beef fry £10.00

Boiled rice £2.50

Appam £2.50

Chapatti £2.25

Double espresso £3.00

Coffee £2.50

Total (incl service) £58.75

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At the Old Black Lion in Northampton, mild is on tap and revolution is in the air. The pub is the weekly meeting venue for the local branch of Left Unity, a new political party aiming to fuse Britain's fissiparous socialists. Ahead of its founding conference in London on Saturday, I went to the shoemaking town to see what, according to Salman Shaheen, a journalist and member of Left Unity's national committee, should represent a typical local party meeting. "It's [in] the back room of a pub in a deprived area," he added.

In fact, the Unite union has booked the back room, so we meet in the main bar area. Five regulars keep the bartender company. A television plays The Paul O'Grady Show on mute while speakers blare a Trevor Nelson Spotify mix. Bianca Todd, the local Left Unity co-ordinator, tries to make herself heard over the beats, explaining how this party will be different to the rest.

"I think people are fed up with protesting," she tells me. Todd, a sparky, hoodie-wearing 36-year-old who runs a charity for ex-offenders, favours practical action over beardy chats about the Russian Revolution. She has a sense of fun. In a stunt to publicise the founding of the Northampton branch, she distributed "guerrilla gardening" kits complete with seeds and bulbs to nearby residents. "We can't spend our time talking about Marx, Trotsky and Lenin."

Yet, within a few minutes of the meeting starting, a familiar division emerges. There are 10 people around the table, including Todd, her partner, her mother and her father (her grandfather was general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union). The latter has a problem with David Smith, another attendee, who is accused of being insufficiently working class (he went to university.) The mood quickly darkens. If Northampton is indicative of Left Unity's future then, according to one attendee, "it could dissolve on the basis of what happened at Kronstadt".

Since its launch in March by the film-maker Ken Loach and other activists, Left Unity has self-consciously presented itself as "the Ukip of the left". Shaheen says this is only a "metaphor" that expresses the need for "a gravitational pull" on Labour from the left, in a similar sense to how Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence party moves the Tories to the right.

The parallel is misguided, according to Robert Ford, a professor of politics at Manchester university. "It took Ukip the best part of 15 years and a very charismatic leader to get their heads off the canvas," he says. "They have learnt how to campaign." Ford predicts Ukip will finish first in next year's European elections before winning seats in Westminster.

The idea of Left Unity as socialist Faragism also misses how the party "has no grounding in popular sentiment", argues Nick Pearce, director of IPPR, a centre-left think-tank. In part this is because the far left and Ukip are not speaking to different audiences. Ford says: "Ukip is the most working-class party in Britain." Its typical supporter is not the southern stockbroker of caricature but the "sixtysomething voter from the Midlands and the north of England who left school without qualifications".

John Allen, a member of the Northampton branch of Ukip, is a case in point. Allen, a third-generation military veteran, has been out of work for five years. The 63-year-old puts this down to a mix of age discrimination and immigration. "If we had control over our borders, then the jobs issue would be dead in the water," he says. "I'm looking at Ukip on the same basis as the wartime campaign my father fought."

For Ukip voters, immigration is a more important issue than the EU. They are often uncomfortable with recent cultural changes in modern Britain, says Anthony Painter, author of the recent book Left Without a Future. Ford believes "the voters Ukip are winning are the voters that are losing in the recession".

This reflects a deeper problem, according to American academic Francis Fukuyama, who in early 2012 wrote of "the absent left". Since the financial crisis, he argued, rightwing populist politicians who tapped into anxieties about globalisation and cultural change have flourished in Europe and the US, while their opponents struggled.

Many on the left agree with Fukuyama's premise. Owen Jones, author of Chavs: the Demonisation of the Working Class, and at 29 perhaps the most influential of a new generation of leftwing commentators, tells me he is fond of Milton Friedman's insight about how, when crisis occurs, "the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around". And in 2008, he says, there was "a vacuum on the left".

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Nearly two years on from Fukuyama's article, has anything changed? If one sees the left as synonymous with parties such as Left Unity, then the answer seems to be No. As Fukuyama wrote dismissively: "The left has not been able to make a plausible case for an agenda other than a return to an unaffordable form of old-fashioned social democracy."

But if one thinks of the left as a broader movement, defined by a belief in collective action to bring about greater equality (other definitions are available from good second hand bookshops), then there are signs of life, including at the top of the Labour party.

Contemporary feminism, for example, is vibrant. Young writers such as Laurie Penny, Holly Baxter, Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett and Helen Lewis are evidence that, in the latter's words, "there's a critical mass of women who just won't shut up about the things they care about". Campaigns such as End Violence Against Women and No More Page Three are gaining prominence. So too Everyday Sexism, a project highlighting the pervasiveness of gender discrimination, which this year forced Facebook to drop some target adverts that featured next to offensive posts.

Laura Bates, 27, who founded Everyday Sexism in April 2012, says this is an "incredibly exciting moment for feminism in the UK". Nevertheless, she says, "I don't feel like it is currently a deeply politicised movement - the idea of being on the left doesn't feel like it is particularly at the heart of this resurgence." Bates describes the movement as "very pragmatic and down-to-earth". Though, as Melissa Benn points out in the IPPR journal Juncture, "What's most striking about this new wave . . . is how predominantly cultural the concerns are."

There is a pragmatic and fragmented quality to the economic pressure groups that have arisen on the left. UK Uncut, founded in 2010, stages acts of civil disobedience to highlight tax avoidance. Campaigners against cuts to the legal aid budget or the so-called "bedroom tax" focus on single issues. Community organisers, such as Citizens UK, have put the living wage higher up the agenda of all mainstream political parties. Groups such as Occupy deliberately emphasise means over ends.

The most recent attempt to bring these disparate groups into a movement against the government's spending cuts is the People's Assembly, which launched this year and is part-funded by big trade unions. At a recent meeting of activists in Manchester, Penny Hicks, local organiser, argues: "Those groups that aren't willing to work together are being marginalised." She says it is too soon to tell whether it will be a mass movement. Jones, one of the Assembly's founders, is more optimistic, citing hundreds at recent meetings. However, he adds: "If it's seen as a party, then it disintegrates. People won't have anything to do with it."

Despite Jones's optimism, the People's Assembly is for now at least a modest smorgasbord of curious newcomers and stalwart activists. However, the young commentator has been corresponding with the comedian Russell Brand, who in a recent essay for the New Statesman called for a "total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system". An accompanying BBC Newsnight interview has been viewed more than 9m times on YouTube.

The comedian's intervention seems to have captured what Prof Ford describes as "a feeling of voicelessness and a feeling of powerlessness" that has grown since the financial crisis. Scandals in parliament, the media and the police have reduced trust in established institutions, according to the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey. The study found that 75 per cent of Britons agree with the statement that "the political system is not working for them".

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Ford believes this "cross-party, cross-ideological loss of faith in the way of doing things" also presents an opportunity. There is, he says, "a groundswell for something politically new", which offers succour to these Britons' economic insecurities and cultural attitudes.

The pledge by Ed Miliband at this year's Labour conference to freeze energy prices was, his supporters argue, an answer to those who accuse the left of having had no intellectual response to the crisis - and to the accusation that politics does not matter to people's lives.

Lord Stewart Wood, an adviser to the opposition leader, says: "You have to ask: what kind of centre-left faced the crisis in 2008? It was a left that felt there were certain fundamentals about the market economy that you couldn't question."

Five years on, he says, "the rules of the game have changed". Real incomes have been stagnant or worse since 2003 and the Labour party is making a political bet on its hypothesis that even as macroeconomic growth returns, microeconomic fortunes will remain detached and, therefore, voters will be open to a less deferential approach to markets. Jones agrees, saying "the public consciousness has shifted".

Critics of what Miliband calls "responsible capitalism" say his philosophy is no more than a return to the old-fashioned socialism that Fukuyama disdains, and which belongs in the Old Black Lion pub. Miliband's supporters dispute this. "The policy has more in common with early 20th-century progressivism than postwar statism," one shadow cabinet minister tells me.

Miliband will also need a cultural message to complement his economic one, Anthony Painter says. "Traditionally Labour has spoken to the economically anxious; Conservatives to the culturally anxious. Now it is not so clear-cut." Ukip's success shows that populist sentiment does not obey a simple left-right spectrum. Yet Miliband's bet that the public will give his arguments a listen is a sign that the left is finding a voice again. It has yet to prove it is popular but it is no longer absent.

John McDermott is an FT commentator

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So many must cast a wistful - if possibly slightly grateful - eye when they read yet another Christmas recipe featuring turkeys to ***feed*** 16, trayfuls of roast potatoes and Brussels sprouts and industrial quantities of cranberry sauce. Many of us - and I do not exclude the extended Leigh family from this - will be ***feeding*** the masses as usual this year but there are probably almost as many who will be celebrating (and I choose the word with care) Christmas with a much smaller number of people. There are couples or threes or fours who will be very content to have exchanged the hurly-burly of the family refectory for the quieter pleasures of the little dining table.

Talk of geese and turkeys will not resonate with such folk. A pheasant might make for a suitably modest little Christmas, a truffled chicken would be a fine extravagance but I think the simple joy of a roast duck - not modishly rare but gently cooked through - is just as appropriate. With a rich stuffing, some robust Alsace red cabbage and a tart apple sauce this should be a better balanced but no less sybaritic feast.

Whatever one cooks and eats this Christmas, I cannot help thinking that the actual cooking process should be one of the chief pleasures. I am reminded of Bill Baker, a much-missed wine merchant of heroic proportions and generosity, who always did the cooking on Christmas day. Straight after breakfast he would nobly dispatch his cherished family to attend the morning ceremony at Wells Cathedral and, on their departure, open a bottle of Louis Roederer Cristal champagne. He generally reckoned to have finished the bottle by the time he had roasted the potatoes and before his family returned - whereupon he would open a more modest bottle and toast everyone's health. Charity begins at home.

Rowley Leigh's Christmas recipes for two

To start

Salmon and brown shrimp salad, dill and horseradish dressing

Purists may wish to use their own freshly grated horseradish: personally, I think a dash of vodka works wonders with "shop" horseradish sauce.

1 good Cos (Romaine) lettuce

2 tsp horseradish sauce

1 dsp vodka (facultatif, or optional, as the French would say)

1 dsp lemon juice

1 dsp cream

2 tbs sunflower oil

1 dsp coarsely chopped dill

150g smoked salmon

50g brown shrimps

- Remove outer leaves of the lettuce and cut into ribbons. Wash the salad in cold water and spin dry. Make the dressing by whisking together the horseradish sauce, the vodka and the lemon juice with a generous pinch of salt and some milled white pepper. Whisk in the cream and then the oil in a slow stream so that it emulsifies. Finish with the chopped dill and taste for seasoning.

- Simply arrange the lettuce on two plates and pour the dressing over. Arrange the smoked salmon in strips on top of the salad and then sprinkle the brown shrimps on top. Decorate with a few sprigs of dill and serve.

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To follow

Roast duck, prune and apple stuf ng

The legs of the duck should still be slightly pink (and cut into thinnish slices), while the breast should be pretty much cooked through but not remotely dry. A very generous portion for two - but could stretch to four with the gammon from the cabbage side dish.

1 Aylesbury style duck, approximately 2kg in weight, with giblets, and with the neck flab intact

200g good pork sausage or sausage meat

1 lemon

12 stoned soft prunes

½ Cox's apple

Nutmeg

6 clove heads

6 sage leaves

2 Bramley apples

Piece of cinnamon

6 cloves

1 large shallot

1 dsp sugar

2 tbs sherry vinegar

1 glass red wine

150ml chicken stock (or a cube and water)

- Chop the wings off the duck at the first joint, remove the giblets and carefully lift up the neck flap. Scrape the wishbone clean and then remove it by detaching it at the bottom and twisting it free (this helps greatly with the carving). Chop the neck, gizzard and wings into smaller pieces and distribute them around the perimeter of a large roasting pan. Preheat the oven to 200C.

- Remove the sausage meat from its casings and place in a bowl. Finely grate the zest of the lemon over the meat. Chop the prunes coarsely and add to the mix. Peel and dice the apple, macerate in a little lemon juice and add in turn.

- Chop the liver and heart of the duck quite finely and season with salt and pepper. Grate a little nutmeg into the mix and crush in the clove heads. Finish with the finely chopped fresh sage leaves. Knead this mixture very well with your hand and then place a third in the neck cavity of the duck. Draw the neck flap over and then stitch up the skin with a trussing needle or close it with a fine skewer. Roll the remaining stuffing into a sausage shape in a piece of foil and place it to steam in the red cabbage (see below).

- Place the duck on a trivet in the roasting pan and cook for 20 minutes on the high heat before turning the oven down to 170C and cooking for a further hour (protect the skin with a piece of foil if it colours too much). Pour out any rendered fat after 45 minutes for roasting some potatoes.

- Peel and core the Bramley apples, slice them roughly and toss them in lemon juice. Place them in a bowl with a couple of tablespoons of water, the cinnamon, cloves and a little more grated nutmeg and microwave for six minutes (traditionalists can simply cook the sauce on top of the stove). Whisk this mixture to a smooth apple sauce. I like my apple sauce to be sharp and tart; others may choose to add a little sugar.

&lt; &gt; - Once the duck is cooked remove it on its trivet from the roasting tray and leave, covered, in a warm place. Add the shallot, thinly sliced, to the pan and set on a good heat on top of the stove. Once the shallot is coloured, add the sugar and let it caramelise before pouring in the vinegar. Let this boil and reduce to a syrup before pouring in the wine and scraping up all the juices in the pan. Add the stock and let this gravy gently reduce for 10 minutes.

- Serve the duck on a bed of red cabbage with the apple sauce, some roast potatoes and the gravy strained into a little jug. To carve, remove the legs first and then carve long, thin strips with some stuffing attached at one end.

As a side

Red cabbage with smoked gammon

A robust and earthy treatment of red cabbage from Alsace. Normally a fatty, smoked bacon hock would be used. I could not source one in time and used a rather standard piece of smoked gammon joint which proved serendipitous with the slightly fatty duck.

1 red cabbage

2 tbs duck fat or oil

1 onion, studded with 8 cloves

150g smoked bacon

Bouquet garni of parsley, thyme and bay leaf

100ml chicken stock

3 tbs red wine vinegar

- Cut the cabbage in half, cut out the central core and then slice into thin ribbons. Heat the fat in a heavy casserole and add the cabbage on a high heat, turning it regularly and sealing it well, after adding plenty of milled black pepper and a small pinch of salt. Remove two-thirds of the cabbage and place the cloved onion and the gammon joint in the middle of the remaining layer, pushing them down towards the bottom together with the bouquet garni.

- Cover with the remaining cabbage, pour in the stock and vinegar and cover the casserole. Bring to the boil on top of the stove and then cook gently on top of the stove (or a slow oven, if available) for two hours. The cabbage is delicious when reheated.

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To finish

Hot chestnut cake with pears and chocolate sauce

The cake will subside a little after cooking but will have a moist, buttery interior. It will serve six comfortably but it is not worth making in a smaller quantity. It won't hang around for long.

The cake:

1 vanilla pod

200ml milk

200g peeled chestnuts

30g caster sugar

350g unsalted butter

350g caster sugar

6 egg yolks

50g plain flour

- Butter and flour a 22cm springform cake tin and preheat the oven to 180C.

- Split the vanilla pod and add it to the milk in a saucepan with the sugar. Add the chestnuts and simmer very gently until the milk has been absorbed. Blend the chestnuts to a purée in a food processor, adding a tablespoon or two of milk to help make it completely smooth.

- Cream the butter and sugar in the bowl of a mixer until very pale and fluffy and then gradually beat in the egg yolks. Fold in the flour and then add the chestnut purée, mixing very thoroughly to form a stiff batter. Pour into the cake tin and smooth out roughly with a spatula.

- Bake the cake for 45 minutes. It will rise a little as it cooks and will spring back to the touch in the centre when done. Allow the cake to rest in its mould for 15 minutes before turning out on to a plate. Keep warm in a low oven.

2 good pears

1 lemon

375ml dry white wine

50g caster sugar

1 vanilla pod

- Peel the pears, split them in half and remove the cores. Roll them in a little lemon juice. Bring the wine, sugar and vanilla to the boil, add the pears and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Leave to cool in their liquor.

100ml milk

150g extra bitter chocolate

50ml double cream

- Bring the milk to the boil. Add the chocolate in small pieces and stir in off the heat. Whisk in the cream and heat gently. To serve, warm the pears in their liquor, pour a little chocolate on to two plates and add a slice of the cake and a pear (without the liquor, which will make a very good base for a punch).

Rowley Leigh is the chef at Le Café Anglais

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So many must cast a wistful - if possibly slightly grateful - eye when they read yet another Christmas recipe featuring turkeys to ***feed*** 16, trayfuls of roast potatoes and Brussels sprouts and industrial quantities of cranberry sauce. Many of us - and I do not exclude the extended Leigh family from this - will be ***feeding*** the masses as usual this year but there are probably almost as many who will be celebrating (and I choose the word with care) Christmas with a much smaller number of people.

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Take advantage of some great fizz deals at this time of year. Everything here is a champagne unless another appellation is cited after the vintage or "NV" for non-vintage. Wines are listed in ascending order of lowest known price in the UK. They are all likely to be 12-12.5 per cent alcohol unless otherwise noted.

Gobin, Perles de l'Angelier NV France

This is recognisably made from Muscadet with nutty, fresh, ripe distinctive fruit. Something a bit different. 11.5%

£10.99, Amps of Oundle and other independents

J Laurens, Le Moulin Brut NV Blanquette de Limoux

There's an attractive bit of development on the nose. Very fresh and really quite special for the money. Delicate on the palate. Look out for other bargains from this Languedoc producer.

£12.10, Ditton (sold by the six-bottle case)

Dom de Montbourgeau NV Crémant du Jura

This has a pretty, retro label. Good tang - recognisably Jura - Chardonnay with bite. Clean and revitalising. Less aggressive than a cheap champagne.

£12.50, The Wine Society

Teo Costa, Madre Natura Rosé NV Vino Frizzante

The combination of 100 per cent Nebbiolo and 0 per cent sulphites produces a very gentle, unusual, rose-scented Piemontese fizz that would make a most distinctive aperitif. 10.5%

£16.50, Vini Italiani of London

Forget-Brimont, Brut Premier Cru NV

From the village of Ludes. Open and relatively simple but proper stuff. A tiny bit sweet but reasonably delicate and a lot more refined and fun than the average own-label champagne selling at this price. Nicely balanced even if on the appetising end of the spectrum. Tiny bead. Neat finish.

£21.57, Justerini & Brooks

Barnaut, Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru NV Champagne

Big and brawny. Not that complex but not expensive, especially at the special offer price that lasts until Christmas.

£23.95 (price per bottle for case of six; £27.95 individually), Lea & Sandeman

Pascal Doquet, Horizon Blanc de Blancs Brut NV

This organically certified growers' champagne has a lightly nutty nose and is chock full of flavour. A steal considering J&B's margins. I don't think I would guess it were all Chardonnay; seems slightly richer than many Blanc de Blancs.

£24.07, Justerini & Brooks

Ridgeview, Bloomsbury Merret 2010 England

Signature wine from the estimable Ridgeview. Very frothy. Edgy in terms of acidity. Very clean but pretty tart.

£24.99, Waitrose

Chartogne-Taillet, Ste-Anne Brut NV

Very racy, direct, clean and breezy. Really neat and concentrated. The flagship blend from this champagne grower in Merfy is a great bargain.

£25, The Wine Society, Fine Wine Direct

Huet Petillant Brut 2007 Vouvray

Based on Chenin Blanc and one of the most welcome variations on the fizz theme: richer and more complex than many champagnes. Pale straw with a steady bead. Young, fresh, floral apple juice. Delicate and rapier-like acidity. Very vibrant.

£25, Berry Bros

Pierre Gimonnet, Cuis Blanc de Blancs Brut Premier Cru NV

Delicate texture but some autolysis on the nose. Real savour and refreshment. Beginning, middle and end to this proper wine - much more interesting than many champagnes at the same price.

£25, The Wine Society

Gusbourne Brut Reserve 2008 England

One of the most toothsome English fizzes with some real depth to it.

£26.45, Berry Bros

Pol Roger NV

A banker of a family-owned champagne. Price will go up once this retailer has sold all the bottles in this batch, which suggests it may have some bottle age.

£29.95, Lea & Sandeman, while stocks last

Agrapart et Fils, Les 7 Crus Blanc de Blancs Brut NV

From the seven villages where Agrapart owns vines, initially aged in old oak barrels. Complex, well-settled nose. Grapefruit peel on the finish after much throat-warming.

£31, The Wine Society

Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve NV

The spearhead of a campaign by the new owner of this house to reposition it firmly upmarket. This cuvée, based on 2007, is very good, with 40 per cent reserve wines up to 10 years old.

£31.95, Berry Bros and other independents

Ruinart, R de Ruinart Brut NV

Bready nose with real interest. Something to get your teeth into. Very clean and neat and tastes as if it had quite a bit of age on lees.

£37.50, Lea & Sandeman, Jeroboams

Delamotte, Blanc de Blancs NV

Grand Cru Chardonnay from le Mesnil, Oger, Avize with a full 48 months on yeast. Signature bottling of this house, a sister to Salon, based on 2006. Quite a bit of age on the nose. Racy and quite delicate on the palate. Well made - just the right quality of fizz.

£37.95, Corney & Barrow

Larmandier-Bernier Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Premier Cru NV

Still one of the finest non-vintage champagnes from a fine, biodynamic grower. Very broad and rich compared with many other handcrafted growers' champagnes. Quite incredible to think that this is an extra brut in view of the richness on the palate. Clean, refreshing, fabulous! Very persistent.

£39.95, Berry Bros and others

Deutz NV Rosé

One of the most impressive non-vintage pink champagnes I have tasted recently. Good dry finish. Solid matter on the palate.

£43.95, Vagabond Wines and others

Louis Roederer 2006

Very firm, savoury and dense, with lively acidity and a fine bead. Not massively intense or bone dry but very competent.

£44, Berry Bros; £45, The Wine Society

Bollinger, La Grande Année 2004

Hint of oak on the nose. Very winning and interesting. Extremely savoury but with flirtatious lift on the finish. Very persistent.

£65, Noel Young; £80, Berry Bros and others

Nyetimber, Tillington Single Vineyard 2009 England

Winemaker Cherie Spriggs offers record pricing with this all-Pinot bottling from an unusually ripe vintage. Quite deep bronze/pale gold. Heady nose. Lightly apple-y and more interesting than most English fizz. Not the driest but it has some autolysis and interest on the nose. Delicate bead.

£75, Philglas & Swiggot

For stockist details, go to [*www.ft.com/fizzes*](http://www.ft.com/fizzes). More stockists at wine-searcher.com. Next week: Jancis's top whites

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Lloyds Banking Group is accelerating disposals of non-core property and housebuilding assets as the state-backed lender seeks to tidy up its balance sheet and pave the way towards restarting dividend payments.

The bank, which is 33 per cent owned by the UK government, on Friday announced it had sold a batch of property loans to a division of Cerberus, the US private equity firm.

The portfolio, worth £860m, was the last of the European real estate assets inherited by Lloyds through its takeover of HBOS at the height of the financial crisis.

The news came as it emerged that JPMorgan had been appointed to oversee the sale of another hangover from the HBOS deal - Lloyds' majority stake in Keepmoat, a Doncaster-based homebuilder and provider of social housing, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Rothschild has also been appointed to explore the sale of Dunfermline-based Avant Homes, the private housebuilder formerly known as Gladedale, whose main lender is Lloyds and in which the UK bank holds a minority of voting shares.

Selling these investments would end Lloyds' involvement in the housebuilding assets acquired through the HBOS transaction.

The sales processes come as housebuilders enjoy a return to good health, with government-backed schemes such as Help to Buy boosting confidence in the sector.

Lloyds declined to comment on Avant and Keepmoat, but said of the Cerberus deal: "This transaction is a further step in the deleveraging of our non-core assets, adding to the more than £28bn reduction achieved by the end of the group's third-quarter results."

Lloyds sold Cala Homes, the upmarket Scottish homebuilder, to a joint venture between insurer Legal & General and buyout group Patron Capital Partners for £210m in March.

That came a month after Lloyds announced the sale of Countryside Properties, part-owned by the Cherry family, to Oaktree Capital.

Lloyds has also sold its interest in McCarthy & Stone, the UK's biggest builder of retirement apartments, as part of the Project Lundy portfolio, which included other property stakes.

In 2011, the lender sold its shares in Crest Nicholson to Varde Partners, a distressed investment fund. Crest subsequently floated in London, raising £533m.

Lloyds is seeking permission from the Prudential Regulation Authority to restart dividend payments, which were suspended in the wake of the financial crisis.

Keepmoat, which merged with housebuilder Apollo last year, had revenues of £886m in the year to the end of March. Adjusting for exceptional items, earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation were £52.2m

Avant, which has an average selling price of £200,000, reported £71m in pre-tax profit in 2012, the last period for which accounts are available.

JPMorgan and Avant declined to comment. Keepmoat could not be reached for comment.

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Following on from John Kay's eloquent view of London's property market, the Financial Times spoke to some young Britons about their struggles to buy a property in the UK capital.

Savills estimates the average house price paid by first-time buyers in London is about £264,000, with the average deposit at £66,000. With average salaries for first-time buyer households in London at about £53,000 a year, young British professionals are finding it tough to buy.

"There are plenty of young professionals in London earning good salaries who still can't afford to buy their own homes," says Susan Emmett of Savills. "Many simply can't save enough of a deposit to satisfy mortgage lender's criteria, especially when they are having to spend about a quarter of their income on rent."

Those who decide to buy outside London and commute face high train fares - latest prices from Network Rail show an annual season ticket to central London costs £3,960 from Reading; £4,400 from Cambridge; and £4,556 from Colchester.

Here are the stories of three young British couples who have had a difficult time trying to get a foot on the capital's property ladder.

1) Clapham Park

Paul Oesten Creasey, 28, and Enas Refaei, 27

Total combined income: £50,000 - £60,000

Budget: £250,000

Bought for: £215,000

Paul and Enas first started looking to buy a flat in Brixton, south London, in April this year, but found that their budget wouldn't stretch that far. "We started looking in Tulse Hill and Streatham Hill once Brixton seemed too expensive," says Enas. The couple finally found a two-bedroom flat in Clapham Park for £215,000, paying a £30,000 deposit and opting for a five-year fixed rate mortgage with Santander. But, as with many of their generation, Enas says the only reason that buying became an option for them was when Paul inherited £40,000 from his grandparents.

"We found saving for a deposit in London practically impossible," says Enas. "With house prices being on the steady rise, we didn't want to get kicked out of London."

Paul and Enas say they are coping well with their mortgage repayments so far. "It's only early days yet," says Enas. But if things don't go to plan longer term, they have a contingency: "If times get too tough, there is a spare room for a lodger," she says.

. . .

2) London Fields

Sarah Waterson, 27, and Stuart Lerman, 30

Total combined income: £90,000 - £100,000

Budget: £355,000

Bought for: £353,000

Having rented in east London for several years, Sarah and Stuart began looking locally to buy their own flat in 2012. "We really wanted a two-bed flat near London Fields, but found that on every property we put an offer on, we were outbid - people were bidding at least 10 per cent over the asking price," says Sarah.

After looking for more than a year, they found the cost of a two-bedroom flat in the area they wanted had increased so much it was now out of their reach. "We started looking in north London and the southeast but just couldn't find what we were looking for," she says. "The options were either a large one-bedroom flat or a smaller two bedroom flat. In the end we settled for a one-bedroom flat in the area we wanted to stay in."

Earlier this year, Sarah and Stuart bought a one-bedroom garden flat near London Fields for £353,000, using a 15 per cent deposit and a mortgage from Santander.

Despite the difficulties they faced in finding somewhere to buy, the couple say they never considered moving to somewhere outside the capital. "It's great to be close to work and the cost of commuting from outside of London is also huge," says Sarah. "We also felt that property prices in London would be more secure than outside, which is a big factor. Being first-time buyers, we felt security for our money and location were more important than size."

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3) Stoke Newington

Alex Unitt, 27, and Rebecca Drewry, 27

Total combined income: £100,000+

Budget: £475,000 - £500,000

After renting in Finsbury Park, north London, Alex and Rebecca started looking to buy a property in the summer of this year, hoping ideally to find a two-bedroom flat in neighbouring Stoke Newington with some outside space. However, having put offers in for three different places - all above the asking price - they are yet to secure a sale.

Rebecca says buying in the capital has been much harder than she anticipated. "As buyers you think you're unique until you come across your carbon copy; they have the same budget, but actually more deposit, so they outbid you." she says.

Their plight has not been aided by some of the estate agents they have used. "They haven't really done us any favours," says Rebecca. Alex agrees: "One guy sat on a radiator in an open-neck denim shirt for the whole time we were there - he didn't have a care in the world."

Alex and Rebecca are still keen to buy because they think signing up for a mortgage will actually reduce their outgoings. "The irony is that when we do [get a mortgage], we expect it will be the same as our rent, which is a real driver for why we want to make sure we secure somewhere quickly," says Rebecca.

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Frumenty is a medieval dish of cracked wheat cooked in almond milk or broth. A close cousin of porridge, it was an everyday staple in the early medieval period. It became less commonplace over the centuries but was still fed to the poor in workhouses through the Victorian period. Though almost unheard of today, frumenty has provided inspiration for a new dish on the Christmas menu at Heston Blumenthal's restaurant Dinner in Knightsbridge.

One of the first documented recipes for frumenty can be found in the 1390 manuscript The Forme of Cury. Written by a master cook from the court of Richard II (1377-1399), this is one of the oldest known cookery manuscripts in the English language. A British Library conservator helped me view it, carefully unrolling it and holding it steady with purpose-made lead "snakes". As a physical object it's impressive - made of calfskin vellum stitched together at 30cm intervals, it's more than 12ft long and contains 196 recipes. It's in amazingly good nick considering it's more than 600 years old.

The preamble to the manuscript explains that The Forme of Cury contains recipes for "common pottages and common meats for the household, as they should be made, craftily and wholesomely", as well as food designed to impress at royal banquets. Frumenty falls into both these camps - there's a basic recipe for cooking the dish with broth but there's also frumenty with porpoise, a dish fit for kings. Apt then that Ashley Palmer-Watts, head chef at Dinner, has chosen frumenty to be part of the Christmas menu: "Our approach to Christmas is about the ultimate luxury - that's what Christmas is about."

Standing in the kitchen of the restaurant watching Palmer-Watts cook his version of the dish is a surreal experience. The state of the art kitchen is located in the middle of the restaurant. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls turn diners into spectators and chefs into entertainers, a reminder that high-end cooking has always been a form of theatre. Inside the kitchen there are futuristic, bespoke work units with refrigerated drawers, incorporated grill plates and hypersensitive electric hobs. But the heat coming off a pulley-turned-spit, slowly roasting caramelised pineapples, the flash of flame and embers visible when the smoking Josper oven is stoked and the scrubbed-faced chefs working intently at their stations could be straight out of a medieval kitchen.

Historic British gastronomy serves as a muse for Palmer-Watts and Blumenthal, inspiring their acclaimed contemporary cooking - Dinner has just been awarded a second Michelin star. Historical recipes, unearthed in old cookery books and manuscripts (some of which I help to research at the British Library), are the reference points for new recipe development. As Palmer-Watts explains, "What we're doing are never exact replicas."

The journey a recipe takes from a historical manuscript on to the menu at Dinner is often long and convoluted. This dish is a case in point. "Frumenty had been simmering away as a possible idea for a long time but we hadn't got round to developing it," explains Palmer-Watts. At first it was the name that attracted his attention. "It's just funny, isn't it? But then digging into the history, well the story was so good and the ingredients so intriguing we just had to do something with it."

Usually made to accompany meat or fish, frumenty was served hot with a porridge-like consistency, or was thickened, left to cool and then sliced, rather like polenta. "We found out that frumenty was often cooked with some sort of dried fruit," says Palmer-Watts. "The cracked wheat, the broth and fruit. That was interesting. And because frumenty often accompanied fish, it was a chance to develop a fish starter inspired by the medieval period."

Over a number of months the dish was developed. "The only sticking point for frumenty was the fruit. We were trying to shoehorn in fruit and it wasn't working." Some weeks before, Palmer-Watts had been given a Buddha's hand fruit - a fantastical-looking citrus with protruding fingers, no flesh but a highly perfumed flavour. "I didn't know how we'd use this," he explains, "but I was grabbing a moment with Heston and he mentioned they'd been pickling some Buddha's hand in the development kitchen lab. It was perfect - lovely and sherbety. It worked so well with the frumenty."

Finally, a frumenty starter of grilled octopus, smoked sea broth, pickled dulse seaweed and lovage was ready for the menu. "With the toasted spelt cooked with vegetable stock to accompany the octopus, then we have something that's not miles away from the original. It's been one of our most popular dishes and I think it's one of our strongest," Palmer-Watts says.

Knowing that frumenty was often given as a gift during the festive period in medieval times, Palmer-Watts decided to incorporate it into his Christmas menu: "If we could meld lobster into the frumenty octopus dish, using seaweed available in December, we'd have something really special."

Laid out ready for Palmer-Watts on stainless steel trays are the prepped ingredients: pickled dulse, luminescent rounds of pickled Buddha's hand fruit, a tiny mound of spelt that's been cooked in vegetable stock, a pile of bright green salty fingers and one of samphire, and three lobster tails. A small pan of smoked mussel stock and another of lobster emulsion simmer gently while Palmer-Watts cooks the lobster three different ways. He selects the one that has the perfect, just-cooked silky texture for the final dish. Then, applying the same degree of care and concentration as the library conservator who handled The Forme of Cury, he assembles the first trial serving of lobster frumenty.

The finished result looks like a perfect, sparklingly clear rock pool, or a dish made for a mer king. And it doesn't disappoint in the eating - there's smoky broth, rich, gelatinous lobster, crunchy salty fingers, salt-sweet pickled seaweed and a creamy herb emulsion that somehow tastes like the very essence of an English garden. The result is intense and complex but not tricksy. Palmer-Watts seems pleased. "There's so much in it but it's so pure. The next time Heston's here for dinner I'll get a couple of lobster tails in and see what he thinks. He loves the octopus so I think he'll love this too."

Conceding that most home cooks would struggle to reproduce the restaurant recipe for lobster frumenty, Palmer-Watts sets about making a home-proof version. With all the ingredients prepped, it's ready in less than 10 minutes, a one-pot frumenty made with cockles, scallops, spelt, vegetable stock, samphire, pickled seaweed and Buddha's hand fruit. It's more relaxed and less refined than its restaurant sibling but it's still impressive. "This is a stick-it-in-the-middle-of-the-table-type dish," Palmer-Watts enthuses. "A sharing dish."

Six hundred years have passed and porpoise isn't on the menu any more but Palmer-Watts's versions of frumenty - albeit translated, interpreted and distilled - are still good enough for a king.

Polly Russell is a curator at the British Library. To comment, please email [*magazineletters@ft.com*](mailto:magazineletters@ft.com)

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Ashley Palmer-Watts's Frumenty with roast scallops, clams, pickled dulse and sea beet

Once the various components of this recipe have been prepared, the final cooking, all done in one large pot, takes no more than 10 minutes. Aside from the ingredients specified here, there are an infinite number of variations that would work, depending on availability and preference. Sea aster or sea rosemary could be used to replace the seaweeds listed here and quantities could be varied if necessary - add more samphire if you can't locate sea beet or double the sea purslane if sea beet isn't available, for example. Razor clams, mussels, cuttlefish or squid would make good alternatives to the scallops and clams. And if you cannot find a Buddha's hand fruit then use a pickled Amalfi lemon or, if you don't have time to pickle, use grated zest and lemon juice instead.

Serves 4

Ingredients

8 scallops

500g clams

10g chopped garlic

160ml vegetable stock

200g cooked spelt

20g sea purslane

40g samphire

20g sea beet leaves

30g pickled Buddha's hand fruit sliced from the "fingers"

8 pieces of pickled Buddha's hand fruit, centre slices

40g pickled dulse plus a couple of pieces for finishing

10g chopped coriander

30ml pickle liquid from the dulse

20ml pickled lemon juice

Ingredients for the pickled Buddha's hand fruit

100g water

75ml Chardonnay vinegar

40g caster sugar

1 Buddha's hand fruit

Ingredients for the pickled dulse

360ml water

72ml Chardonnay vinegar

35ml white soy

5g sugar

4g salt

20g dried dulse

Ingredients for the vegetable stock

250g leeks, white part only, sliced

200g carrots, grated

175g onions, sliced

175g button mushrooms, grated

85g fennel, grated

85g celery, sliced

40ml olive oil

1 bay leaf

4 thyme sprigs

1.5 litres cold water

25g flat leaf parsley

Ingredients for the cooked spelt

50g spelt

10ml olive oil

300ml vegetable stock

Method

Three days before you want to cook the frumenty, prepare the pickled Buddha's hand fruit as follows.

To make the pickled Buddha's hand fruit

Heat the water and Chardonnay vinegar in a pan. Add the sugar and stir until completely dissolved. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. Cut off all the "fingers" on the Buddha's hand fruit, using a knife, then slice into 1.5mm-thick slices, using a mandolin. Slice across the "fingers" to create circular slices. Using an electric slicer, cut the base section of the Buddha's hand fruit into 1.5mm slices. Put the sliced "fingers" and base section into a jar or container, cover with the pickling liquid and place in the fridge for at least three days. As long as the fruit is submerged in the pickling liquid and is refrigerated it will last up to three weeks.

24 hours before you want to cook the frumenty, prepare the pickled dulse.

To make the pickled dulse

Heat the water, Chardonnay vinegar and white soy in a pan. Add the sugar and salt and stir until dissolved. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. Wash the dried dulse thoroughly in cold running water to remove any sand. Cover with water and leave to soak for 10 minutes. Drain well then add to the cooled pickling liquid. Place in an airtight container in the fridge for 24 hours before using.

At least two hours before cooking the frumenty, prepare the vegetable stock and cook the spelt.

To make the vegetable stock

Peel and prepare the vegetables. Heat the olive oil in a large pan, add all the vegetables and sweat for five minutes without allowing to colour. Add the bay, thyme and water and bring to the boil. Skim off any froth or impurities that rise to the surface and gently simmer for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the parsley and allow to infuse for 20 minutes. Pass the stock through a fine sieve and discard the vegetables. Remove any fat from the surface of the stock. Refrigerate until required.

To cook the spelt

Heat the olive oil in a pan and lightly toast the spelt, stirring continuously until light brown in colour. Add 300ml of the vegetable stock and simmer until the spelt is tender but still has a little bite and almost all the stock has been absorbed. Pour the spelt out on to a tray and cool in the fridge and reserve.

Ten minutes before you wish to eat, start assembling the frumenty.

Season the scallops with salt and pepper. Heat a frying pan until very hot then fry the scallops on either side until light, golden brown. Remove and set aside in a warm place to complete cooking and rest. Heat a generous splash of olive oil in a large frying pan with a lid. When the oil is smoking add the clams and cook on a high heat for a minute. Add the chopped garlic and cook for a further minute then add the vegetable stock, cooked spelt and sea purslane. Cover with a lid and bring to a simmer. Once simmering remove the lid then add the samphire, sea beet leaves, Buddha's hand rings and most but not all of the pickled dulse. Cook for another minute until the clams open then add the chopped coriander and both pickle liquids. Divide the broth and clam mixture between two large bowls, making sure the scallops are clearly visible. Place a couple of larger pieces of pickled dulse and large pieces of Buddha's hand fruit in and around the dish and then serve.

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Bob Dylan's three-night residency at the Royal Albert Hall was his first visit to the venue since the 1966 tour when he was heckled for the heinous crime of playing an electric guitar. What fresh outrage would he concoct this time? Dylan goes ukulele? The great man turning to his band amid howls of indignation: "Strum it loud ... "

The old tease kicked off Wednesday's show with "Things Have Changed". "Standing on the gallows with my head in the noose," he rasped: "Any minute now I'm expecting all hell to break loose." But unlike 1966, nothing had really changed. From his black frock coat and raffish two-tone shoes to the road-tested touring band, Dylan, 72, was in the role he has been playing since 1997's Time out of Mind - that of the itinerant troubadour, the mythic American wanderer who, as he later sang, "ain't seen my family in 20 years".

He and his five-strong band were illuminated by muted sepia lighting on a darkened stage in the round. There were no spotlights to focus attention on individual players. They played as a unit, like an antique roadhouse band transported by some odd wormhole to the plush setting of the Royal Albert Hall.

Most of the set was drawn from Dylan's post-1997 work, with his latest album Tempest predominating. Charlie Sexton delivered deft but unshowy solos on guitar while steel guitarist Donnie Herron added a western twang. Drummer George Recile and bassist-bandleader Tony Garnier drove the tempo forward immaculately, from "Beyond Here Lies Nothin's"'s Latin shuffle to the boom-chicka-boom railway beat of "Duquesne Whistle".

Dylan alternated between a microphone stand in the centre and a grand piano at the side where he stood playing rudimentary chords, often one-handed. The rumoured arthritis appeared to be confirmed by the other hand dangling by his side; he seemed uncertain what to do with it, often propping it awkwardly against his hip. But his harmonica-playing was lusty - it replaced the accordion parts that Los Lobos's David Hidalgo contributed to recent albums - while his ruined voice struck me as unusually vigorous.

Tempest's "Pay in Blood" found him hissing the line "I pay in blood - but not my own" with B-movie relish. And "Forgetful Heart", a rootsy ballad from 2009's Together Through Life, was outstanding, Dylan contorting his groaning tones into genuine tenderness. With his frizzy grey hair in a quiff that had failed to defy the laws of gravity, he resembled a ghostly satire of a 1950s showman; the way he looked at the audience after kerplunking the piano keys - as if to say "Top that!" - was straight from the Jerry Lee Lewis school of stagecraft, with a hefty dose of irony.

He ended with two classics: "All Along the Watchtower" and a neatly countrified "Blowin' in the Wind", the latter punctuated by a swaggering harmonica solo. A young man pushed past me to throw something on stage, a "personal letter to Bob Dylan". Dylan, standing taking his bow, did a cartoonish double take as the package skidded past his feet. It wasn't addressed to "Judas".

bobdylan.com

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What to say about Mark Morris, his dances and his dancers, save that their return this week to Rosebery Avenue is the most welcome, the most stimulating of events? I would add that, in a city where inadequate, score-bruising choreography abounds, we see in Morris's work the triumph of an art of subtlest creation and sensibilities, movement an organic and radiant development of its music. Strong words? Of course, and necessarily so when activities that have lately occupied this same stage (notably with Hofesh Shechter and Rambert) have tarnished the good name of choreography.

Morris, who has genius, offers us - in this first of two programmes - dances that are the most seemingly natural and felicitous realisations of their score. Design? A bare stage, discreet costuming, good lighting. Music? The refined resources of Morris's own ensemble - a septet comprising gifted singers and musicians - performing Beethoven's settings of British folk songs, Weber's Grand Duo Concertant for clarinet and piano, Satie's Socrate. The result? An evening of dance penetrating of its music, both beguiling and uncompromising, a vivid image of what the composer created.

The Muir takes Beethoven's delightful songs, shows us their charm, their world, and in a final heart-tearing sequence, their soul. Crosswalk is a joyous realisation of Weber's virtuosities and ingenuities of craft for the clarinet, its every least feat of bravura explored by 10 buoyant men and three flame-garbed women, running (and walking) across the stage, springing delightedly over their music, its forms their forms, its happy rhythms theirs. Socrate offers a prodigious visualisation of Satie's austere masterpiece concerning the philosopher's final days. This most unemphatic music (idiomatically given by the tenor Zach Finkelstein and the pianist Colin Fowler) is explained, respected, as Morris's dancers, clad in pale-hued tunics and chitons and kilts move through choreography that probes with every restraint the heart of Satie's score. I think it a masterpiece and, like so many of Morris's dances, amazing in power, eloquence, clarity of vision. And lit by a radiant humanity. Choreography unalloyed, life-enhancing. Vast gratitude to Morris and his artists.

markmorrisdancegroup.org

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One day in East Hampton in about 1960, the Pop artist Larry Rivers introduced Jasper Johns to a Russian-Jewish émigré named Tatyana Grosman, the somewhat unlikely founder of the printer Universal Limited Art Editions, or ULAE. Grosman was on a mission to recruit exciting contemporary artists to make original lithographs, and she had become enamoured with a Johns painting of a coat hanger, an audaciously banal subject in that era, that she had seen at the Museum of Modern Art.

Not long afterwards, Johns recalls, "she delivered several heavy stones to my Front Street door". They were lithographic stones, on which he could draw. "I quickly decided that it was easier to make the trip to West Islip [on Long Island, New York, where ULAE was based] than to carry the stones up several flights to my studio. Once I began, it was clear that there were things to learn and to play with."

Johns is typically understated in describing his ongoing 53-year odyssey that has not only heavily influenced the direction of his practice but also helped alter the very definition of what a print could be: not a reproduction or a step-sibling to painting, but a work of art in itself, of equal importance to any other medium.

One artist brought another, and soon Grosman had lured a virtual who's who of the era - from Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly to Helen Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell - to her cottage with the promise of lunch and the freedom to experiment. In the process, ULAE became a storied force in contemporary art.

"You get the sense there were all these young people with nothing to lose," says Iwona Blazwick, director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London. "They had no money, just ideas. They would get fed, watered and the materials they needed. It was almost utopian."

Now Blazwick and Bill Goldston, who succeeded Grosman at ULAE after her death in 1982, are mounting an exhibition of Johns' prints at the Gallery at Windsor, in Hilary and Galen Weston's exclusive Vero Beach, Florida, development. It is the third annual collaboration in the Whitechapel at Windsor series, mounted to chime with Art Basel Miami Beach. The show focuses on Johns' body imagery, including recurring figures of a man and a boy as well as renderings of hands doing sign language and a family portrait made when Johns' father was a baby. "He uses the body as a kind of language," Blazwick says.

While many might speculate that Johns' imagery is deeply autobiographical, Goldston notes, "I don't think anyone knows the meaning it has for Jasper. I was more interested in the repetition of the image - you know, how he says: 'Take an image, do something with it, do something else with it.' It has more to do for me with how the image changes from one print to another."

Grosman's role as printmaking's catalyst began when she was already in midlife. Before then, she had been buffeted round the world by the 20th century's calamities. As a child, she and her family escaped the Russian Revolution, settling in Japan, then Germany. With that country's embrace of Nazism, she and her artist husband Maurice moved to Paris. After the Germans marched in, the couple fled to Spain, then Portugal and finally to New York in 1943.

Faced with her husband's failing health and the need to earn a living, Grosman turned to printmaking. Their friends were artists and the language of the printing press was not entirely foreign, since her father had owned a newspaper in Siberia. Still, no one expected ULAE to elevate prints to such an art form that MoMA would acquire one of every single ULAE edition, as it has for half a century.

"Tanya was attentive and encouraging, as I think she was to any artist she trusted to work at ULAE," Johns says. "Her European, old-world background seemed to strengthen, or stabilise, her interest in experimentation and novelty."

Grosman was not a master printer herself; for expert knowhow she turned to people like Goldston, who first came to ULAE in 1969 to work with Rauschenberg, and who, like his good friend Johns, had embraced printmaking as central to his artistic practice. "He and I sort of became brothers," Goldston says.

Initially, Goldston thought ULAE would be a temporary gig. "All I wanted to do was be an artist," he recalls. Grosman, though, persuaded him to stay.

On a sunny autumn day, Goldston, 70 and elegant in a navy blazer and grey trousers and sweater, begins his tour of ULAE at the one-time gardener's cottage, which now houses a lithographic press on the main floor and an etching studio in the basement. Upstairs is a viewing room.

Well into his employment with Grosman, he recalls, "every night I had to lock the cabinets and give her the keys". Her insistence, he says, was not for lack of trust. "It was out of respect for the artists and their work."

ULAE's main operation is now a few miles away, in Bay Shore. There, the staff of 10 still cooks and eats lunch together daily around a square wood table, along with whichever artist or collector happens to be visiting. Prints by Lee Bontecou and Larry Rivers hang on the walls, along with ULAE's "birth certificate". A drawing Goldston made in art school - the only piece of his not in the bin, he says - sits over the sink, placed there, he notes, as a staff joke.

Goldston, who grew up on a farm in Oklahoma, first worked with Johns in 1971. He'd been assigned to print images for a planned Johns catalogue raisonné on an offset printer, a device then considered acceptable for high-end books but artistically inferior to a lithographic press. Much to Grosman's horror, he consented to Johns' request to show him the press, which was housed at another location. "I came close to losing my job that day," Goldston says.

Johns, as Grosman feared, became enthralled with the new technology. One morning Grosman stopped by while the two men were hard at work. "Jasper was drawing on a plate," Goldston recalls. "As fast as he could paint them, I could get them ready. She came in. I saw her standing in the door. Four or five minutes, she did not say anything. She closed the door and left." At lunch back at the house, Grosman told him, "The energy in that studio was so electrifying I was afraid to interrupt it."

That spirit of experimentation has guided Goldston and ULAE into the digital age. "Ideas are ideas," he says. "You think Giotto wouldn't have loved the possibilities of what we're using today? It's all another method to get the idea out of the brain."

Artists who've worked with Goldston say that he is a master at getting out their ideas. "It's always done very gently, sometimes without your knowledge," says Terry Winters, whom Goldston first brought out in 1982.

Lisa Yuskavage, who had made a mental note of ULAE as a student studying Johns, compares Goldston to Fred Astaire: "He lets you move, but he guides you at the same time.

"He pushes me," she continues. "He disobeys me."

Yuskavage recalls how she resisted his suggestions to try digital. "I'm like, 'Digital blah blah blah,'" she says. Against her wishes, he scanned the image they had printed, printed it digitally extra-large and then, using the keys she had given him to her studio, snuck in and pinned prints all over. First Yuskavage was annoyed. Then she took out her pastels and went to work drawing on the prints, several of which have since been acquired by museums. "Bill is not just a printer," she says. "It was his leap. It was not my leap."

Says Goldston of their collaboration: "We're having a heck of a good time."

That the business is not always profitable is beside the point. Though Goldston considers it a "blessing" that 15 or 20 collectors can enjoy the finished product, "it's not about making multiples. It's about something creative."

'Jasper Johns: Shadow and Substance', December 8-April 30 2014

windsorflorida.com

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Latin America is no longer a geographical description: it's a cultural phenomenon. Never does the city of Miami feel more a part of the south of the great American landmass as when the art crowd hits town for the powerhouse fair Art Basel Miami Beach. And not only for the mothership, as ABMB has now become, but also for the plethora of her acolytes: at least a dozen satellite fairs will pop up in Miami next week to take advantage of the fairground atmosphere that visits the city each December.

The influx of both talent and commercial acumen from central and South America is greater this year than ever, according to Latitude: Platform for Brazilian Art Galleries Abroad, a project supported by the Brazilian government and the Association of Brazilian Art Galleries. No fewer than 22 galleries from Brazil alone, they report, are showing across six fairs: 13 at Art Basel Miami Beach and nine others at Context, Scope, Art Miami, Art Untitled and the Brazil Art Fair, including some that have never before ventured beyond their own borders.

The Brazilian art scene amounts virtually to a craze at the moment. It is also, incidentally - interpret this how you will - the only national art market in which all the bestsellers are female: viz Lygia Clark, whose "Bicho Invertebrado" (1960) fetched $1.9m at Phillips New York this month. Numbers like this should put a gleam in the eye of her galleries at Miami - DAN, from São Paulo, and London-based Alison Jacques.

Other recent Brazilian sales also imply good news. Two works by the late Brazilian Sérgio de Camargo sold for over $1m at Sotheby's New York last week, including a record for the artist brought home by "Untitled (Relief No 21/52)" (1964) at $2.2m, almost quadruple its estimate. New York's Mary-Anne Martin gallery should also have high hopes for the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo, whose "Women reaching for the Moon" (1946), recently went for $1.4m. And results from last month's ArtBo fair in Bogotá were cheering too.

The wealth of Latin American talent assembled in Miami has a geographical rationale, of course - the city sits at a significant crossroads. And, despite their tigerish economies, there is still in the southern countries of the continent a cultural insecurity: coming to the US to buy and sell, to see and be seen, is still an important validation for dealers, artists and collectors alike. Miami has its magic. Now celebrating its 11th edition, ABMB is no longer seen as the baby sister of its European senior sibling, but as a distinctive phenomenon - in fact, the two are utterly different in feel and mood.

And, as grown-up fairs do, it has had a powerful effect on its hinterland. Not only the eager satellites but also some superb public shows are in prospect: Tracey Emin at the excellent Miami MoCA, Ai Weiwei at the new Pérez Museum, fine displays at the Rubell Family Collection and other privately funded venues. Not to mention installations on the beach, the obligatory art bar, and much more.

Which goes to show that, despite the chatter of Spanish and Portuguese voices among the artworks on display in Miami next week, the rest of the world is hardly under-represented. Among the grand total of 253 galleries showing across six sections at ABMB, newcomers and regulars include Asian and European galleries as counterpoint to the (roughly) 50 per cent from the Americas.

The linguistic bridges lure galleries from Barcelona and Madrid, taking advantage of the Hispanic mood. Others simply do what they are good at - Galerie 1900-2000 from Paris brings Duchamp, Man Ray and Picabia; Chemould from Mumbai brings Shilpa Gupta and Jitish Kallat. From as far afield as Oslo and Beijing, Athens and Buenos Aires, geography goes into the great melting pot of the art souk.

Tom Wolfe's 2012 novel Back to Blood, which mirrors "class, family, wealth, race, crime, sex, corruption and ambition in Miami, the city where America's future has arrived first", contains a hilarious-but-vicious portrait of the super-rich vying for first entry to the city's premier art fair. It's hardly a pretty picture, but it's an unforgettable insight into the passion and madness that drives this burgeoning phenomenon. According to a recent article by my colleague Georgina Adam, in 1970 there were three main art fairs in existence (Basel, Art Actuel and Cologne). By 2005 there were 68 and in 2011 there were 189. Who knows what 2014 will bring.

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Art Basel Miami Beach runs December 5-8, artbasel.com

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The Italian tyre company Pirelli kicked off the A-list's Christmas party season this year with a 50th anniversary celebration of its best-known product - the Pirelli calendar.

In a vast contemporary art space on the outskirts of Milan, more than 500 guests, including Sophia Loren, Kevin Spacey, Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli, plus prominent industrialists, European bankers and many, many models, sat down for a black-tie gala dinner - with a side helping of nudity.

"The thing about the Pirelli calendar is that you could just go wild," said model Karolina Kurkova. Her outfit, men's black tie on top and tiny leather shorts by Dsquared2 on the bottom, amid a sea of long dresses and buttoned-up tuxedos, struck exactly the right tone for a glamorous night with a risqué undercurrent.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a party for this very Italian brand, most guests were dressed in homegrown Italian labels: Giorgio Armani, Fendi, Alberta Ferretti, Ermenegildo Zegna, Gucci and Dolce & Gabbana all featured. Afef Jnifen, model and wife of Pirelli chairman and chief executive Marco Tronchetti Provera, wore a form-hugging, floor-skimming azure-blue velvet gown by Alberta Ferretti. Elisa Sednaoui, the Karl Lagerfeld muse-turned-actress, was in red velvet by Fendi, again fitting from breastbone to ankles.

But, interestingly, given that this was a Pirelli calendar party, most revellers had chosen not to reveal too much flesh. Perhaps this was not to distract fellow party­goers from posters above their heads - many of which showed portraits of the very same women wearing little more than either loincloths (in the 1994 calendar "In Praise of Women", which featured Kate Moss) or leaves (in photographer Richard Avedon's 1995 calendar "Seasons"). It was a contrast that played well at Pirelli, a brand that has, after all, excelled at using pin-ups to sell tyres for half a century.

For the men, as ever the choice was easier, with tuxes the theme of the night; albeit with a few notable exceptions. Lapo Elkann, billionaire Fiat heir and society-circuit flâneur, wore a checkerboard suit by Lapo's Wardrobe for Gucci, plus "a vintage Mickey Mouse Rolex", which he was keen to point out. Elkann also slipped off his patent black dress-shoes, complete with bow, to show that they were tailor-made on Savile Row. Among the photographers the swinging 1960s appeared still in vogue: with many sporting baggy linen suits, sneakers and Sebagos. Although this was a rainy night in Milan, their look was reminiscent of the calendar's first photo shoot, by Robert Freeman on a Caribbean island in 1964.

The star of the night was Sophia Loren, who was regal in body-skimming silver Giorgio Armani. What was it like, I asked, to pose for Pirelli in the 2007 calendar? "For me, it was surprising doing that for the first time at a later age," the 79-year-old replied. "For Pirelli, it was a scoop to have me."

Still, the last word went to Kevin Spacey, who compèred the evening in a midnight-blue tuxedo by Burberry, and was the only one to address the elephant in the room. "I think I know the secret of your success," he commented, when partygoers had just watched a 20-minute film of 50 years' worth of Pirelli calendar images during the interval between their risotto entrée and veal main course. "Did you count the breasts? That was a lot of breasts."

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Fred Hervey, 39, is managing director and co-head of UK private banking at Berenberg Bank, where he has worked for three years. He was previously with Barclays.

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Suit by Dress 2 Kill

This is a lightweight blue wool suit with a weave in it. I buy almost all my suits from this company and a number of them are seven years old or more, so I know they last. This suit is about a year old. As I'm a private banker my suits are conservative but they'll always have little touches of personality, such as the lining - which on this one is deep burgundy. But nothing crazy: I meet so many different sorts of people and you want to make everyone feel at ease. It shows respect to some and instils comfort in others: there's a professionalism to people wearing suits.

dress2kill.com

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Shirt by Dress 2 Kill

I'm tall and I have long arms so I get shirts made to fit. Dress 2 Kill does a great service in a multitude of different cuts: bespoke without being super-expensive. I think people get put off by bespoke because they think they will have to remortgage their house but these are actually quite affordable.

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Tie by Hermès

This is blue and red silk and, now that I'm looking at it, I realise the pattern is letters; Hs and Qs. Hermès ties suit my style because they are discreet. I'm not very good at shopping at airports but I bought this in Zürich airport since I travel back and forth to our Swiss office. I insist on buying my own ties. My wife has tried to on occasion. We agree on almost everything apart from the choice of my ties.

hermes.com

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Cufflinks by Sammy Duder

These are square and sterling silver, each has a fingerprint of my two children and their names. To be honest, I wear these almost every day. They were given to me for Father's day last year. They remind me to go home more often.

sammyduder.com

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Watch by IWC

For someone who doesn't like shopping in airports, it's funny I have two things on from an airport. I got this in Hong Kong airport before I joined Berenberg as a "good luck in your new job" present from my wife. I have a number of watches but this is my favourite. It's a large black-faced watch with traditional leather straps. The brand is not one of those instantly recognisable ones. People who know watches would recognise it but otherwise it's not well known, and I quite like that, and they make a nice product. I'm always sort of slightly looking out for a watch.

iwc.com

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Shoes by Harrys of London

These are simple, classic black lace-ups. Harrys is another brand I really like. They are traditional and handmade but have a technical aspect. These have injected rubber soles, which means my feet are always dry. It is a full leather sole but this weird injecting thing they've done works well living in London. This pair is quite new but I have three or four pairs of their shoes now.

harrysoflondon.com

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In the early morning chill, my holiday companions were milling about the kitchen. While eating toast, they gathered up clothing and equipment for the day, to the swooshing of nylon salopettes. Their outfits were simple and tailored, light and slim-fitting. And then there was me: Bambi in a sumo suit.

As someone who is 5ft 2in and a holiday skier, outerwear can be a disaster. The above scenario took place during an Easter trip. I had struggled to find a decent outfit at the last minute: hence my very puffy purple jacket and black trousers cut for a portly giant. I vowed that the next time I went skiing I would have snow gear that was not just protective, but fit for off-piste viewing too. Earlier this month, that "next time" arrived: a coaching clinic at the ski dome in Hemel Hempstead. Enter Moncler.

Now famous as the puffer jacket of choice for ladies everywhere from Chelsea to Courchevel, Moncler in fact has roots deep in the world of mountain climbing and skiing. Originally known for making quilted jackets and sleeping bags for mountain expeditions, it was the official supplier of the French national downhill ski team at the Grenoble Winter Olympics in 1968 and in the past 40 years has broadened its horizons even further. Its current ski label, named Grenoble, represents only about 10 per cent of its total product range, which also includes Gamme Rouge, the haute couture line by designer Giambattista Valli. Grenoble sports the Moncler signature: the use of non-traditional performance fabrics - think wool tweed - to create garments that work on and off piste.

My test case was an Irrenberg jacket. This is standard Moncler: black quilted nylon, cockerel logo on the shoulder, waist nipped in by an elasticated belt. At £780, it is at the low end of the price range for this line, which can go over £2,000 for jackets embellished with fur and wool. From the outside, it looks like a simple everyday winter weather jacket for the city. (At the office there was much envy among even non-skiing colleagues, who simply wanted to wear it to work.) But it comes with frills: a traditional powder skirt inside; a double zip so you can close the jacket just as far as your waist, rather than all the way from hip to neck; fleece-lined pockets; a hood big enough to cover a helmet and a turtleneck for added warmth. Plus waterproof pockets inside and in the sleeve for phones and keys. Missing were a few features of more technical jackets, such as clips that hook on to your trousers to give you extra protection from powder snow (and some Grenoble jackets have an internal gaiter that zips on to trousers).

Still, given that I wasn't waist-deep in powder, this was not a big issue, and on the slopes the jacket was both warm and movement-friendly. Watching myself on playback (the clinic insists you see your own mistakes) I was delighted to note that no matter how messy my skiing, I still looked sharp. In fact, I was so delighted that back in London I made a beeline for the Moncler shop to try on more jackets, including the Reidberger (£1,180) and the Skilbrum (£1,085). Made with bi-stretch technical nylon over feather down, they were both beautiful, with a body-conscious shape, and unlike the Irrenberg they come in colours other than black: the Reidberger in a chic blue, and the Skilbrum in light or steel grey or dark green. The Skilbrum, which also has a removable fur-lined hood, is belted, with quilting on the back and slim-fit arms.

Still, there's no getting away from the fact that this is an Italian luxury garment, thanks to the sizing. Which is, to be blunt, on the small side. Be prepared to go up a number, and be comforted by the fact no one looking at you will be able to tell.

moncler.com

Anousha Sakoui is the FT's M&A correspondent

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Journeys down memory lane are rarely predictable. Unlike the drive from JFK into Manhattan - it never seems to improve and I'm convinced it's uglier than it was a decade ago - memory lane is a place that can fill you with joy, make you instantly depressed, inspire you to pick up the phone and call a long-lost classmate or quietly pull on your coat and beat a silent retreat to the nearest fire exit.

Following an intense birthday weekend in Tokyo that involved dinners, drinks and singing at all my favourite venues, I touched down in London early on Tuesday morning ready to take on the day. While I normally make my way between Europe and Japan on ANA, Finnair or Swiss, it's hard to beat the 6pm departure on BA from Tokyo Haneda (much closer to the city centre) to Heathrow. You are almost guaranteed to pass out before the aircraft gains altitude over Tokyo Bay and, with a bit of luck, not to wake up until you're over the English Channel.

Armed with 11 hours of solid sleep, a day of meetings wasn't a problem until the 3pm dip, when I was struggling to pay attention to a presentation from colleagues. A flat white and small sugar hit from our café down the street soon put things right and by 5pm I was back in the game.

Normally I wouldn't plan an evening out after a 10-day trip but an invitation to a friend's farewell party was too important to miss, so I jumped into the car and made my way to Canada House on Trafalgar Square.

After a painfully slow tour through the West End, we pulled up in front of Canada's recently renovated digs and were greeted by some burly security guards who struggled to find names on their clipboards. (National branding tip number one: get some Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers in full red get-ups to look after this task as this is your first encounter on Canadian territory.) We then went up the stairs and into an elegant reception room, where I was greeted by our jolly high commissioner to the UK, before making my way through the crowd to find the guest of honour.

With a glass of bubbles in hand (national branding tip number two: was it Canadian? Was it Australian? French? Would have been good to know), I surveyed the room and was surprised by the number of faces I recognised - BBC correspondent Lyse Doucet chattering away, Channel 4's Jon Snow shaking hands and looking concerned, and sometime radio host (and current lavender farmer) Nancy Durham, looking mildly naughty among a group of more sedate guests.

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After slaloming around clusters of animated well-wishers, I found Ann MacMillan - the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's retiring London bureau chief, and the star of the evening.

Since the mid-1970s, MacMillan has been a reassuring figure on TV screens across Canada - first for commercial network CTV and, since the early 1980s, for state broadcaster CBC. She's also a familiar face for anyone who spends much time in and around Fitzrovia - the one-time international TV news hub of London that's seeing a bit of a renaissance. In the golden days of TV and radio newsgathering, the CBC occupied an entire semi-modernist building on the west side of Great Titchfield Street, a stone's throw from the BBC's Broadcasting House. At CBC a staff of 60-plus from the network's English and French TV and radio networks fanned out across the region to cover disasters, state visits, conflicts and no shortage of royal stories. Over the years since then, the bureau has been the victim of various cuts.

Throughout the period, MacMillan has covered the political landscape of the UK and also managed the far trickier politics of a network that's been trying to figure out its place and redefine its mission in Canada, one of the world's biggest English language markets.

When I arrived in London in 1990, the CBC was one of the first places I applied for a job. Ann was away at the time and I was interviewed by someone filling in for her during the summer break and I didn't get hired for the position. A few weeks later, I landed a job up the street, in US network ABC's massive London bureau (140 people back then). I recall Pierre Salinger padding around his corner office entertaining various ambassadors and Peter Jennings used to fly in on Concorde to read the news "live" from London.

All over Fitzrovia you could spot the most famous faces, or hear the most famous voices, in broadcast journalism. A few of them are still around but Ann's will most definitely be missed from both street and screen.

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More columns at ft.com/brule

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US stocks suffered a last minute sell-off at the end of a shortened trading week that dragged the S&P 500 back from a record high, as early bullishness following signs of strong consumer demand in the holiday shopping season faded.

Broader sentiment in the markets this week was helped by mostly encouraging data on the US housing and labour markets - even though it did little to dispel speculation that the Federal Reserve could begin scaling down, or "tapering", its stimulus measures before year-end.

Oil prices were in focus at the start of the week following Iran's agreement to curb its nuclear programme in return for an easing of sanctions.

The S&P 500 equity index ended Friday's half-session with a drop of 0.1 per cent - leaving it with a weekly gain of 0.1 per cent, and a rise of 2.8 per cent in November as a whole.

Across the Atlantic, the FTSE Eurofirst 300 ended just a fraction firmer on the day, but still at a five-year peak. The index gained 0.6 per cent over the week and 1 per cent in the month.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 slipped 0.4 per cent on the day, but still managed a weekly rise of 1.8 per cent, reaching a near six-year high in the process and an impressive gain of 9.3 per cent in November.

The strong performance of the exporter-sensitive Nikkei was largely down to the weakness of the yen.

The currency hit a six-month low against the dollar overnight before steadying after the release of strong Japanese inflation data that appeared to vindicate the anti-deflation policies of Shinzo Abe, prime minister. The dollar rose about 1 per cent over the week to Y102.24 and about 4 per cent over the month, .

"We expect dollar/yen to keep the pressure on the upside as the composition of portfolio flows appears consistent with renewed investor confidence in 'Abenomics'," said Hans Redeker, head of global FX strategy at Morgan Stanley.

"We believe the way is now open for gains to target the Y103.75 May high."

Analysts at Danske Bank noted Japan was one of the few leading world economies to see consumer prices accelerating - and that this was the first time since 1998 that Japan has had higher inflation than the eurozone.

"It shows what to do if you want inflation to go higher: print a lot of money," Danske said.

Indeed, while the latest eurozone consumer price data showed the year-on-year rate of inflation increasing slightly in November after the previous month's worryingly soft outcome, money supply and lending figures released earlier in the week ratcheted up pressure on the European Central Bank to be even more accommodative.

"The ECB will probably hold fire on taking any further action at its 5 December policy meeting given that it only cut its refinancing rate in November and inflation has moved up from its October low," said Howard Archer, economist at IHS Global Insight.

"However, we expect the ECB will take further action before long, most likely in the form of another Longer-Term Refinancing Operation, especially given latest data showing a further and deeper fall in bank lending to businesses in October."

In spite of such expectations, the euro remained resilient, rising 0.4 per cent against the dollar over the week to a one-month high above $1.36. The single currency also hit a five-year peak against the yen.

Sterling also put in a strong performance amid growing optimism about the UK economic recovery, touching a two-year high against the dollar within a whisker of $1.64.

The Bank of England unveiled an overhaul of its Funding for Lending scheme that would scale back stimulus to the housing sector, a move seen by many as paving the way for a shift away from ultra-loose monetary policy.

But there was no getting away from the fact that the Fed's policy stance will be the biggest influence on global markets. While US data releases this week were mostly encouraging, the key is likely to be next week's November jobs report.

"We anticipate a gain of 180,000 in payrolls, which could just be enough to persuade the Fed to begin tapering its asset purchases later in December," said Paul Ashworth at Capital Economics.

But government bonds showed relatively little concern about such a prospect at this stage, with US and German debt holding within well-established ranges. The yield on the 10-year US Treasury was up 1 basis point on Friday at 2.74 per cent, down just 1bp over the week. The Bund yield slipped 1bp on the day and was down 5bp on the week at 1.69 per cent.

Gold rallied off a four-month low of $1,227 an ounce hit at the start of the week. The metal on Friday rose $8 to $1,251, a $7 rise over the five-day period.

In industrial commodities, Brent sank as much as $3 a barrel on Monday in response to Tehran's nuclear deal. But it very quickly recovered and on Friday was trading at $110.71, down 15 cents on the day and just 34 cents on the week.

Copper rose 0.5 per cent in London on Friday to $7,055 a tonne, but fell 0.6 per cent over the week and 2.7 per cent over the month.

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I remember it was a Friday night," says Jeremy Ashbee on receiving the news that would make him question his attitude towards his profession more than any case he had previously encountered. "I remember that clearly because it ruined my weekend."

It is not, on the face of it, the kind of news that would have many of us hurtling towards anxiety and self-doubt. The phone call came last year from the restorers of Kenwood House, Robert Adam's masterly neoclassical villa on the edge of London's Hampstead Heath, which was freshly reopened to the public on Thursday after a £5.95m refurbishment.

The restorers had been working on the gilding in the house's library, long regarded as one of the jewels of 18th-century English architecture. There was "bucket loads" of it, recalls Ashbee, all over the column capitals and elegant reliefs, giving the room its distinguished and distinctive character. The only problem was that it didn't seem to be original.

The call that caused Ashbee such distress informed him they had found a layer of white lead paint under the gilding. More importantly, there was a thin film of dirt between paint and gilding. This showed that the extra layer of decoration had been added decades after Adam's original room had been unveiled, to great acclaim, in front of Kenwood's owner William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, in the 1760s.

"We have got to have a meeting," Ashbee remembers telling his caller. If you are head curator of historic properties for English Heritage, such discoveries entail difficult decisions - in this case, one that would determine how Kenwood would be perceived by future generations of visitors. The technical challenge of restoring one of London's most notable interiors had just acquired the sharpest of ethical dimensions.

Here was the dilemma: whether to make a radical change in the appearance of the library, in an attempt to evoke its original appearance; or to respect the added decoration that was added soon afterwards ("the late 18th century has a certain sacredness in its own right," says Ashbee softly) and leave things as they were.

The debate that followed, with strong opinions on either side, according to Ashbee, reflected a longstanding controversy over restoration in Britain. Cack-handed attempts to restore things to an imagined pristine condition were sharply criticised by the likes of William Morris in the 19th century, who believed that the layers of amendment evidenced in a place or object were more important than the reproduction of its alleged original state.

I have my own views to declare here. I am one of the very few people - we are widely derided as nutters - who think that the restoration of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in the 1980s and 1990s, the most important such project in recent history, proved to be a crushing disappointment, and am happy to be old enough to remember it in its previous state, when the artist's frescoes looked more real, more subtle, and more moving. I am well aware of the arguments that were presented to justify the restoration. But they have been rebutted, with no little ferocity. In the end it comes down to taste.

Which is why one of the most important principles of restoration today is that of reversibility. When Ashbee finally made the decision to go with the plain white version of Adam's library, there was never any question of stripping away the gilding. Instead, yet another layer of white paint was added to it, which could comfortably be removed by future historians, who may decide that the gilding did better justice to the room after all.

Ashbee says the clinching argument was that the room as seen today is a plausible version of what it looked like when Adam first unveiled it to his delighted client. This is partly a technical triumph but also a testament to a greater professional scrupulousness on the part of the restorers.

The very acknowledgment of the decision's difficulty shows an awareness that these issues live and breathe according to the air of the times. Whatever we think, contemporary taste shapes the debate every time it is played out. It is no coincidence that the 1960s restoration of the library provided it with a thick carpet, of the kind that was in our homes of the time too. The carpet has now gone. The bare-wooded floor that we saw this week is an original feature - but it also happens to accord with fashions in interior design.

The result of all the agonising makes a fresh visit to Kenwood essential (for those not in the know, it also houses some extraordinary paintings, among them one of Rembrandt's greatest self-portraits). The library looks lighter, in every sense. Sit in it for a few minutes, and you can hear the ghosts of all those heated domestic discussions, replaying endlessly over the decades: "Darling, I'm not saying I don't like it. But don't you think it is a little too white? I've thought of a new colour scheme . . . " The beholders of beauty, each and every one of them, will always have their say.

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Most of Britain's big energy companies will announce within days that household power bills will rise by less than expected this winter, in return for government reforms to energy levies.

George Osborne is expected to say on Sunday that the government has concluded its review of how to "roll back" green tariffs in a move that could knock some £50 off the typical annual household bill.

The big six energy companies have been engulfed by a public storm after they announced price rises averaging about 8 per cent for the coming year, far in excess of inflation.

The chancellor has made clear that he expects them publicly to promise to limit price rises, in return for his reforms.

"We will pass on any cost savings resulting from a change in government policy to our customers penny for penny, pound for pound," an SSE spokesman said.

Npower said it was still waiting for the full details of the coalition's package, but added: "If the green levies are rolled back, then Npower will cut prices to its customers as soon as possible."

Any such changes will represent a victory for coalition aides and officials. They have been scouring green and social levies looking for a way to restrain price rises, in response to Ed Miliband's promise to freeze energy bills. The Labour leader set the tone of the Westminster agenda this autumn with his pledge.

The main changes will affect Eco - the energy company obligation - a government scheme to insulate homes that is paid for through household bills, and which is expected to cost each dual-fuel customer nearly £100 a year in 2014.

The deadline for the companies to meet their obligations under Eco will be extended from 2015 to 2017, although other targets may be increased.

The Eco will also be "rebalanced" towards cheaper insulation products.

The energy companies' obligation to deal with "hard-to-treat homes" - such as those without cavity walls - would be eased, while targets for replacing or repairing boilers, or carrying out loft insulation in low-income households would be raised.

Also, the Warm Home Discount, which helps the elderly and some "vulnerable" people, will be moved from customer bills into general taxation to save about £12 a year from the typical bill.

Companies have long complained about the obligation to carry out solid wall insulation, which can cost about £10,000 a house.

One industry executive denied that the government had asked companies to freeze prices until 2015.

"It's more like they're saying to us: if we promise not to put your costs up, will you promise not to put your prices up again?" he said. "But at this stage, it's unclear whether we will be able to make that kind of commitment."

EDF Energy recently put up prices by less than its rivals, but only on the condition of changes to the Eco.

If the government's alterations are more modest than the company was hoping for, it could be in the awkward position of having to lift its prices again. "It's a critical question," said a person close to the company. "And it's one we won't be able to answer until we've seen what the cost savings from the changes to Eco are."

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If what you want is certainty, words are easier to read than pictures. Photographs containing relevant words often fall short in visual mystery. Viewers naturally decipher a kind of internal caption, and then leave the picture - since they have every reason to think that having "got" the sense through the words, they've "got" the picture.

América Latina: 1960-2013

América Latina 1960-2013 is a magnificent, eye-opening and deeply moving exhibition but it never resolves that problem. There are more words in it than in any exhibition of photographs I have ever seen. Not in captions or accompanying texts, but within the pictures. Almost every body of work included is actively wordy.

There are some images made with other things than words in which the photographic elements are really only illustration (the map-based works of Claudio Perna, for example). There are some texts written directly on the images (as the magnificent calligraphic screams of León Ferrari). There are far more texts found in the environment: graffiti and posters on urban walls, advertising, packaging. There are numbers of "extreme" words: a set of pictures by Rosângela Rennó mining a prison archive for studies of crude tattoos or an extraordinary 1970s video piece in which Letícia Parente made her comment on the commercialisation beginning then to gather pace in her country by stitching the words "Made in Brasil" into her own foot in black thread.

The curators don't identify words-within-the-image as a specifically Latin American style of picture-making, but it is plainly the central current of the exhibition. This imposes a noticeable skew: in an exhibition of dozens of artists working across a very wide register (from performance to interventions in the landscape, to documentary and repurposing existing photographs and so on), made over 50 years across a huge geographical territory, we are invited to see only works in which overtly political or socio-political messages are dominant.

By extension, these are works in which the magical complexity of possible reactions to a photograph is diminished. There are many treatments of photographs here, but in few of them is the photograph itself the locus of wonder or delight. There is no place, for example, for the deeply non-verbal, almost mystical, religious imagery of the Guatemalan artist Luis González Palma. Nor, at the other end of the scale, is there any room for Enrique Metinides, the "Mexican Weegee", whose cataloguing of death and disaster was non-judgmental and non-political.

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The tabular content relating to this article is not available to view. Apologies in advance for the inconvenience caused.

&gt; The real subject of the exhibition is violence. The start date chosen for the show - 1960 - is not coincidental. The Cuban revolution against Batista took place in 1959, and Cuba has been the yardstick of a certain kind of radicalism ever since. A frightening map showing revolutions and counter-revolutions accompanies the show.

But violence is not only the overt political violence that seems to drive regime change in Latin America. There is also the violence of need, of the favelas and all the rough conditions associated with them. Or the violence of drugs, or of landholding and landowning abuses. Or the violence of race. There are many varieties of violence in Latin America, and even now, as many of its countries show faster growth and greater prosperity than many in Europe or Asia, that violence still seems close to the lives of the people.

Many of the stories told in this show are horrible. Take the series Gloria Evaporada, by Eduardo Villanes, which ironises savagely on the fact that the Peruvian authorities returned the ashes of the victims of the 1992 Cantuta massacre to their families in cardboard boxes which had contained Gloria evaporated milk. You don't need to speak Spanish to understand the terrible pun. And it is not the pictures which tell the story. A man with his head in a cardboard box labelled Gloria means nothing until we read the facts behind it.

This is a good example of that word-leading element which occurs again and again in this exhibition. The pictures are rarely complete visual communications. They are elements of something else, either powerfully direct like a poster or a headline, or sometimes a more complex amalgam that can only be deciphered with contextual help or a glossary.

It turns out that the Argentine death squads who flew political opponents over the River Plate (during the military dictatorship 1976-83) to dump them alive out at sea consulted ecclesiastical authority to seek confirmation that their method of killing was Christian and non-violent. This is the subject of León Ferrari's work. It's madness, the very stuff of a certain kind of art. In the hands of a Zola or a Balzac, it would make a searing novel. It is in literature that such deep traumas of the continent have been most consistently explored, and a catalogue of stories of this kind make up the exhibition. They burn into the mind even in the comfortable surroundings of a contemporary art space in Paris's 14th arrondissement. Only occasionally, though, are they told in a way rich in photography itself.

A heavily laden family group moves along a pavement in a suburban district. It's not hard to imagine that everything they own is in their hands. They might be peasants, moving into the city as so many millions have done. We see them through the windshield of a police motorcycle, its lettering clearly legible even in reverse. We have, for a moment, authority's point of view. A child of the family turns apprehensively; he knows that he is being watched.

This powerful little picture is less of a poster than many of the works in the show; it's by Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, a highly distinguished photographer, and it really is a photograph, complete within itself. Yet even so, we could not understand it without the seven letters of POLICIA that take up nearly a quarter of the frame.

There's a ton of thinking and reflection and history in this exhibition, which is thoughtfully divided into four meaty and helpful categories (Territory; The City; Informing/Resisting; and Memory & Identity). Some of the artists are very well known (Francis Alÿs, disappointing here, in a few reworked sketches of some of his walking pieces; Graciela Iturbide, not at all disappointing in her gut-wrenching revelation of the daily torture undergone by Frida Kahlo in the corsets and prostheses she had to wear after a road crash in 1925). Yet the general tenor is rough-and-ready: collage, handwritten messages, stencilling, photocopying. It's like a huge student show, with the terrible urgency of the issues getting in the way of coolness. But the driving heat is formidably impressive.

It is a very odd thing, this: a photography exhibition in which photography is itself pretty consistently a secondary element. It takes time to see this show, time spent above all reading. But you come out of it profoundly moved by all those artists, raging in pictures.

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América Latina 1960-2013, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, until April 6 2014

fondation.cartier.com

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The Financial Times recently invited four eminent economists to a debate about the outlook for 2014.

This was no ordinary round table. Rather than a moderated discussion about economic technicalities, each panellist was encouraged to come up with the most headline-grabbing, thought-provoking proposition possible, then defend it. The statements may appear improbable, even implausible. But that was the object of the exercise. For most economists, a global banking crisis on the scale of 2008/9 seemed implausible - until it happened.

Stephanie FlandersThe UK will be the fastest-growing country in Europe for at least the next five years

Hélène ReyInternational capital flows are dangerous and should be controlled

Martin WolfThe eurozone will break up, with catastrophic depressions in several nations

Jim O'NeillThe world economy will grow at a faster rate in the next decade than it did in the last one

How to trade the Big IdeasThe experts give their views on forming an investment strategy

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The first port I can remember enjoying was a Taylor's 10-year-old tawny in a cloudy green bottle, with a stopper cork and a simple label. It was part of a case that my parents had shipped up to the remote village of Applecross in northwest Scotland for essential evening first aid after August days spent tramping over boggy hills in pouring rain and getting eaten alive on a midge-infested river.

My association of port with extreme weather remains strong. In southeast England I only drink the stuff during that testing period when the light drains out of the sky in mid-afternoon, the cold begins to grip and, in the worst cases, the tennis courts freeze over.

As this British winter sets in, I'm faced with both a dangerous opportunity and an intriguing dilemma. The emptying of the cellar in our former family home at Coleshill means that my small stock of port is lying vulnerably above ground, rather than snugly under it, needing to be consumed sooner rather than later. But which port to drink first?

The choice is first of all between tawny and vintage. To be more technical, this is a choice between wood-matured and bottle-matured port, between wine that has spent most of its life in the slender barrels called pipes, in one of the warehouses or lodges that line the south bank of the river Douro at Gaia opposite the old city of Oporto, and port that has been bottled young and left to age much more slowly under northern skies.

This choice has cultural, historical and sociopolitical dimensions as well as purely aesthetic ones. It could be expressed as a question: is port a Portuguese or a British wine? Port is one of those wines, like red Bordeaux, in whose development British merchants played a key role. Wars with France in the late 17th and early 18th centuries led enterprising British (and Dutch) merchants to search for acceptable wines from their old ally Portugal to replace embargoed French sources. The Methuen treaty of 1703 enshrined low rates of duty on Portuguese wine in return for free entry of English cloth to Portugal.

Almost by chance, the British hit on the sun-baked upper reaches of the Douro as a better source than the sodden Minho, whose wines have always been acid. They were not always at all scrupulous in their dealings with local farmers, as Hugh Johnson relates in his excellent The Story of Wine, sometimes requiring a farmer's daughter in part-exchange for the wine. In 1727, the British merchants founded their association in Oporto at the Factory House, which became a quasi-colonial club. A year after the devastating Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the Marquês de Pombal, as part of his salvage plan for the country, part-nationalised the industry, citing British abuses. The British merchants were infuriated and put up prices. Following the Tipplers' Riots of 1757, 26 members of the Factory House were executed. It turned out to be a temporary setback. British merchants prospered for most of the 19th century, though they had a choppier time in the 20th.

To express this long cultural history in stylistic terms, you could say that firm, masculine, long-lasting vintage, the product of a single exceptional year, was the classic style invented by the British, whereas tawny, more gentle, less aggressive, perhaps more subtle, and usually blended from many different vintages, was the style preferred in Portugal. I love both but on a recent visit to Oporto found myself veering towards a third style. This is colheita, or single-vintage tawny; wine from a single year matured for decades in wood.

The occasion was a charity dinner culminating in the auction of special lots of Graham's colheita 1982, a wine bottled in honour of last month's christening of Prince George, with proceeds to the charity Bagos d'Ouro, which promotes education for disadvantaged children in a region that has remained poor. Wealth has always flown downriver towards Oporto and beyond rather than trickling back to where the grapes grow on steep slopes above the river, needing to be picked by hand and sometimes, even now, trodden by foot.

Before the dinner, at the Graham's lodge in Gaia, which now incorporates a smart restaurant and shop (unthinkable 25 years ago, when the lodges looked unchanged from the 19th century) I tasted a comprehensive range of the company's ports. Though I loved the still youthful, bramble and violet- scented 2007 vintage, the star wine for me was the 1952 colheita, with its concentrated raisiny richness and astonishing freshness and finesse.

Once again cultural reflections mingled with aesthetic ones. Graham's is a company of Scottish heritage, founded by one family of Scots entrepreneurs, then bought by another, the dynamic Symingtons, who now control almost a third of the port business. But the guests and speeches at the dinner, which might once have been Anglo-Saxon in inflection, were almost all Portuguese, and the wine chosen to honour a British prince was in a Portuguese style.

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More columns at ft.com/eyres

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Michael Wolf (b1954) is a German photographer based in Hong Kong, whose work chronicles life in megacities. He was raised in the United States and Canada before returning to study in Germany, and his work reflects something of this outsider status. Wolf's website describes him as using his camera "to reveal the human energy that flows through the contemporary city".

In this series (see slideshow below), 'Small God, Big City', Wolf focuses on one set of small, overlooked objects in Hong Kong: the Earth God shrine, which is often found by the doorways of homes and shops in the city. The notes to Wolf's current exhibition at Shanghai's M97 Gallery explain that "It is hoped that Small God, Big City will provoke deeper thoughts on who we are and what we believe in, in this modern world."

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It's surprising how easy it is to open a barrel of prized brandy. Cognac maker Roger Prisset stands in his storehouse next to a barrel promisingly chalked up "1962", and lifts off the wooden stopper with one hand - a tenth of the effort you'd need to uncork a weeknight wine.

He sticks his nose as far as it will go into the barrel, then encourages our little party of cognac tourists, shivering in the damp November chill, to do the same. An instantly warming vapour of sweet, deep honey and cigars shoots into the head.

Prisset does not want an airtight seal: cognac needs to breathe through its oak cask to take on the colour and flavour of the wood. The 1962 smells good but then, he admits, it was an uncommonly good year, and anyway not something he can take credit for. This vintage was made by his father, who like his grandfather, was a cognac master. For really good cognac, you have to wait.

In all there are about 4,000 producers of France's famous spirit but more than 90 per cent of what they make is tankered away for blending at the "big four" cognac houses - Rémy Martin, Hennessy, Courvoisier and Martell. These powerful businesses have successfully chased new markets in the Americas, Singapore and China, pushing global sales of cognac to around EUR2.35bn last year, according to the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac. What the independents keep behind, they sell under their own labels, taking a tiny 2 per cent of the market.

I'm here to try a new weekend tour of independent cognac makers such as Prisset, something started this month by Nick Brimblecombe, an Englishman who runs the Logis du Paradis, a boutique hotel 20km south of the town of Cognac. It's surrounded by Grande Champagne, an area of villages and valleys that is the premier cru, the most prestigious, in the Cognac region.

The trip begins on Friday evening at Bordeaux airport, where a 7ft claret bottle by the luggage carousel announces the good life just as clearly as Brimblecombe's generous frame. Over the next two days we will taste more than 20 cognacs, attend a workshop on blending and visit four independent producers.

Brimblecombe (he books as "Monsieur Nicholas" at local restaurants to spare the French pronunciation) and his wife Sally moved here from the UK in 2005 when they bought a then crumbling heap of 18th-century buildings in the hamlet of La Magdeleine. Set around a large courtyard, the estate includes an old cognac distillery (its copper stills now polished up around a bar), cellar-turned-garage for his vintage cars, three cottages and a main house shaded prettily by lime trees. The Brimblecombes' spaniel, Bramble, keeps watch in the courtyard for something to happen, though as in so many French provincial outposts, nothing much does.

Winter is the ideal time to visit, and not simply to stock up on Christmas supplies or to test the drink's warming properties. With the grape harvest complete, the copper stills in the distilleries are lit (with gas these days, rather than coke) in November and kept alight until March, meaning visitors can see cognac production in process. It begins with the simple, low alcohol white wine (largely made of ugni blanc grapes), which is distilled in solid, handmade copper stills to make "brouillis". A second distillation, called la bonne chauffe, is when the floral notes of the terroir are supposed to be coaxed forward, and the clear eau de vie that results is transferred to French oak barrels for ageing.

On Saturday morning in sleepy Jarnac, François Mitterrand's birthplace on the banks of La Charente, we visit the Tiffon/Braastad distillery (it uses the latter name in Scandinavian markets), where 10 stills are at work, a medium-sized operation. We begin in a warehouse by the riverfront next to a giant cask holding cognac more than 100 years old. It is left untouched - it can only increase in value.

After propping up the bar in the tasting room, where a succession of ever darker, ever older cognacs is poured, we drive on upstream, through the rolling valleys to lunch in Saint-Simon. We pass châteaux, fields of sunflowers and staves of Limousin oak drying in the sunshine (only particular forests can be used for cognac coopering). It's a pretty, pastoral scene but soon we begin to notice the pale Charentais brick walls and terracotta roofs of many of the cognac storehouses, or chais, are stained sooty black, making them look burnt and abandoned.

In fact, the black marks are proud signs of the cognac makers' industry: as the drink ages, some evaporates - la part des anges or the angels' share - which ***feeds*** a fungus that thrives on the walls and turns them black.

Saint-Simon is the village where the gabarres, the flat-bottomed barges that used to transport the cognac barrels, were ***manufactured***.

After a simple lunch at the local café (much-needed after the standing tasting at Tiffon), we move on to visit Patrick and Maria Brillet's Domaine Breuil de Segonzac, an estate that holds a rare "bio organic" certification. Seemingly every cognac producer in the Grande Champagne has an elderly dog guarding their property; here an old Spanish mastiff patrols the beautiful grounds, set around a gorgeous 18th-century house.

The Brillets spent almost a decade turning their cognac and wine fully organic but, even so, still sell most of it to the big four. They also make the classic Cognac aperitif, pineau, a rather syrupy-sweet mix of unfermented grape juice and cognac eau de vie, but nicely done here.

At the back of their modern distillery is its disused 19th-century counterpart: a tiny room crammed with tarnished copper stills with a brick lean-to in the corner, where the distiller would have slept through the night, keeping the fires going.

Celebrity endorsements and the marketing efforts of the big four have given cognac associations of excess and conspicuous consumption. Jay-Z celebrated his recent Grammy award by drinking D'Ussé cognac from the trophy. Meanwhile, prices have soared - two years ago, a single bottle of Croizet cognac sold for Rmb1m (£101,000) in Shanghai.

"The past four years have been the most prolific in 40 years," says Jacques Denis, another nearby producer. "Small guys are buying nice cars and getting their roofs mended."

Nevertheless, as the afternoon cools and the autumn mists roll in through the woods, the antics of high-rolling rappers seem a long way away, the marketing hype stilled by the sense of centuries-old tradition. It's dark by the time we leave Domaine Breuil de Segonzac, exiting through another cellar that smells of damp earth, mixed with the scent of coffee and honey.

Natalie Whittle was a guest of Grape Escapes (grapeescapes.net), which offers two-night cognac tours at the Logis du Paradis on several dates during the year, from £499 per person, or from £365 per person staying at the Château de l'Yeuse

See Christmas Food & Drink special, FT Weekend Magazine

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Mexico

The dynamic Habita Group will open its latest hotel next month, a collection of thatched beach shacks on Mexico's Pacific coast. The Hotel Escondido will be the 13th new property in as many years for the group, which was founded in 2000 and has flourished despite Mexico's drug wars and their impact on tourism. Rather than try to reassure visitors by making its properties look alike, as is the conventional wisdom for chains, Habita's hotels are all unique, with bold design dictated by their location. The Escondido is due to open on December 13 near Puerto Escondido, a popular surfing resort in Oaxaca state. Its 16 guest bungalows (from $195 per night) are right on the beach and each has a private pool. grupohabita.mx

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Bangladesh

More than four decades after its maiden flight, the McDonnell Douglas DC-10 is about to reach the end of the line. Almost 400 of the three-engine aircraft were delivered to airlines around the globe but today, while many are used for cargo, only one passenger DC-10 remains in service. That aircraft, operated by Bangladesh Biman, is due to make its final scheduled flight on December 7, and will be used as a standby aircraft until February, when it makes a last journey from Dhaka to Birmingham in the UK, and then on to a US aviation museum. Enthusiasts are being offered the chance to buy seats on the flight from Dhaka to Birmingham, and on two hour-long round-trip scenic flights from Birmingham. Tickets will be sold on the airline's website from January. biman-airlines.com

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UK

Heston Blumenthal, chef-proprietor of the Michelin three-star Fat Duck in Bray, is to open a new restaurant at Heathrow. The 443 sq metre restaurant will be in the new, £2.5bn Terminal 2, which is due for completion in June 2014. Blumenthal will showcase "his pride of all things British, including our much loved, familiar dishes", according to a press release. Specialities will include pizza.

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US

Rancho Valencia, a Relais & Châteaux spa resort in San Diego, California, is running a new year "performance camp" for cyclists. The programme, which costs $10,000 per person and runs from January 23-29, includes five days of riding with professionals Christian Vande Velde and George Hincapie, who has competed in more Tours de France than any other rider (though he has since admitted using performance-enhancing drugs). The camp, limited to a dozen riders, includes massages and dinners with the pros. ranchovalencia.com

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In one of only three photographs that exist of me before I was 10, I am wearing a red velvet dress with short sleeves and three small pearl buttons, one slightly chipped. It's a school photograph, and the background is sky blue; the red is deep and slightly faded, maybe a tiny bit Velázquez-y. I have a wry expression, a bit jolly, a bit reserved. I'm six-ish. Life is complicated but not unpleasant.

If I were a dress, I think I would be that dress. It sums up something important about me. It was on the invitation to my 30th birthday with the words "THWACK! Susie hits Thirty." It was reproduced in a memoir I wrote some years ago, next to a picture of Dorothy relaxing between takes, with Toto, on the set of The Wizard of Oz.

It is one of three important childhood dresses, the other two being a 1950s cotton summer dress printed with pictures of gift-wrapped parcels, and a dark green wool dress with embroidered lazy daisies at the neck that my mother made me to receive my cycling proficiency certificate at Islington town hall.

But the red dress is the main event. It's dignified. It tries to show a polished front. It tells a story.

So you can imagine my surprise when I went to give a talk at a local girls' school today and was told by the librarian, who had invited me, that she used to live next door to us when I was small and that my mother had once given her a red velvet dress which I had grown out of, for her own daughter. It had become a firm friend, this hand-me-down. They have a favourite family photograph of her daughter wearing it, she told me.

It was a strange piece of information to receive. Did it make this important, era-defining dress less mine, somehow? Was there a precious doubling evident in this coincidence or was it what Phillip Larkin would have termed a "dilution"? It was a bit like the feeling I had two weeks ago when a woman walked into a party wearing the same dark teal (which reads as navy) shift, printed with white squares (that read as polka dots), as I was wearing. It didn't feel ideal, but there was nothing to be done but to shrug and grin. (Grug or shrin).

I phoned my mother later on about the red dress, but she did not remember any more details.

"Where did you find that dress anyway?" I asked, with a nose for a good tale.

"I don't know. In a jumble sale, probably." She was using the brisk telephone manner of someone who is trying to complete a painting of the last leaves glimpsed from her window before they crisp and blow off the trees, so I did not press her further.

The schoolgirls I talked to were fresh and lovely and engaged. It was only halfway through the event that I realised I was unwittingly sporting 80 per cent of their school uniform: a navy kilted skirt and a navy cardigan. My navy mac was folded neatly over the back of my chair. Add a pale yellow shirt, and might I have almost passed as a sixth former? It was a thrilling thought. "Well, perhaps to someone with severely limited vision," I answered myself tartly. (Of course, the sixth formers wear their own clothes anyway, just to make the matter utterly clear.)

Perhaps my unconscious uniform matching could be seen as an attempt at courtesy. My godmother often used to take on the accent of the person she was speaking to, very, very, subtly, and this always struck me as the height of politeness. It was considered charming but it was a risky strategy.

I talked to the schoolgirls about my life and my work. We touched on fashion writing, a subject that interested some of them greatly. I said that my thinking about fashion hinged on the fact that I liked my own clothes to communicate quite clearly that anything that has ever gone wrong in my life - well, none of it was my fault.

Later on, I mentioned my early love of the stage and everything to do with it, and how happy I am that a book I wrote some years ago will soon be a play. "You must be in it!' they said, which went down very well with me.

It was a day of outfits twinned and recreated, for in the evening on the way to a friend's book launch, still in my uniform, I caused some mirth in the Dover Street Acne store. I went upstairs and tried on a slightly A-line wool knee-length skirt and a matching, single-breasted A-line wool coat. Putting on something so reminiscent of a district nurse in this temple of cool was a strange sensation. The outfit worked well, and I did feel a little stab of delight, so it's not surprising that it took about a minute for it to sink in that in almost every respect it was exactly the same as the one I was wearing.

"Well, you know what you like," the assistant said approvingly.

We agreed their coat would be fractionally warmer than the one I had on, being made of a medium-weight felt rather than wool gaberdine, but we both knew we were splitting fashion hairs.

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More columns atft.com/boyt

Vanessa Friedman's column returns on December 14

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This time, we're told, it's finally going to happen. From December 15, direct high-speed trains will link Paris and Barcelona. They will travel at up to 320kph (199mph), completing the trip to the Catalan capital in six hours 17 minutes - the existing direct train takes almost 12 hours.

There have been several false starts along the way. Rumours that TGVs (trains à grande vitesse) would reach Barcelona in April, and then in October, came and went, amid suggestions that the delay was as much political as technical. The Paris-Barcelona service will be run jointly by SNCF (France's state-owned operator) and Renfe (Spain's equivalent) but both sides have been suspicious of the other's ambitions to extend services and competition on their home soil.

But with political concerns set aside and technical problems solved, from mid-December a sleek double-deck TGV Duplex will leave Gare de Lyon for Barcelona initially twice a day at 7.15am and 2.07pm, with fares likely to start at EUR59 each way. From March 31 next year, two more departures (at 10.07am and 4.07pm) will be added.

The link makes the concept of an airline-rivalling European high-speed rail network seem increasingly realistic. Including transport from city centre to airport, and allowing time for check-in and security, flying from Paris to Barcelona takes about five hours. From 2017, the case for rail with be strengthened further when a new section of high-speed line from Nîmes to Montpellier cuts the journey to about five hours 45 minutes.

As of next month, British travellers will be able to leave London by Eurostar at 9.17am to connect with the afternoon TGV from Paris, although an earlier Eurostar at 7.55am allows for a leisurely lunch at Gare de Lyon's celebrated Train Bleu restaurant. You can down the half bottle of red included with the set lunch (plus the liberal quantity of Martinique rum in which the rum baba is doused), safe in the knowledge that your train leaves from a platform 100 metres from the table.

There is no check-in; passengers can wait until a minute or two before departure before stepping on board. Choose an upper-deck seat for the best views; there are tables for four for families while a first class table for two is ideal for couples. After easing out of Gare de Lyon and threading its way through the Paris suburbs, the train will gather pace, taking the Rhone Valley high-speed line, bypassing Lyon and gliding past pretty French villages. The maximum speed here is 300kph (186mph) - not too fast to appreciate rural France.

The train will stop briefly at Valence and then turn west near Avignon, slowing to call at Nîmes and Montpellier. Between Narbonne and Perpignan it will flirt with the Mediterranean coastline, crossing causeways over several lakes, where vast flocks of flamingos seem unperturbed by the passing trains. Beyond Perpignan the TGV will join the new high-speed line and you will feel a slight push back into your seat - though not enough to spill your vin rouge - as it accelerates to maximum speed. It will call briefly at Figueres Vilafant (a short walk from the fabulous Salvador Dalí museum), then continue to Girona before rolling into Barcelona's bright and modern Sants station just after 8.30pm. Breakfast in London, lunch in Paris, dinner in Barcelona.

The author is the founder of the rail website seat61.com. Tickets for the direct Paris-Barcelona trains are now on sale, with Rail Europe (raileurope.co.uk), Loco2 (loco2.com) and Capitainetrain (capitainetrain.com)

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Pablo Helguera is an artist, author and educator with a particular interest in socially engaged art. Born in Mexico City in 1971, he is based in New York, where, alongside his art practice, he is director of adult and academic programmes at the Museum of Modern Art. His most recent project is Librería Donceles, a Spanish-language used bookstore that will be on show at CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation) in Miami from December 4.

How did the Librería Donceles come about?

It began from the realisation that in New York City there are 2m Spanish speakers, nearly a quarter of the entire population, and there are no Spanish-only bookstores in Manhattan and no used Spanish bookstores anywhere in New York.

Why is it important to have such a bookshop?

Books are critical in cultural mobility and education. A used book is also a powerful vessel because of its ownership history. Each book in the bookstore has an Ex-Libris with the name of the previous owner to create a connection with the next reader.

How did you go about it?

We went to Mexico City, where I promised a small piece of my work in exchange for every 60 books. Soon we had 25,000!

Originally, you set up the bookstore in your gallery in Manhattan. How was it received?

The idea of the bookstore is that it is itinerant; while we were in that location we also went to book fairs like the Latino book fair in Harlem. We generated interest from a wide spectrum of people - from literature students to Dominican poets. I organised weekly social gatherings, or tertulias: readings, discussions, music, and many other kinds of programmes.

After Miami, you take it to downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Why there?

Arizona is perhaps the place where the conservative, anti-immigration push is felt strongest in the US. A third of the population of Arizona is Latino; there is a pushback to repress the presence of the culture that comes with it. In Tucson, for example, the state threatened to defund the school system if it continued teaching ethnic studies - thanks to pressure from the Tea Party.

We are going to open in a location that used to be a Borders bookstore. It is very important for us to be on a street-level storefront, as Librería Donceles must allow full public access to anyone in the city.

The Librería Donceles is an example of the socially engaged art which is increasingly practised by contemporary artists today. What do you think is behind this phenomenon?

In part, it is a pushback against the incredible growth in the power of the art market over the past two decades. I believe that a lot of artists today are rejecting the idea that one must depend exclusively on the market. Additionally, there is great interest in making work that has relevance in social spheres outside museums, biennials and galleries.

December 4-February 23 2014, cifo.org

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I am less than gracious when a dawn alarm tugs me from my bed on a Saturday morning to watch the first part of Al Araba Al Madfuna, the artist Wael Shawky's latest film. But an interview with Shawky at 10am makes the viewing essential.

Grumpily, I press "play", and the Nile glides across the screen in monochrome. The scene cuts to a dark chamber peopled by children dressed as men. As one digs a hole in the floor, the others tell the story of a community who, on the advice of their dying leaders, devote themselves to the worship of various ***animals*** until they mutate into hybrids. A parable warning us of the perils of blind faith, it enraptures through the musical voices (which are adult); the solemn conviction on the children's faces; and the equilibrium of the images as they shift between the airless cave and the ancient river.

The fact that, by the end, my imagination feels renewed owes much to Shawky's gifts as a storyteller. Nevertheless, that is just the tip of a far more complex vision. "You are watching one story but you are hearing another story. You are watching a kid but you are hearing a man, so you are focusing on two systems simultaneously," he tells me as we sit in the lobby of his Marylebone hotel, sipping coffee from paper cups.

The tale of the hybrid villagers was originally a story by the late Egyptian writer Mohamed Mustagab. It is typical of Shawky to layer one imaginative gesture on to another so the spectator is left enlightened yet giddy by the pyramid of shifting expressions.

This vertiginous vision has propelled him to the peak of the contemporary art world. The recipient of numerous awards, including the Sharjah Biennial prize this year, he has had solo shows at the KW Contemporary Art Institute in Berlin and the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis. Now it is London's turn: his new exhibition, Wael Shawky: al-Qurban, opened this week at the Serpentine Gallery.

Shawky was born in Alexandria, Egypt, but spent his youth in Mecca, where his father worked as an engineer. "I think I was making all the drawings for every activity in the whole school," he remembers, laughing. Now 42, today dressed in a casual blue T-shirt and jeans, his easygoing manner and ready smile ensure that he retains a light-hearted, youthful air.

From the first, he possessed a subtlety of mind. Traumatised by his return to Alexandria when he was 13, he entered a "very turbulent" adolescent crisis. Solace came at 17, when he enrolled at the city's Academy of Fine Arts. "From that moment, I don't think I was thinking of anything else [except art]."

Lessons at the academy were "mainly drawing and painting", he recalls. Other than the groundbreaking work being done at Cairo's non-profit Townhouse Gallery - which gave Shawky several early solo shows - Egypt had almost no contemporary art scene. His awakening occurred on a trip to Madrid, where he saw Bill Viola's videos at the Reina Sofia museum. "It was really, really great." He pauses. "I hadn't seen anything like that in Egypt at all."

He started to visit New York every summer. Soon, a crucial influence was Joseph Beuys. "Oh my God, yes. That was the man," he breathes. "The idea that the material itself became a vehicle for human belief was very important for me," he continues, citing Beuys' custom of making installations out of fat which, according to his own self-mythology, had saved him when he was shot down as a pilot in the second world war.

"In order for you to receive any information from this cube of fat, for example, you had to believe in its chemical content. For me this is a bit religious. It is [similar] to when you look at the Koran or the Bible. It's a book which is sacred as it is, even if you don't open it, because you believe in its chemical content."

A flair for expressing the flawed, contradictory processes by which we arrive at faith and knowledge is the bedrock of Shawky's vision. As a young artist, he made installations out of asphalt to reflect his childhood in Mecca - to "understand the relationship between me and my family and Saudi Arabia, which had discovered oil and the British and American oil companies were arriving. All the modernity that I lived in the 1970s in Saudi Arabia [was] based on this western arrival. The asphalt was a metaphor for oil, of course."

Paradoxically, his gift for deconstruction hinges on his feeling for old-fashioned narrative. The work that catapulted him to the world's attention was Cabaret Crusades, a two-part film in which marionettes act out the medieval struggle for control over the Middle East. A spine-tingling anti-epic, it leaves viewers appalled by the carnage yet riveted by Shawky's meticulous mapping of the era's Byzantine twists and turns. "I had to do a lot of research," he agrees. A crucial source was The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (1984), a history of the period by the Lebanese-French writer Amin Maalouf. "It shows you that history can be told from a different angle ... from the Arab side."

His new two-part film, Al Araba Al Madfuna, is also grounded in his fascination with the way that the stories we tell ourselves - uncertain, mutable, contingent - evolve into unquestioned beliefs. Its seeds were sown more than 10 years ago when a friend invited Shawky to witness a ritual in a village in upper Egypt. There, he explains, there is a ritual of digging through the floors of homes in the hope of discovering buried Pharaonic treasure. "But it is impossible to discover a tomb unless you break the spells of the Pharoahs that act as protection on the door of the chamber." Night after night he watched as his friend, who works as a medium, engaged in his dialogue "with something like ghosts".

What fascinated him was the dichotomy between the means and the end. "They use a metaphysical system, magic essentially, to reach a material, physical system: gold."

The second part of the film, which premieres this week at the Serpentine, turns on a rumour. "It's set outdoors and you see one group of kids going to another group of kids spreading this story."

Like the first film, the tale the children are telling was written by Mustagab. Entitled The Offering, it centres on a village of traders who, suddenly afflicted by muteness, transform themselves into entertainers who clap at parties. When a man comes to restore their voices, he disappears mysteriously. "Perhaps the villagers killed them because they didn't want to lose the clapping."

Given the tortuous history of Shawky's own region and the nature of his interests - social transformation, the nature of faith, power and communication, the way our collective fantasies can tip into psychosis - how does he succeed in making work which is profoundly relevant to its political moment yet also sufficient unto itself?

"I try as much as I can not to react to current political events," he says. "You can't expect a revolution to happen today. I [may] be making a film about the revolution [tomorrow]: that's changeable. Yes, the revolution will happen and we will support the army now, and the second day the army will cheat on you. You will change your mind after you made the film; this is not art, it is just reactionary activity. Art must be much bigger than this."

We have been talking for two hours and Shawky has a plane to catch, yet he never glances at his watch or mobile phone. That lucid, scrupulous commitment to presence is the key to his art's power. It is what compelled him to, for example, track down a particular radood - a Shia religious singer - to play the part of Ibn al-Khashshab, an important Shia leader with a role in Cabaret Crusades. "I did think: why am I being that precise? Perhaps nobody will notice the radood." He pauses. "But it's internal."

Serpentine Gallery, London, to February 9. serpentinegalleries.org Lisson Gallery, London, January 31-March 8 2014. lissongallery.com

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Zack Snyder, 2013

Warner

Zack Snyder's reboot of the Superman franchise attempts to correct the high camp theatrics of the Christopher Reeve era, but overcompensates wildly.

Yes, the effects are impressively realised, but a distinguished cast, led by Russell Crowe and Amy Adams, are prevented from developing their characters by the surfeit of bombast. Henry Cavill as the protagonist flexes some serious muscle, but we long to hear the odd wisecrack. It is all so terribly earnest and po-faced: there is more fun in a Ring cycle.

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Michael Cimino, 1980

Second Sight

Michael Cimino's once-woebegone Western emerges battle-scarred but finally restored to its original cut - all 216 glorious minutes of it.

Yes, it was over-budget, overlong and nearly bankrupted a studio, but the film itself is boldly novelistic in scope, beautifully played by its leads, Kris Kristofferson, Isabelle Huppert and Christopher Walken, and its brutal depiction of what it means to be poor in America still resonates in the age of Obama. But above all it is a thing of beauty, Vilmos Zsigmond's luminous and painterly cinematography outshining all else.

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Declan Lowney, 2013

Studiocanal

Partridge-fanciers' hearts will leap as Norfolk's own man of steel makes his big-screen debut. Alpha Papa sees DJ Alan flung from the high-stakes arena of local radio to the life-or-death straits of an armed hostage crisis.

When an axed fellow DJ goes postal, Alan must find his inner action hero in a Terry-Wogan-meets-Steven-Seagal scenario. Wisely, Coogan, Iannucci and co have opted for the suitably sitcom-like setting of a radio station. And there's still time for anecdotes about motorway service stations and supermarket checkouts amid the guts and glory.

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Petrolheads have a fetish about engine capacity. With yacht owners it's the length of their boat. When it comes to chocolate, the boasting metric is the percentage of cocoa solids. Reasonable milk chocolate should come in above 40 per cent. Dark, plain chocolate wants to be comfortably higher than 60 per cent.

But to get your Christmas kicks from the cocoa bean this year you might be looking for something more darkly challenging, even plain aggressive. In this sampling of eight chocolate hampers there were some individual products to ***feed*** even the most extreme habit. Mast Brothers' Madagascar Dark Chocolate (72 per cent) was adult and complex; Duffy's Panama Dark Chocolate (also 72 per cent) was smoothly assertive; and topping these was The Grenada Chocolate Company Organic Dark Chocolate at 82 per cent. Its flavour can best be likened to chewing tobacco that's been soaked in barrel-proof rum. And, as we shall discover, it was sourced for the winning hamper.

Three of our regulars were up for this task. The Discerning Litigator (DL), the Gourmet Celeb (GC) and the Gluttonous Pig (GP), who prudently prepared himself for the ordeal by taking an antacid tablet before he started. We also wanted a certified chocoholic - in all, we had to try about 85 products, from chocolate figs to salted caramels and from popcorn to cinnamon-sugared drinking chocolate. The FT found the perfect candidate: Jennifer Earle (JE) - the proprietor of London's Chocolate Ecstasy Tours, co-founder of worldchocolateguide.com and chief taster for Cocoa Runners, which sources artisan chocolate bars from around the world. She has an encyclopedic knowledge of chocolate products and has been an addict of the dark stuff since her early teens. When asked why, her answer is disarmingly simple: "It makes me happy."

It emerged fairly swiftly that three of the hampers were out in front in terms of variety and quality. But first, some other highlights. Melt's Brown Hamper (£70, meltchocolates.com) included an attractive hot-chocolate kit: one cylinder of dark-chocolate buttons (70 per cent cocoa solids) and another of cinnamon sugar.

The two together produced an agreeable cup of drinking chocolate: "seductively mulled" (GP). Its raspberry and tarragon-flavoured white chocolate was enterprising but more of an acquired taste.

Brindisa assembled El Azucar, a box of "sweet Spanish delights" (£49.95, brindisa.com), the high point of which was a box of chocolate-covered dried figs - Rabitos Royale Bombón de Higo: "good for sharing but a pity the chocolate casing is only 54 per cent"(JE). It also threw in a bottle of Don José Oloroso sherry. A darker, richer version would have matched the confectionery even better - this one was bordering on the lighter Palo Cortado style.

Harrods sent a traditionally packaged Celebration of Chocolate (£125, harrods.com), which we enjoyed but found a trifle conservative. Oaks Hampers' Chocolate Box (£35, oakshampers.com) included two imaginative ideas: Joe & Seph's Gourmet Popcorn with Caramel and Belgian Chocolate - "like crunchy, creamy bubbles"(DL) - and Love Jam, a raspberry and chocolate emulsion with a number of implied uses - "sharp fruit tang with rich chocolatey flavour . . . for sharing and spreading"(GP). Finally, Partridges' Chocolate Hamper (£110, partridges.co.uk) included a bottle of own-label champagne and a tin of Huntley & Palmers Chocolate Olivers, which, it emerged, the panel had a collective weakness for.

Now, for the two runners-up. Paul A Young's Ultimate Chocolate Lovers Hamper (£142, paulayoung.co.uk) offered the 72 per cent Madagascar Dark Chocolate bar already mentioned ("bliss" - GC). There were also Mixed Pavés - squares of white, milk and plain chocolate impregnated with lovely spices ("for the connoisseur" - JE), a chocolate bar with Marmite in the centre ("salted caramel with attitude" - GP) and a jar of pure salted caramel. The other recommended box, a Deluxe Christmas Hamper from William Curley (£150, williamcurley.com), contained delicious if slightly leaky salted caramel chocolates and classy truffles ("serious, X-rated" - GC; "sophisticated" - DL).

Our winning Christmas hamper, though, in front for appeal, choice, flair and indulgence, came from Chococo - the Purbeck Chocolate Company. Its box of chocolates caused a sharp intake of breath when opened. As well as being eaten, it could well be mounted in an art gallery, with its riot of colour and design, from vivid green pistachio to gold fretwork to floral transfers. These visuals were allied to precise flavours and A1 cocoa: "a beautiful, fantastic assortment" (JE). There was also a Mini Marble Cake Yule Log with chewy cherries and raisins and some shrewd offerings for younger scoffers: a conical Christmas tree, a honeycombed chocolate star on a stick and a Venezuelan chocolate penguin: "mouth-watering kids' treats, definitely not to be eaten all in one go" (GC). Chococo's distinctive, colourful "Battenburg" packaging also appealed to the aesthetes among us - "superb-looking product" (DL). And the selection was full of wit (small chocolates designed like Xmas puds with sugar holly) and vigour (that Grenadian 82 percenter lying like an unexploded bomb at the bottom). Congratulations to Chococo.

We asked our panel one more question: of the 85 products offered up, which single one is your must-have favourite? The Gluttonous Pig, wiping his ample, choco-stained jowls, opted for Chococo's Dark Chocolate-Covered Colombian Roasted Coffee Beans: "sensationally well-roasted beans for a crunchy mocha explosion in the mouth". The Gourmet Celeb chose the Mast Brothers' 72 per cent Madagascar Dark Chocolate (also offered by Paul A Young). And both the Discerning Litigator and Jennifer Earle fingered Chococo's stunning chocolate selection.

A happy choco-Xmas to you all.

Jennifer Earle's Chocolate Ecstasy Tours; chocolateecstasytours.com

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The winner

Luxury Festive Hamper by Chococo - "out in front for appeal, choice, flair, indulgence"; £99, chococo.co.uk

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The most impressive, and unexpected, display of contemporary art you're ever likely to see - if you're prepared to undertake the journey to reach it - is just outside a remote town in rural Brazil. A few miles from Brumadinho in the southwestern state of Minas Gerais, the mining tycoon Bernardo Paz has spent the past 15 years building an art park and nature reserve called Inhotim in 3,000 acres of forest and farmland. There are career-defining works here by some of the greatest artists of our age, from the Americans Matthew Barney and Chris Burden to the Canadian duo Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, the Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo, the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, the Italian Giuseppe Penone, and many others.

What Paz and his team of curators have created here must rank among the most ambitious and original contemporary art museums ever conceived. There is no single, monolithic building designed by a famous architect of the kind favoured by most institutions across the world. Instead there are 22 galleries scattered in the vast, immaculately manicured landscape, which are connected via stone paths meandering through lush vegetation.

Some of these buildings are perched on the edge of emerald-green artificial lakes, others are hidden in the forest or positioned on top of steep hills with imposing views of the surrounding region. A further 22 outdoor sculptures are dotted throughout the site. So a visit to Inhotim is part gallery visit and part nature hike, a combination that is surprisingly successful.

"Most museums are places where people go for an hour or two before reaching a state of fatigue," says Allan Schwartzman, the New York-based art adviser who serves as chief curator at Inhotim. "Most people come to Inhotim for a full day and tend to leave refreshed rather than exhausted."

So who is the man behind this radically new approach to showing art? I meet Bernardo Paz in a discreet office building at the heart of the immense site. With his shoulder-length grey hair, white beard and flowing linen clothing, Paz, 63, looks like an ageing hippy. He speaks quickly in broken English, chain-smoking menthol cigarettes as he talks. Inhotim, he says, is "for the future, for eternity. It will be here 1,000 years."

Since stepping down from active management of his mining company, Itaminas, more than a decade ago, Paz has lived with a singular obsession: to create a place that will become known throughout the world for the excellence of its displays and programming. Although Inhotim is already enormous - altogether its pavilions contain about 115,000 sq ft of exhibition space, making them roughly one-third larger than the galleries at Tate Modern in London - it is going to get much bigger, and fast. Paz hopes there will eventually be 40 pavilions and galleries on the site, as well as many new outdoor sculptures. A hotel with 80 bedrooms and a luxury spa is under construction and will open next summer, the first of several at various price levels Paz wants to build here. When the site reaches its full expansion "it will take 10 or 12 days for you to see everything," he says.

Paz talks of launching theatre and film festivals and plans for a biennial think-tank devoted to tackling the global challenges of our day, such as climate change. "My goal is to bring here every two years the 10 best thinkers in the world," he says. These initiatives are all part of a scheme to make Inhotim financially sustainable for the future - it currently takes $18m a year just to keep it running, and this excludes the cost of new building. Much of this money comes from Paz, who is worth some $817m, according to Forbes, a fortune made by selling iron ore to China. He intends to spend all of it on Inhotim. "I don't believe in giving money to children after you die," explains Paz, who has seven children, scattered throughout the world from Germany to Hawaii, from six marriages. "I told them [when] I die, they will have nothing . . . They understand, they know this is my life and my vision."

He first became interested in art through his friendships with Brazilian artists such as Tunga and Cildo Meireles, who both have pavilions showing their work at Inhotim. A recently opened 30,000 sq ft gallery devoted to Tunga includes several signature pieces from throughout his career and amounts to a permanent retrospective exhibition that is unlikely ever to be bettered. Meireles too is represented here by some of his most important works, such as "Red Shift", conceived in 1967 and consisting of a series of interlinked rooms where all the furniture, fittings and decorations are red. A version of this installation was the centrepiece of Tate Modern's 2008 Meireles exhibition.

The premise behind these displays is simple: in every instance the curators aim either to choose an artist's best existing work, to commission him or her to create a new, site-specific project, or to realise a project that has hitherto been impossible to create. "We want the most amazing works to be realised there," says Schwartzmann. The American artist Doug Aitken is a case in point. He is represented at Inhotim by his "Sonic Pavilion", which was completed in 2009 and consists of a circular building on top of a hill with a well at its centre. At its bottom, microphones capture the sounds of the earth, which are then amplified and played live in the gallery above. It was a work the artist had thought about for years before Schwartzmann encouraged him to build it at Inhotim.

New projects currently in the planning or construction phase include the installation of four major pieces by Anish Kapoor. The first of these to open next year, "Shooting into the Corner", will be housed in its own building. It consists of a cannon that fires balls of red wax against a gallery wall, and was included in the artist's exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in 2009. Another work by Kapoor, to be sited outdoors, will be a "slash in the landscape that will extend for a quarter of a mile or longer so it looks like the earth has been cracked open", explains Schwartzmann. "It will be a spatial void that you can't gauge the depth of [and will have] enormous visual impact."

The Scandinavian artist Olafur Eliasson is also working on new projects at Inhotim: one is a building with a lateral slat cutting through it at eye level that shows the horizon, and the other is described by Schwartzmann as a "sculptural version of a sundial", an outdoor installation consisting of a sphere cut into the earth. "As you descend down into it, you look up to see the top of the piece track the sun as it moves in the sky."

Other galleries opening soon will include one devoted to hundreds of photographs of Brazil's indigenous Yanomami tribes taken by the Swiss-born, Brazilian-based Claudia Andujar over the past 50 years, pavilions to house major works by Doris Salcedo, who already has one gallery devoted to her work at Inhotim, and the American land artist Michael Heizer. Meanwhile Robert Irwin is realising a new outdoor sculpture.

Since opening to the public in 2006, Inhotim has welcomed more than 1m visitors, the majority from the surrounding area. Paz is particularly proud of this, as he is of employing about 1,000 staff on the site, many of them locals. "All the poor [young people] from here who before had the dream of becoming a truck driver [now have greater ambitions]," he says. "Inhotim is for all the people."

inhotim.org.br

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No new museum is delivered without a certain amount of controversy and pain, and the Pérez Art Museum of Miami-Dade County, or PAMM, which opens its doors to the public on December 4, is no exception. The project's initial director Terence Riley, previously chief curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, had already left by 2009. The full $220m budget was tricky to procure in spite of the $100m given to the project by Miami-Dade County with voter approval (Miami's well-established band of local collectors, including the Rubell family and the Margolies, were already happy running their own prestigious private foundations).

And when a particularly large investor - developer Jorge Pérez - ended up with his name over the door in 2011 following a cash-plus-collection donation valued at a reported $35m-$40m, a furious group of trustees saw fit to resign.

Meanwhile, as the horizontal building began to peep above MacArthur Causeway, locals wondered about the suitability of the site: it was perceived to be hunkering down beside the highway (rather than gazing out over Biscayne Bay, which it also does rather well). When Michael E Miller, of the Miami New Times, described the building as "a spaceship from an Orson Welles movie" in August this year, you could feel the fear mounting.

In fact, the elegant, flat-roofed and rather modernist structure would make a lousy spaceship. But if the architects - the Swiss firm of Herzog & de Meuron - have delivered a "futuristic building perched atop concrete stilts" (that's the anxious Mr Miller again), there's probably a good reason for it.

"Hurricanes are a fact in Miami," says senior partner Christine Binswanger when we meet in Herzog & de Meuron's Basel office to talk about the building, whose design and progress she has overseen. "Which is why the building is lifted off the ground. The hot climate and the heavy storms have informed the entire architectural concept."

Parking is neatly hidden away beneath the entry-level 360-degree platform that balances on slender pilotis; the platform is reached, on the bay side, by a lavish flight of steps where visitors can sit and linger, admiring the view across the water. Beneath the canopy, the building is set back to create a generous wrap-around terrace of shade, and from the canopy dangle dense columns of tangling tropical plants. There is nothing here to make you nervous about extraterrestrials.

Binswanger joined Herzog & de Meuron in 1991, and though she would never take the credit for a building - all work is done under the Herzog & de Meuron name - those projects on which she is named as senior architect are noticeably light on their feet. There's the expansive Rehab in Basel, for example, a spinal injury clinic in wood and glass that was completed in 2002. At the Basel Museum of Culture, which reopened in 2010, a complex roof finished in glittering blue/black tiles has just the right amount of joie de vivre to fit in and not fight with its surrounding medieval antecedents. And, back in Miami, there's a mixed-use development based around a parking garage at 1111 Lincoln Road whose open floors have proved so seductive that people have used them for yoga classes and even weddings.

The city's new museum, in spite of its concrete structure, has a surprisingly delicate air. "I was always hoping we could do a building there, with plants and natural ventilation," says Jacques Herzog, who has been visiting Miami since the early 1990s.

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Inside, there is no traditional enfilade: instead, the main galleries are staggered in "a different kind of linear story", says Binswanger, and the continuous windows keep the outside world looking in. Single-subject project galleries are tightly enclosed boxes, whose oak floors and natural concrete walls make a connection with the building's concrete exterior. "You still feel the main structure," says Binswanger. "We wanted to avoid any sense of cladding. The mix of materials is the same, inside and out." The main galleries will open with an Ai Weiwei retrospective, an installation by British artist Hew Locke and, in deference to its location, a survey of the Cuban artist Amelia Peláez, who died in 1968.

If the building avoids "white cube" clichés, that is in part thanks to Riley, Binswanger says. A trained architect himself, he signed off on the design before his departure and was, she says, "a dream to work with". "He couldn't care less for an icon," she adds. "He wanted something specific - not another neutral space but one that would relate to this city and the particular location."

"Specific" is a word that could sum up the work of Herzog & de Meuron. The practice is responsible for structures as diverse as the Beijing National Stadium (the Bird's Nest), where the massive concrete bowl of the stadium is slung inside an impressive steel superstructure, and Minneapolis's Walker Art Center, where a crystalline box twists through an axis to link the old and the new seamlessly. The firm's repertoire of moves and tools - stacked spaces, organic materials, creative ways with screening, acute observation of what is already there, and long periods of client consultation - leads to a seemingly infinite variety of solutions.

"It's like being a cook," Herzog declares, as he guides me through the firm's headquarters, a cluster of buildings gathered around a couple of courtyards that the architects have occupied since 1984. So artfully distributed are the 300 staff as to make this global enterprise feel cottage-industry cosy. For the record, there are a further 100 in offices around the world. "If you only like to cook one thing, you are lost," says Herzog.

Binswanger is far from lost, though architecture is not the career one might have predicted for her. She grew up in a family-run psychiatric hospital at Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, where her father was director. It had been founded by her grandfather's grandfather. "It was a family business since 1857, way before Freud," she says. "Some people were afraid of the place - Kreuzlingen was a small town." Her grandfather Ludwig was a pioneer of phenomenological psychology (his Dreams and Existence was translated from the German by Michel Foucault). Unenthused by psychiatry or science, she decided to study architecture but with no extended game plan. "It wasn't a career, things happened. That's the biggest beauty, when things evolve," she says.

Binswanger, who will be 50 in July, is one of only two female partners at Herzog & de Meuron (the other, Esther Zumsteg, heads the communications arm). Architecture is still notoriously short of senior women practitioners, especially in the top international firms. "More women finish their architectural studies than men," she says, "but then we lose them. Things seem to have changed in society. They want to marry early, they want to have kids. I was all for the idea of the free woman but you don't find that among the 30- to 40-year-olds."

She herself still lives in the apartment she moved into 25 years ago - "that ugly brick tower with concrete balconies", she says, pointing to a building across the river in Klein Basel that's clearly visible from the office. And her unfettered status, it seems, has not just benefited her career. "You have better friendships if you have no family," she says. "You have more time."

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Pérez Art Museum Miami opens on December 8, pamm.org

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Sweetheart deals for activist shareholders just may be good deals for ordinary investors, too. Not that Mom and Pop seem to be noticing. Last week, the video games company Take-Two Interactive Software and the home security company ADT arranged to repurchase shares held by activist investors - Carl Icahn at the former and Keith Meister of hedge fund Corvex Management at the latter. Dan Loeb negotiated the same type of deal at Yahoo earlier this year.

Shares in all three companies dropped at least 4 per cent on the news of the buybacks. What is nice for the activists, though, is that these transactions were carried out at the closing price from the previous trading day. Cue howls of protest about preferential treatment. But lost amid the recriminations is the fact that the companies quickly retired large blocks of stock at prices that are likely to have been favourable - an event that will boost earnings per share and so should also help remaining shareholders.

The three companies had hefty buyback programmes already in place. The press releases for ADT and Yahoo indicated that the repurchase of the activists' stock would fall into those authorisations. Perhaps the market had already accounted for the elimination of those shares. However, by taking the activists' investments in a single transaction, the companies probably got a lower price than waiting to buy in the open market, since the prices could be expected to move up over time. Put another way, more stock could be retired for the same dollar cost.

The 12m shares Take-Two - the company behind the Grand Theft Auto series - acquired from Mr Icahn represented a whopping 13 per cent of its stock outstanding. It will be distinct from its existing repurchase programme, which is just 7.5m shares. Yet its price fell 5 per cent anyway. Will management slacken off with Mr Icahn and his three representatives on the board gone? Or perhaps Mr Icahn saw no more low-hanging fruit left to pluck so he jumped ship? Each is a plausible explanation. Still, it is a perverse reaction when Take-Two's forward earnings per share estimate has jumped 11 per cent.

Email the Lex team in confidence at [*lex@ft.com*](mailto:lex@ft.com)

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Since the financial crisis, Britain's politicians have faced a difficult balancing act between preserving the prominence of the City of London and preventing banks from wrecking the economy again. Until recently, the government was confident that its Banking Reform Bill - as approved by the House of Commons last summer - struck a reasonable compromise between these two objectives.

However, a burst of scandals has reignited fears that the draft approved in Britain's lower house lacked teeth. The implosion of the Co-operative Bank has raised new questions over how much capital lenders should be asked to hold. Revelations about the troubling conduct of the Reverend Paul Flowers, Co-op's former chairman, have prompted calls for stricter controls of senior bankers.

When the legislation reached the Lords last week, a group of peers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, managed to change the regime on both fronts. The government was forced to anticipate a review on whether the Bank of England should have powers to impose a leverage ratio. This is a blunt but important regulatory instrument, which measures how many assets a bank can accumulate on a sliver of equity, irrespective of their riskiness. The Lords also voted to create a "licensing" regime for senior bankers.

Both proposals are sensible. Leverage ratios are an essential companion to other measures of capital requirements which let lenders discount assets they perceive as safer. Even the plainest financial products, such as mortgages, have the potential to bring a bank to its knees. Co-op did not have an investment banking arm, but still suffered from a £1.5bn capital hole.

Any licensing regime should be fair on those vetted. The administrative procedures must not be too burdensome. But an annual review by the regulator will increase the chances of spotting incompetent or reckless professionals before they do damage. Rescuing a bank is expensive. The cost of this scheme would be small change compared to the benefits it could bring.

The Banking Reform Bill returns to the Commons next year for the final imprimatur. It would be wrong to assume the new rules will make Britain resilient to any future shocks. Large chunks of the financial sector - for example shadow banking - are not covered by the bill and will need to be dealt with separately. But for once, MPs and peers deserve praise. Provided it stays in its current form, the new law will go some way in making British banking safer.

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Some works of art are made to create a bravura public display; others are intended for private delectation, made on a scale that encourages close inspection and of a material that allows, even insists on their handling and the play of light. Few are more rewarding - or challenging - than the remarkable small-scale bronzes that offer such a tantalising glimpse into the intellectual life of the Renaissance.

The Frick Collection in New York has made a specialism of staging highly focused exhibitions of these works. Whether big monographic retrospectives or displays of superlative private collections, they allow the public the opportunity, previously afforded only to their privileged owners, of getting up close and seeing them outside a vitrine.

At the end of January, the museum will be host to the Renaissance and Baroque bronzes of Janine and J Tomilson Hill. Its core is an exceptional group of statuettes produced by the greatest of all mannerist masters, Giambologna, and his circle, and its 32 pieces extend from Renaissance Italy to embrace the Netherlandish, German and French bronze-casting traditions. What visitors will not see, however, is the extraordinary counterpoint of their setting in the Hills' home against the titans of postwar painting and sculpture. If ever proof were needed that power and monumentality are not dependent on scale, it is here. These bronzes more than hold their own, even against great de Koonings, Bacons and Warhols.

In 1995, when the couple bought the first of their nine Warhols, most from the 1960s - "Campbell's Soup Can (Beef Consommé)" - they also acquired their inaugural bronze: a Hubert Le Sueur "Venus" (c1640) that once belonged to Louis XIV.

The two are not obvious bedfellows, yet the Hills' Manhattan apartment abounds in arresting juxtapositions and unexpected dialogues. Who would expect to find, say, de Kooning's massive and lumpen dehumanised bronze "Clamdigger" confronting a large Bacchic fountain figure by Adriaen de Vries, its face distorted by an exuberantly compelling grotesque mask? On the top of a Louis XVI commode stands the earliest known cast of Giambologna's elegant female personification of "Astronomy" (c1570), the curve of her voluptuous naked thigh playfully echoing the calligraphic chalk doodles of the Cy Twombly "Blackboard" behind. Under Warhol's "Mao" sits Barthélemy Prieur's "Lion Devouring a Doe" (c1583).

In the dining room, a row of six mostly heroic, muscular male nudes, some struggling in mortal combat, are silhouetted against Ed Ruscha's epic, ominous "Seventeenth Century". As Hill writes in his preface to the Frick catalogue, bronze "captures action, tension, emotion. It immortalises a moment." Over the fireplace in the library is a Bacon Pope; inside a niche is the "Hercules and Antaeus" attributed to the 15th-century Florentine Maso Finiguerra, where the mouth of the vanquished Antaeus is "formed like the scream from a Pollaiuolo painting", as Hill puts it. This is not a comment one could imagine being uttered by many of today's billionaire buyers of Warhols.

Hill takes pains to point out that when he and his wife began buying postwar art, the "entry point" for a Warhol was 5-10 per cent of what it is now. Yet it has been a highly successful career on Wall Street that has funded his pursuit of quality (he is president and chief executive of Blackstone Alternative Asset Management, and a vice-chairman of the Blackstone Group). He is evidently the driving force behind the acquisitions but it is, he insists, "a total collaboration". "I have not bought a single thing without talking through the idea with Janine, and us thinking how it fits into the collection," he says.

What drew him to the rather rarefied world of bronze? He cites countless visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and to the Frick - he grew up a few blocks away on Fifth Avenue - and the fact that his mother, Dorothy, 96, is an abstract painter and sculptor in bronze. For Janine Hill, who grew up haunting the museums and galleries not of New York but of Paris, bronzes were familiar territory. Another factor was their friendship with the architect, designer and bronze collector Peter Marino. Hill also liked the fact that these small-scale works had always been the very private preserve of the connoisseur-collectors who acquired them for their studioli or studies: what could be more appropriate for a collection in a family home formed purely for the pleasure of its owners?

Perhaps part of this pleasure also lies in the challenges of this notoriously complex field. Few collectors could match the focus, steely rigour and exacting standards of Tom Hill. He has clearly enjoyed every opportunity to handle and compare different casts and comparable models, sometimes even taking a bronze to a museum or another collector's house for a "play date".

He praises the expertise of Pat Wengraf, who has been his adviser in putting together this collection, yet Hill himself also has the courage - and confidence - to rely on his own eye. "We have never been hung up about buying a bronze because we did not know who made it," says Hill. This skill has paid off: a particular coup was the spirited "Nude Striding Warrior" that turned up in South America and was subsequently identified as being by Willem Danielsz van Tetrode, who had worked with Benvenuto Cellini in Florence and, after his return to the Netherlands, initiated a passion for collecting small bronzes in northern Europe.

Such tours de force as this and Riccio's "Strigil Bearer" (c1515-20) are among the earliest examples here of the "multiples" - at first as few as two or three - that sculptors began to produce after they realised they could fabricate reusable piece-moulds for their sculptures, either of independent works or reductions of monumental pieces. This was commercially appealing, not least as a means of promoting a wider diffusion of their reputation and ideas. Warhol's soup cans, self-portraits, Marilyns, Mao, Lenin and "Electric Chair" are perhaps not so very different after all.

'Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the Hill Collection', Frick Collection, New York, January 28-June 15 2014. frick.org

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Angela Merkel is facing a chorus of criticism from German business over her putative coalition's economic plans.

Employers groups have been joining forces in accusing the proposed right-left coalition of spurning the opportunity to promote growth-boosting policies, backtracking on previous reforms and burdening the economy with pensions increases and a minimum wage.

"It may not be intentional but they have now cancelled out what has been agreed in recent years to ensure the permanent, solid financing of public pensions," said Ingo Kramer, president of the BDA, the German Employers' Union, in a newspaper interview on Friday.

Mr Kramer singled out for criticism the pensions increases for older mothers, which were boosted at the demand of Ms Merkel's CDU/CSU. The total cost of these pensions - at E6.5bn to E8bn annually - would be E130bn by 2030, he said, speaking to the newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

That was more than the savings coming from the earlier hard-fought decision to raise the general retirement age over the next few years to 67, he said.

Mr Kramer also blasted as a "serious mistake" a move pushed by the centre-left SPD to allow workers with 45 years' service to retire early, at 63. These measures, he claimed, would raise labour costs and cut the take-home pay of workers paying social security.

The pensions increases are a key element of the coalition agreement reached on Wednesday. Ms Merkel went into the talks in a commanding position having triumphed in the September election with 41 per cent of the vote.

But SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel, whose party won just 26 per cent, strengthened his hand by promising in advance that any coalition deal would be put to the vote of the SPD's 473,000 members.

The coalition agreement seems to have gone down well with the public. According to a ZDF television poll, 82 per cent of voters approve of the planned minimum wage of E8.50 an hour, while 90 per cent back retirement at 63 for the long-serving and 86 per cent the boost to mothers' pensions.

Only 16 per cent think these plans can be financed without higher debts and taxes - but with unemployment low and the export-driven economy doing well, voters seem ready to take a chance.

Wolfgang Schäuble, finance minister, defended the coalition plans in an interview with Die Welt newspaper, saying that the burden of the pensions increases was "very limited".

But business leaders are furious that the welfare and labour reforms of the past decade may be compromised.

Eric Schweitzer, president of DIHK, the German chambers of commerce, was quoted in the media on Friday as saying that retirement at 63 sent the wrong signals at a time when "we all must work longer". He added: "The coalition partners are gambling with their projects that high economic growth will lead to record new tax revenues. But this is not a foregone conclusion."

On Thursday, Ulrich Grillo, president of the BDI, the largest German employers' organisation, delivered an even tougher rebuke to Ms Merkel. "The coalition agreement is a wasted opportunity for Germany's future. It is not a master plan for our country. The signal is stop instead of start."

Mr Grillo said the deal imposed "new stress tests" on business and added that the minimum wage alone threatened "hundreds of thousands of jobs".

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North Sea crude oil headed to South Korea at the highest rate in more than a year this month as the Asian country's refiners have seized on government incentives to import crude from further afield.

Three very large crude carriers (VLCCs) were chartered to load North Sea oil for South Korea in November, according to traders. The aggregate 6m barrels heading to the Asian country will be the most since at least July 2012, according to several market participants.

The South Korean government has put in place incentive schemes to encourage its refiners not to rely on the Middle East for supplies. A free trade agreement limits tax on shipments from Europe, although the terms of that agreement were tightened earlier this year. But under a second scheme introduced more recently, the government reimburses refiners most of the extra cost of shipping crude from sources beyond the Persian Gulf.

Many traders argue that these incentives raise the price of Brent, a blend of four North Sea crude oils, increasing costs for European refiners.

"The Korean arbitrage is back, and that is supporting Brent," said one trader.

Brent is also the international oil benchmark against which many other crudes are priced. On Friday ICE January Brent was up 0.5 per cent at $110 per barrel.

The shipments to Asia have also been encouraged by a shrinking spread between the prices of high quality North Sea oil and heavier Middle Eastern crudes. The premium of Brent to Dubai crude has shrunk to as little as $2.60 per barrel this month from as much as $7.10 per barrel in the late summer, as strong demand from Asia has pushed up Middle Eastern crude prices.

Chinese buyers have also been active in the North Sea market as a result this month.

"The South Korean buying reflects very strong Asian fundamentals," said Amrita Sen, head of the Energy Aspects consultancy. "Product markets [such as diesel and gasoline] in Asia are strong, giving refiners there an incentive to purchase crude," she added.

Two Suezmax tankers, with capacity for carrying 1m barrels each have also been booked to take North Sea crude to Chile this month, according to two trading sources. And one trader said three Suezmax tankers would take cargoes to eastern Canada.

The shipments to far flung markets have been encouraged by weak demand in Europe, where refineries are struggling to generate profits amid lacklustre local demand and competition from US refiners that have access to cheap domestic shale crudes.

"European refiners have been off the market, and shy to step up to buy prompt cargoes," said Miswin Mahesh, an analyst at Barclays in London. "These other refiners have taken the opportunity to step in and get cargoes away."

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In the run-up to a hotly-contested election, it is the way of politicians to make promises, and the Scottish National Party is no exception as it attempts to convert a majority of Scots to the independence cause.

Among the many pledges in the SNP's "Scotland's Future" document are commitments to more generous pension benefits, perhaps not surprising given that over-65s are better represented north of the border than in the UK generally.

Specifically, the SNP has reiterated its commitment to preserving the so-called "triple lock" on annual pension increases - meaning that state pensions rise by the higher of inflation, wage growth or 2.5 per cent - for the entirety of the first Scottish parliament. In the rest of the UK, it is only protected through 2015 - and many observers think it will be abandoned after the next election.

The SNP has also said it would introduce a flat-rate state pension of £160 a week in 2016 - £1.10 a week higher than the expected figure in the rest of the UK. - and abandon the planned increase in the state pension age to 67 after 2020. The expected rise to 66 for men and women in 2020 would remain.

In most other respects, state pension policy is to remain unchanged, with those who have accrued rights in the UK receiving them in full, but paid by the Scottish administration instead of the Department of Work and Pensions.

The SNP stressed that it sees no need to alter taxation to pay for its spending pledges, but added it would set out detailed policies ahead of elections to the Scottish parliament in 2016. Its priorities would include linking the personal allowance and tax credits to inflation, and ending the Conservatives' proposal for a transferable tax allowance for some married couples.

The SNP has already established a Fiscal Commission to make recommendations for post-independence fiscal policy.

Pensions experts at Hargreaves Lansdown estimate that the superior state pension will cost £52m a year, while the cost of abandoning the planned increase in state pension age would come in at a heftier £1bn a year.

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&gt; The SNP argues that its pension pledges are affordable (and appropriate) because statistically, Scots tend to die earlier than other Britons - something the SNP described as a "human tragedy". Data from the 2008-2010 period show a UK-wide life expectancy for men at age 65 of 18.03 years, while in Scotland that was 16.76 years.

But looking more closely at Scottish data suggests a portion of that shorter life expectancy is due to the "Glasgow Effect", an effect which has epidemiologists puzzled. Research shows that when Glasgow - where male life expectancy at 65 is a mere 14.3 years - is compared with cities such as Manchester and Liverpool which have similar concentrations of poverty, Glaswegians still do worse.

When Glasgow is stripped out, average life expectancy in Scotland rises to 17.05 years at age 65, still below the UK average, but by a smaller margin. But data also show widespread inequality, as measured by life expectancy, within Scotland itself. A 65-year old man from East Dunbartonshire can expect to live a further 18.9 years while one in West Dunbartonshire only has another 15.6 years to go.

The manifesto also pledges to create a separate system of financial regulation for Scotland, prompting some to warn that the cost of financial products would have to rise. "Every bank, insurance company, financial adviser and investment manager will have to run duplicate systems and train their employees to deal with two different regimes," warned Tom McPhail, head of pensions research at Hargreaves Lansdown.

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Jacob Zuma, South Africa's president, came under renewed fire on Friday after a leaked report alleged he personally benefited from millions of rand of public funds spent on his private residence and misled parliament over the controversy surrounding his homestead.

For more than a year Mr Zuma has been dogged by allegations that R215m ($21m) from state coffers was used to upgrade his sprawling Nkandla property in what is developing into one of the country's most high-profile political scandals. He and the government have insisted that the funds were only used for security upgrades necessitated by his position as head of state.

But an investigation into the affair, dubbed "Nkandlagate," by the Office of the Public Protector, or ombudsman, has found that a swimming pool, visitors' centre, amphitheatre, cattle corral and new houses for the president's relatives were included in the upgrade at "enormous cost" to the taxpayer, the Mail & Guardian reported.

The newspaper - which said it had obtained a leaked copy of the provisional report - said Thuli Madonsela, the public protector, recommended that Mr Zuma repay a "reasonable" amount to the state based on the cost of non-security items.

She also recommended that parliament call him to account for failing to protect state resources and misleading the legislature.

Last year, Mr Zuma staunchly defended the project during a parliamentary debate, insisting that he and his family had paid for Nkandla and that state funds were only used on security measures. The provisional report, titled "Opulence on a Grand Scale," said the cost of the Nkandla project had soared from an initial R27m to R215m, with a further R31m in works outstanding, the Mail & Guardian said.

The Office of the Public Protector said it did not comment on provisional reports, which require responses from the involved parties and could change before a final version is released. It added that it was "unethical and unlawful" to publish details of a provisional report.

But the leaking of the information will heap more embarrassment on Mr Zuma and his ruling African National Congress party as they gear up for elections next year. Mr Zuma has been plagued by controversies amid the perception that corruption, patronage and cronyism in the government and ANC have been on the rise since he took office in 2009.

Lindiwe Mazibuko, parliamentary leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, said that if the provisional findings were accurate they "would warrant the most severe sanction" of Mr Zuma's conduct.

"As more and more details surrounding Nkandlagate emerge, it is becoming increasingly clear that President Zuma is at the centre of one of the biggest corruption scandals in democratic South Africa," she said. "He must be accordingly held accountable by parliament for his actions."

The ANC urged South Africans "to exercise restraint and caution until the Public Protector releases her [final] report".

"Failure to do so will prejudice the process," it said. "As the ANC, we continue to have confidence in our president and we believe and know that he is not responsible for any wrongdoing."

The presidency did not comment.

Nkandla was in the headlines last week when cabinet ministers suggested that media publishing photographs of the homestead could be prosecuted.

After a public backlash, the government later said the ministers' comments were misinterpreted.

Earlier in the month, ministers briefly went to court in a bid to delay the publication of the public protector's final report. The case was withdrawn but not before Ms Madonsela revealed in court documents that her year-long investigation had met "very strong" resistance from a number of ministers.

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Over the past five years, President Barack Obama has gained a reputation as a reluctant commander-in-chief. True, he has not shied away from endorsing drone strikes or the killing of Osama bin Laden. But on many questions - such as whether to take military action against the Assad regime after its use of chemical weapons - he has often appeared indecisive.

This week, however, the president responded firmly and speedily to events in the East China Sea. Last Saturday, China announced it was setting up an "air defence identification zone" around a group of islands that Japan administers, but which China claims. On Tuesday, the US promptly responded by sending two B-52 bombers into the contested area without notifying the Chinese authorities. The US message was clear: America will resist any attempt to change the status quo over the islands by force.

Nobody doubts that a conflict involving China, Japan and the US over these uninhabited rocks would be disastrous. The stand-off is certainly alarming. On Friday, China scrambled combat jets as Japanese fighter aircraft entered the air defence zone. There is a growing sense of a storm gathering over the western Pacific.

But the US was right to respond to China's initial move in the way it did. The US-Japanese security treaty obliges Washington to defend Japan's territorial integrity, a guarantee that extends to the disputed islands. At a moment such as this, the US must demonstrate to China that the treaty is robust.

Mr Obama's move also sends a broader message to US allies in Asia. Many are anxious about Beijing's aggression. They are also alarmed by Mr Obama's vacillation on security issues in general. Last week's intervention by the US was an important signal to them that America, the overwhelming naval power in the region, is engaged.

For the US to sustain this stance against China will be challenging. In the cold war, the US could confront the Soviet Union without fear of economic consequences. The US had no dependence whatsoever on the Soviet economy. But today the US and China are economically intertwined. This makes all US security calculations in Asia much more difficult.

The hope must be that in the next few days a way can be found to de-escalate the tension in the East China Sea. But the fundamental point is that the US needs to stand firmly by Japan. If it fails to do so, it will send a signal to every other nation in the region that the US has become an unreliable ally.

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I am approaching 60 years old and have built up various pension pots amounting to £200,000 in defined contribution schemes. I must now decide whether to start an income drawdown plan, or buy an annuity.

My house is worth £800,000, with no mortgage, and I am single with no dependants. I also have £50,000 in an equity portfolio.

How can I achieve an income of £30,000 per year with some inflation proofing? Even if I amalgamate my three pension pots into one self-invested personal pension and start income drawdown this will not achieve my desired income. Could I use a further £200,000, released by downsizing my home, to boost my income?

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Paul Taylor, managing director of McCarthy Taylor, says in general he does not consider drawdown where a client is risk averse, requires stable reliable income and where the drawdown fund is less than £100,000.

Drawdown is expensive to maintain as you need to manage the portfolio effectively to avoid loss of capital. The income needs to be reviewed every three years under current rules. It is generally worth taking the lump sum, usually 25 per cent of the fund value, as this is tax-free. However, this does mean reduced pension income, so unless the funds are needed immediately it is worth investing the money, using the annual individual savings account (Isa) allowance of £11,520 and capital gains tax allowances of £10,900 to minimise tax.

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&gt; These days you do not need to use a Sipp to take drawdown and you may want to consider a platform-based pension to see if the costs can be reduced. If your adviser is independent they ought to be able to demonstrate the lowest cost option for you.

The amount of pension you take from drawdown is determined by the government actuarial tables and for a man aged 60 the current rate is about £53 per £1,000 of fund value based, on current 15-year gilt rates, which suggests a pension of £9,720 per annum. An insurance company annuity may give you slightly more if you have serious health problems, but while rates are low you may well want to avoid locking in. Annuities are expensive when you try to provide for inflation.

A drawdown fund should keep pace with inflation, although this is by no means certain. If interest rates rise, you could always buy an annuity later. If you want certainty then you need to buy an annuity and consider inflation linking. Such an annuity would give you about £6,000 per year guaranteed.

Your portfolio of £50,000 is too small to be adequately diverse to minimise risk and cost. We normally recommend at least £100,000 to be cost effective. With £200,000 from downsizing and £50,000 from your pension lump sum you would have £300,000 invested.

&lt; &gt; Using a spread of investments including low-cost ETFs and trackers as core holdings, with a few specialists, with a medium risk profile, we would recommend about 70 per cent in equities and 10-15 per cent in fixed interest. Around 10 per cent could be in property and 5 per cent into infrastructure. This portfolio could yield about 3-5 per cent, which would add, say, £12,000 per year to the drawdown pension income. But that would still leave you short by about £8,000 a year.

This could be met by taking gains which could be achieved at 4 per cent per year, until state pension kicks in at age 65. At that point, your pension will be £5,720 per year, assuming you have adequate contributions.

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The UK will be the fastest-growing country in Europe for at least the next five years

We always make the mistake in the lead-up to a crisis of mistaking the cycle for the trend, thinking the good times will carry on forever. But then we make the opposite mistake, especially if things drag on for a while, and assume that the bad times will go on forever. Happily, we've now moved away from that depressed state but I would argue we are still not nearly optimistic enough.

To be more optimistic is not to be unrealistic. I was just looking at the independent forecasts for the economy that the Treasury collates; the fastest forecast for next year is still 3 per cent.

To think that is the highest rate we can expect assumes that we will struggle to put this crisis behind us, that we will have more permanent damage and find more loss of output irrecoverable then at any time in history.

Whether it's the world wars, the great depression, the 1920s, Opec - none of these things prevented us from getting back to previous trend growth and getting back the output we lost.

We always talk about when we get back to where we were, but what matters is where we would have been if we had carried on growing at the trend rate. That gap is 16-17 per cent at the moment.

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&gt;Most of the estimates suggest we've lost 12-13 percentage points of that permanently, and that we will not have the catch-up growth we have had in the past. It may sound deeply plausible that "this time is different" but we should understand the strength of that assumption.

I can't see something that has metaphorically meant we all woke up in January 2009 with one hand missing, which is effectively what you have to assume if you think that all this productivity and output is gone for good.

Even if you assume that half that output has disappeared permanently, which would be worse than anything that's happened in modern history, you could still expect to achieve strong growth in the next five years. We can go off trend for a long time, but there has never been a time in the past 60 years when we have ended up on a completely different path.

Stephanie Flanders is chief European market strategist at JPMorgan, and was formerly the BBC's economics editor

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International capital flows are dangerous and should be controlled

Since the 1990s, capital flows have increased exponentially in size, particularly portfolio debt and equity flows. If we look at cross-border position data, if we look at advanced economies they were about 60 per cent of GDP. By 2007 they were up to 450 per cent of gross domestic product.

Trillions of dollars have crossed borders and yet despite our best efforts and hundreds of studies, it has been extraordinarily difficult for economists to identify any benefits from these flows.

Of course it is entirely possible that parts of the financial sector reaped large benefits, but for everyone else these flows were not risk sharing but risk creating. When they disappear, usually as quickly as they appear, they create havoc, huge swings in exchange rates. Sometimes it ends badly in a banking crisis and when that happens, the cost can be around 20 per cent of gross domestic product.

Think about Latin America in the 1980s, Mexico in 1994/5, the Asian crisis in 1997, think about Iceland, Ireland, Spain - it is pretty clear that the cost of these hot money flows can be huge.

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&gt;Just as Paul Volcker found it difficult to see what innovations the financial industry had come up with aside from the ATM, so economists find hard to see what international capital flows - apart from good old-fashioned foreign direct investment - have actually brought.

So if these international capital flows didn't do much good, then we have to restrict them, which we can do through macroprudential policy or through capital controls, and I support the idea that everyone would be better off, except maybe some parts of the financial sector.

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The eurozone will break up, because of the catastrophic depressions in several nations

Many people are conventionally minded and consider this an unthinkable notion. They are essentially saying that everyone is so frightened of the consequences of leaving this masochists' paradise that they will stick with it for 10 or 20 years and feel very grateful.

Extraordinary complacency has broken out since Mario Draghi did the clever and completely necessary thing of indicating that he would intervene, albeit with a programme that is entirely incoherent and no-one knows if it would actually work if it were ever called upon.

We have catastrophic depressions in a whole host of countries, with unemployment rates in many cases higher than in the Great Depression. All of them have very high public debt ratios and knife-edge debt dynamics. The policy of the creditor countries has been to provide just enough to prevent total implosion and promise just enough to keep people interested.

The best we can hope for is a very slow recovery. Demand growth is feeble and unlikely to improve. They're very dependent on improvements in the external account as the eurozone is now the biggest current account surplus region in the world. It's likely the euro will become very strong, thus crowding out net exports from those countries starting to do quite well. The result will be 20-30 per cent unemployment in places like Greece and Spain for years to come.

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&gt;What are the ways out? One is that the eurozone could become a genuine transfer union. It's absolutely clear that won't happen. Another is that it becomes an adjustment union, with wages and prices rising in the creditor countries. That won't happen either; Jens Weidmann (Bundesbank president) has told me that if he sees any sign of price growth in Germany, he's going to kill it.

Out of sheer terror of the consequences, the eurozone could remain the masochists' paradise it is today, or we could see some event - a government pushed into default, an election result - that prompts a serious country like Spain or Italy to say "enough's enough" and end it.

Martin Wolf is the FT's chief economic commentator

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The world economy will grow at a faster rate in the next decade than it did in the last one

Over the past three decades, the world economy has grown at an average rate of about 3.4 per cent a year. My contention is that, essentially because of China but also because of other places that I've been roaming around recently, the world will grow by more than that in the current decade (2010-20).

You could say that 2007/8/9 crisis was essentially about the US consuming too much and saving nothing, while China consumed very little and saved too much. It would be good if, in the current decade, they swapped places a bit and from what I can see they are doing just that.

The US current account deficit will probably be less than 3 per cent of GDP this year and China's surplus will probably be 3 per cent too. Before the crisis the figures were a 6 per cent deficit and a 10 per cent surplus.

What China is doing is so important. If China were to grow 7.5 per cent during the current decade, that would have the same global impact as the US growing by 4 per cent - and that has never happened in my lifetime. In contrast to the other three Bric countries, China is actually growing by more than that so far this decade.

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&gt;Unless China really slows down a lot more than consensus, its contribution to the world is just going to get bigger and bigger. It has created another India just since 2010.

So it's quite easy for the world to do better unless the places that have been really weak get even weaker. It's conceivable with the Eurozone, but from what I have seen the other places in the world, such as the US, Japan and even here, are actually doing better. The US is a very different place to six years ago; it's far more competitive, multinationals are moving back to the US. I'm just back from a week in Nigeria - Africa is booming.

Jim O'Neill is former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management

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Buy: Mitchells and Butlers (MAB)

If economic recovery spreads to the regions from London and the Southeast - which currently generate 45 per cent of sales - then M&B will be well placed to benefit and the shares are modestly rated on a price/earnings ratio of 11.6, writes Julian Hofmann.

A mix of stable operating revenues and reduced interest charges kept adjusted operating profits ticking up by 5.1 per cent for the year. The pub company cut capital investment by £19m, too, but it looks like a Christmas season that falls in the optimal midweek slot is the key to building short-term momentum.

M&B's estate is increasingly weighted towards food and like-for-like food sales increased by 0.8 per cent, reflecting price increases rather than volume growth.

"Wet" sales continued their long-term downward trend with a 0.2 per cent drop, although excellent weather in the second half helped moderate the fall.

Deutsche Bank forecasts adjusted pre-tax profit of £191m for 2014, giving adjusted earnings per share of 35.8p, up from £184m and 34.7p this time.

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Sell: SAB Miller (SAB)

SABMiller seems well-placed to benefit from global consumption growth, although earnings growth will be held back by currency weakness and rising raw material costs, writes Julia Bradshaw. Yet the shares are highly rated given the risks.

Declines in the South African rand, Colombian peso and Peruvian nuevo sol held back growth for beverage giant SABMiller, which makes about four-fifths of its profits in emerging markets.

The maker of Grolsch and Peroni saw decent progress across all markets apart from Europe and North America, where lager volumes fell, leaving underlying lager volumes just 1 per cent higher.

The picture in emerging markets was much rosier. Profit in Latin America grew by 10 per cent to $972m, helped by favourable pricing, higher volumes and a good performance from premium brands. Thirst for beer continued in Africa, where profit was up 16 per cent to $408m, while Asia Pacific also had another good year, with profits 12 per cent higher at $540m.

Broker Numis Securities expects pre-tax profit of $5.1bn for the full year, giving earnings per share of 244¢ (up from $4.7bn and 237¢ in 2013).

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Hold: Compass (CPG)

Profit margins are improving and there is a huge pipeline of business, but a forward price/earnings ratio in excess of 18 - near a 10-year high - looks up with events, writes Lee Wild.

***Feeding*** hungry Americans, and a growing appetite for its services in emerging markets, helped boost organic revenue at catering heavyweight Compass by over 4 per cent last year. Operating profit before hefty write-downs and restructuring costs rose 8 per cent to £1.27bn, and a larger than expected £500m share buy-back for 2014 pushed the shares to a record high.

That's the reward for getting the operating profit margin above 7 per cent for the first time. North America, which now accounts for over 46 per cent of sales, grew organic revenue by 8 per cent, while emerging markets grew 7 per cent.

Even in Europe and Japan, operating margins grew by 60 basis points as cost-cutting offset another fall in like-for-like volumes.

Broker Numis Securities expects adjusted pre-tax profit of £1.26bn in 2014, giving adjusted earnings per share of 51.9p (from £1.19bn/47.7p in 2013).

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Sector focus: tech is back with a bang

London's so-called Tech City has been getting a lot of favourable press recently, writes Matthew Allan. There's a real buzz around the epicentre in gritty Shoreditch, reminiscent perhaps of the heady optimism that fuelled the dotcom bubble in the late 1990s.

But is the current surge in merger and acquisition activity, number of initial public offerings (IPOs) and rocketing share prices a sign of future growth, or a warning cry that the sector is beginning to overheat?

Already this year, the Aim technology index has risen by nearly half and has almost doubled in the past two years. It recently breached a level last seen at the back end of the internet boom, in December 2001. Nor are the gains confined to tiddlers; the FTSE 350 technology index is up four-fold since the darkest days of the financial crisis at the end of 2008.

Recent takeover bids for Andor Technology, a high-tech camera maker, and Delcam, which develops advanced software for the ***manufacturing*** industry, suggest better times ahead. Andor's suitor, Oxford Instruments, has made an indicative offer of 500p per share in cash. Sales are recovering and Andor has negotiated hard, yet Oxford clearly sees value in the business even at these levels.

Delcam, meanwhile, is being bought by US-based rival Autodesk for £172.5m in cash, a deserved premium as record demand for its software translates into soaring revenue and profit.

There has been an abundance of smaller M&A activity among London-listed tech stocks during these past few months, too, most recently at managed service provider Redcentric, which said this week it will pay £65m for peer InTechnology. The deal, classified as a reverse takeover, will be funded largely by institutional money.

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&gt; It is the IPO market, however, that has really captured the imagination of investors this year as companies and speculators alike capitalise on the robust capital market environment. Shares in microblogging site Twittersoared as much as 70 per cent on their first day of trading after the loss-making company raised $1.8bn (£1.1bn) this month. And more than a few eyebrows were raised when Evan Spiegel, the 23-year-old founder of photo messaging app firm Snapchat, turned down a $3bn offer from Facebook.

London, however, is popular, too. Servelec, a provider of software and services to the healthcare and power industries, is set to complete the largest fundraising for a UK-listed software company since 2000 when its shares list on the main market on December 2. A heavily oversubscribed IPO - also billed as the largest UK tech IPO by market value since March 2010 - will raise £122m.

Servelec isn't an isolated example, either. Another 18 technology companies have tapped the London market so far this year, double the number in 2012 and 2011. "The market is improving such a lot now, there is a completely different appetite for raising money," notes Sam Smith, chief executive of broker finnCap. "The small-cap environment is definitely seen as less risky than it has been for a long while. There's so much interest in initial public offerings... it's now a viable option for a lot of businesses."

It certainly helps that shares in many of the tech floats have rocketed following their debut. In 2013 alone, you would have made an average gain of nearly 17 per cent had you invested in all 18 tech IPOs on their first day of trading, based on exclusive research from Investors Chronicle and S&P Capital IQ.

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Shares in telecoms software group Coms rose during the first half of the year after Dave Breith took the helm in January. A journeyman of the telecoms industry, Mr Breith sold his business to Daisy Group two years before and has attracted a series of new contracts at Coms as well as completing a £9.5m acquisition in the last month.

News of the completion failed to stimulate the share price above its July peak so Mr Breith improved his stake on Tuesday, acquiring five times as many shares than when he and a colleague invested a similar sum before the gains took hold in February.

In the software sector, Mark Wells became the third director to buy into Kofax during November, making his fourth trade in five years with each at a higher share price than the last.

The shares have been on an upward trajectory since 2011, and the company recently announced the biggest deal in its history. The stock has chalked up a 5p gain since Gregory Lock bought at 378p a fortnight ago.

Robert Hancock may have called the high in Senior shares when he sold at 295p at the end of October, although traders who have shorted the stock are unlikely to have profited since the dark days of 2008 when the sky fell in across global markets.

He took profits on a 38 per cent gain since January, with 2013 looking certain to become the fifth straight year of gains for the aerospace stock. Recent weakness did not deter newcomer Celia Baxter, an executive at support services firm Bunzl, from gaining a foothold having joined three months ago.

Similar gains at Judges Scientific tempted two non-executive directors to cash in some of their stake on Tuesday as the shares traded close to their all-time high. Like Senior, the shares have not suffered a sustained period of weakness since 2008 and have almost doubled in value this year alone.

A trading statement last week said that full-year earnings would be ahead of analyst expectations but warned that growth may not continue into 2014. Ralph Elman banked an eleven-fold profit on shares he bought just four years ago, accounting for £890,000 of the combined sum. Chairman Alex Hambro sold the rest, reducing his stake for the first time.

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Kames Capital, the fund manager owned by Dutch insurer Aegon, plans to launch a Property Authorised Investment Fund aimed at retail investors in the first quarter of 2014.

The fund will be co-managed by David Wise and Alex Walker, who already manage several other property funds aimed at institutions. It will invest mostly in direct property assets, but may also buy real estate investment trusts and property funds.

Paifs are the fund equivalent of Reits, and are allowed to pay gross dividends from rental income without corporation tax deducted. M&G and Standard Life have already converted some of their existing property funds in to Paifs.

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Every time the stock market falls, I read that it's because investors fear higher interest rates. This is just such rot. Why would they fear rising long-term rates? Higher rates are supply-side monetary stimulus - which is just what the world needs now, after five years of the evil twin, demand-side monetary stimulus.

So what's the difference and why does it matter?

It's all about how central banks manipulate money supply - the fuel for economic growth. Central banks create the monetary base - notes, coins and reserves. But banks create the bulk of M4 money supply. Through the fractional reserve banking model, they lend their reserves many times over, and this loan growth is what drives broad money growth.

So if you want more lending, you either you make banks more eager to lend - boost supply - or you make borrowers more eager to borrow - boost demand.

Throughout modern history, central banks have used supply-side policy. They've adjusted reserve requirements and nudged overnight lending rates to make banks more or less eager to lend as need be. Since 2008, they've used demand-side policy. They've bought huge amounts of long-term gilts and US treasuries to push down long-term rates and make folks more eager to borrow. The infamous quantitative easing.

The problem is that supply-side factors matter more than demand-side. Don't believe it? Imagine long rates were zero. Everyone in the world would want to borrow. But banks wouldn't lend a penny, ever. Low long-term rates might make borrowers more eager but make banks less so.

Banks' core business is borrowing from depositors at short-term (lower) rates and lending at long-term (higher) rates. The spread is their profit. When short rates are fixed near zero and long rates are held down, profits shrink and banks don't lend. They're not charities.

This is why QE fails. Banks won't take risk for no reward. When yield spreads are as small as they have been, banks lend only to the most solvent borrowers. Hence why small business lending spent the whole of British QE in free fall and M4 fell two straight years. When yield spreads widen, the risk/reward trade-off improves, and banks are keener to lend to iffier prospects.

Borrowers are still keen, too. Pretend you want a home and have good credit, so you can get a 10-year fixed-rate mortgage for 4.5 per cent. That home is £240,000 - your monthly principal and interest payment is £2,487. If rates rise half a point, your monthly payment rises by £58. Do you back off? No! You love that house! Besides, cost is just one variable. Is your income good? Your job? Do you expect your life to improve or worsen?

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&gt;Or pretend you run a high street shop. You need a loan for a long-term project. Your return on investment is 7 per cent, and you have good credit, so you can borrow at 5 per cent, or 3 per cent post-tax.

If rates rise to 3.5 per cent, your profit is still 50 per cent (3.5 divided by 7) if revenues continue. So you look forward. Do you have confidence in the economy? Expect strong demand? Are your order books already bursting? If so, you'll still take the loan. If not, you won't and probably wouldn't have done so at lower rates either.

Borrowers like low rates, but most don't actually need them. You know this - UK borrowing costs have risen all year, but so has loan demand, according to the Bank of England's credit conditions survey. Demand now is stronger than during the UK's QE nightmare! Growth is speeding on all fronts, so businesses and homebuyers are more confident, more eager to borrow. With profits up, banks are more eager to lend. M4 is finally growing apace.

Expect the same in the US when their idiotic QE ends. QE hurt the US, just like it did Britain. Loan growth slowed and M4 is up only 2.8 per cent since QE began - and it fell for a year and a half along the way. Banks lent less, created less money. The economy had less fuel. That it grew anyway is a marvel.

The fog is already clearing. Markets are discounting QE's end. At the end of May, the yield on 10-year Treasuries was 1.68 per cent. By the end of September, that had risen to 2.54 per cent. Bank lending rates rose too. Yet household borrowing rose 1.1 per cent during the third quarter - the first rise this year. Consumers knew it was OK to borrow even as rates rose. Businesses did too - business lending grew 1.2 per cent. M4 is growing faster.

&lt; &gt; Once QE stops, the party will really start. Wider spreads will make banks more eager. Long shutout business owners will finally get what they need - money to invest in new technology, equipment, R&D, facilities, inventory and employees. Five years of pent-up demand will be unleashed to work its magic throughout the world's biggest economy.

And the best part? No one is expecting it! Everyone thinks higher rates will cause lending to crumble and GDP to go into free fall. They're in for a colossal shock - just what stocks love.

Ken Fisher is the founder and chief executive of Fisher Investments

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We recently hired an intern to do social media for our company as we are looking to expand our online activities. The intern tweeted some personal comments about a sportswoman who had been in the news recently which bordered on the libellous. We deleted the tweets as soon as we realised what had happened, but they had already been retweeted a number of times. I'm worried that we could face legal action as a result of the intern's actions. Can you advise?

Nothing "borders on being libellous" - it either is or it isn't. For an action in libel, something is published about a person and "the reader" thinks less of them. The courts consider that "the sting is not so much in the words themselves as in what the ordinary man will infer from them and that is also regarded as a part of their natural and ordinary meaning".

The reader is someone not avid for scandal and who does not read too much into the words. As the tweet contained personal comments even if not defamatory, it may be a misuse of personal information under article eight of the Human Rights Act, protecting private life.

If the words are libellous, as they have been published and the person named, a claim in libel will exist and the important thing is for the sportswear company to minimise the damage. They have already deleted the tweet but are aware that it has been retweeted.

Each tweet and retweet is separately actionable. It is the initial publisher who will carry responsibility for retweets, as it is to be presumed that tweets will be republished. Your company should issue a prompt apology and retraction. As the recent Lord McAlpine case demonstrated, he took a far more lenient attitude towards those who apologised promptly than to Sally Bercow, who defended the claim on the basis that the tweet was not defamatory.

Your company could make proposals to the sportswoman to turn what could be a PR disaster for them into something positive.

Sarah Webb is a partner specialising in defamation and reputation management at Payne Hicks Beach solicitors, a law firm

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Good money after bad?

I am setting up a retail business and am in the process of arranging premises. I have found a suitable property and intend to purchase the freehold. However, the property requires several thousand pounds worth of exterior renovations. The current freeholder has agreed to carry these out, but has asked that I transfer funds in advance amounting to the cost of the renovations, as a gesture of goodwill and to demonstrate my commitment to the sale. He is widely known to be heavily in debt and the proceeds of the sale will go straight to the bank. I am concerned that if I transfer the funds as he requests I will expose myself to a claim from the bank in the future?

Don't do it. There is no need to go down this high-risk route. The funds you pay to the bank will be absorbed into the freeholder's accounts and set off against his debts, so you would lose them if things go wrong and in any event he will not have the money available to carry out the renovations unless the bank agrees to provide it. You could instead agree a reduction in the purchase price equivalent to at least the cost of the work.

Alternatively, a relatively simple document can protect you in this situation. Agree to exchange a contract to purchase the freehold, conditional upon the seller carrying out the works and with a provision that you will pay for the works against invoices direct to the contractor, such sums being treated as part payment of the price.

It would also be helpful if provision were made for the condition to be waived if the seller does not perform - so you can complete the contract at the price less the outstanding cost of the works and take over the works yourself.

Glenda Miller is a partner at Knights Solicitors, a law firm

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From Russia with . . . doubts

I own a marketing agency that is doing well and is increasingly working with UK-based Russian companies. I was put in contact with an entrepreneur from Russia who is looking to invest in the UK and has made me a very attractive offer to buy a shareholding in my business, which seems almost too good to be true. What kind of due diligence can I do on this company?

Conducting due diligence is vital when dealing with foreign jurisdictions, where local laws and business practices can differ substantially from the UK.

The due diligence procedures will vary, depending on whether the prospective investor intends to acquire shares in your business as an individual or a company. In both instances, personal information should be collected, including their date and place of birth, nationality, family details and qualifications.

You must include an initial screening of the prospective shareholder's reputation. The investor should provide details of his previous business experience and government affiliations that he may have, either personally or through an existing company. He should disclose to you his interests in other companies and/or key management positions to ensure there is no conflict of interest with your business.

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&gt; The investor should provide financial references. I would advise asking for financial statements for the past three years. In the absence of these, a local bank should deliver an opinion of reliability and financial capabilities of the investor. An advantage to the investor is that if his level of his investment is at least £200,000, he is eligible to make an application for himself and his family for a tier 1 entrepreneur visa to live and work in the UK.

This type of visa lures foreign entrepreneurs, as it can result in British citizenship. The checklist above is a good starting base for your due diligence and will help you to mitigate risks when contemplating business relationships with a foreign party.

Katrina Cooper is counsel and Irina Mikhnova is a corporate assistant at Faegre Baker Daniels, a law firm

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Santander, Halifax and Nationwide have benefited most since the introduction of seven-day switching on current accounts in September, according to figures from market research group TNS. However, it noted that, overall, there has been only a modest pick-up in switching activity.

Most of the traditional high street banks, such as Barclays, HSBC and RBS have lost more customers than they gained, despite incentives such as cashback and reward schemes to keep them. Although there is some evidence that financial incentives are playing a greater part in attracting customers, TNS found that poor customer service was still the main reason for leaving a bank.

The research was conducted before the recent scandals involving the Co-op Bank.

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Santiago, the sprawling capital of Chile, enjoys a Mediterranean-like climate and is a couple of hours' drive from the Pacific Ocean to the west, and winter sport resorts in the Andes to the east. Despite its seemingly idyllic location, it is, like many areas in Chile, prone to earthquakes - hence the strict building code that was introduced following a devastating 9.5 magnitude quake in 1960. The code is credited with protecting many Chileans when an 8.8 magnitude quake struck off the coast of central Chile in 2010.

Earthquake-protection techniques are just one reason why greater Santiago, which has a population of 6.3m, is revelling in confidence these days. A strong economy and stable political system have also helped. The most visible result is the Gran Torre (Big Tower) of the Costanera Center in the Providencia district, a 300-metre office block in Santiago's gleaming new business and financial centre - the tallest building in South America. The $1bn centre also contains South America's largest shopping mall.

In spite of the global financial crisis, the average price of a home in Santiago rose by 15 per cent in real terms between the second quarter of 2008 and the same period in 2012, according to BBVA Research, which describes the city's housing market as "dynamic".

However, according to estate agent Carolina Lippi, some high-end homes in the affluent, eastern comunas, or city districts, of Vitacura and Las Condes increased in value by 25 to 30 per cent in the past two years (Providencia and Lo Barnechea are the two other upmarket districts in the city).

"There are hardly any limits on getting home loans these days and property is seen as a safe investment. Building plots in the most coveted areas are getting so scarce that people are buying old buildings, tearing them down and building something higher," says Lippi.

One property on sale in Vitacura at present is a five-bedroom, seven-bathroom detached house built in 1995, with an infinity pool, a separate apartment for guests and mountain views. The property is being marketed by Inmobiliaria Poseidón for 65,000 UF ($2.92m). There is little residential property advertised publicly in Chile above this price level.

The Unidad de Fomento is a separate unit of value linked to the Chilean peso and which constantly adjusts with inflation. It is used to price most real estate (and loans, too).

Another example is a four-bedroom, four-bathroom penthouse apartment overlooking Los Leones golf club in Las Condes, with a heated pool and five parking places, on sale for 63,500 UF ($2.85m) via 3C Propiedades.

Beyond Vitacura - and a 45-minute drive from the business and financial centre - a recently built, hacienda-style mansion in the Arrayán sector of Lo Barnechea, with 500 sq metres of living space on a 5,600 sq metre plot is being offered by Lippi Propiedades for 25,000 UF ($1.12m). The house has an outdoor pool and accommodation for staff.

Half a century ago, land in Vitacura was mainly given over to grazing cattle; now it is the epicentre of fashionable Santiago, with restaurants like the minimalist Boragó, where diners can eat dishes flavoured with foraged herbs and edible flowers, or shrimp dangling from a bonsai tree.

Chile's rigid class system has its own impact on the local high-end property market: extended families tend to stay in the same district, and a lot of property is passed on within families, or pushed discreetly at country clubs or the driving range (or, indeed, advertised less discreetly on Facebook and other social media sites). As a result, up-and-coming neighbourhoods derive much of their buzz from incomers. Good examples include the bohemian district of Bellavista, with its eclectic dining scene, and Bellas Artes, a central district of trendy bars, cafés and markets.

Santiago's historical downtown, meanwhile, has some attractive French-style neoclassical buildings but it is rather scruffy: in September the authorities introduced new rules to clamp down on the many unauthorised street vendors there.

A renovated three-bedroom, two-bathroom 98 sq metre apartment in Bellas Artes is on sale for 4,500 UF ($202,500) through the Procasa agency.

Nathan Lustig, 28, is an entrepreneur from Milwaukee, US, who came to Santiago in 2010 under the government's Start-Up Chile programme, which offers grants to promising new businesses, both foreign and Chilean, who set up in the country. Many are in the ecommerce, biotechnology and finance sectors. "Santiago is the most livable city in Latin America and there is wonderful hiking on your doorstep," says Lustig. "Business-wise, there may be some extra bureaucracy here [compared with the US], but the rules are understandable and you feel confident that they are not going to change suddenly."

Over the past four years, Start-Up Chile has brought between 800 and 900 overseas entrepreneurs to Santiago, according to the programme's communications manager, Maite Larraechea.

"There is now a real cluster of young foreign entrepreneurs in Bellas Artes," says Lustig, who has opened Andes Property, a company offering furnished units to the steady stream of expat arrivals in Santiago.

Lustig's main gripes are air pollution and petty crime, while the distance from home is also a drawback: "It takes 14 or 15 hours to get to Wisconsin. On the other hand, if you are doing business with New York, or just watching sports or talking with friends there, there is no time difference in the southern winter, and only two hours difference in the summer."

"Santiago couldn't be more different from Buenos Aires," says David Chevalier, 30, an engineer from Nantes, France, who moved to Santiago three months ago. "Superficially, there are streets in the [trendy and gentrifying Buenos Aires] district of Palermo which look like streets in Bellas Artes and Bellavista. But the big difference is the foreigners who come to Santiago are not here to spend money, they are here to make it."

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- Estate agents' commission is usually 2 per cent of the sale price, paid by both the buyer and seller

- Smog is a problem in the city, especially during the winter

- Violent crime in downtown Santiago fell by 17 per cent during 2012, according to the country's interior ministry

- Flights from New York to Santiago take about 11 hours from New York and 15 hours from London

- Average temperatures range from about 9C in July to 20C in January

What you can buy for . . .

$100,000 A one-bedroom apartment in Bellas Artes or Bellavista

$1m A three-bedroom new-build apartment in Las Condes

$3m A modern five-bedroom house on 3,500 sq metre plot in a prime location in Vitacura

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Sculptor Eleanor Cardozo could easily have chosen the more traditional path of the wife of a London banker with a comfortable house in Fulham, three children at a local prep school and weekends in the Dorset countryside. But Cardozo, 48, wanted to make Switzerland, rather than Britain, her home. "We could have just stayed put," she says. "But we decided that Switzerland had mountains, lakes and no crime. Whereas in London, I just seemed to be spending hours on the road in traffic [on the way to] Dorset."

Fifteen years after making the move, Cardozo's decision has helped to widen the appeal of her sculpture. Today, galleries and hotels all over Europe exhibit her work. Yet, importantly, she is still recognised as a British artist when it counts - such as during the London 2012 Olympic Games, when her bronze sculpture of a gymnast was placed outside Westminster Abbey.

Setting up in Switzerland with three young children was hard work, however. "The usual expat trappings that a bank lays on [such as] a car, home and schools weren't there," she says. "Bank Sarasin [for whom her husband, Rupert Fryer, 53, is a director] is from Basel, so we were treated very much as locals and left to our own devices to settle in. I was surprised to find that the Swiss Germans didn't really speak English."

Family life in Switzerland proved to be a success. "In London we were terribly social," she says. "But here it was just us as a family, so we took lessons to get our motorboat licence, took the children skiing in Klosters, Zermatt and Davos - and it was all rather peaceful really."

Cardozo's decision to put down roots in Switzerland is in contrast with her peripatetic childhood. The daughter of a military attaché, she was the eldest girl of 10 children. "We all fought like crazy, but we were a chaotic, happy family," she says. Postings abroad took the family to Malaysia, Malawi, Ghana, Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar during her early childhood and school years. She attended St Mary's School in Shaftesbury with five of her sisters.

"All our holidays were spent without a television, making and doing things - sewing, painting, dress designing or playing music," says Cardozo. Art and music also played a big part in the household, with her mother teaching violin and piano to all the children from the age of four. "I remember arriving in Malawi airport with my brothers and sisters, each of us carrying a violin case, until customs officials stopped us, suspicious we were carrying guns."

Her own three children - Cosima, 22, Danny, 21, and Henry, 20 - began their education in Switzerland, before attending British boarding schools. "I wanted them to feel some Englishness," says Cardozo. "I was nervous of them becoming too 'Euro'. This place can be too small and too rich - with talk about the next Prada handbag or Daddy's new car, versus piano, drama [lessons] and team spirit."

When Cardozo was the age her children are now she completed her studies at City and Guilds of London Art School, and then spent a year in Florence, at the Studio Cecil-Graves.

After renting for five years in the suburb of Cologny, on Lake Geneva, the family sold their five-bedroom house in Fulham in 2002, took the plunge and bought a property in Geneva. Cardozo, however, didn't want to live in Cologny. "I wanted something flatter, with more space," she says, "and without halos of midges in the summer".

Cardozo and her husband found a three-bedroom Spanish-style hacienda, built in the 1970s and owned by Peruvians, in another smart suburb of Geneva - Vand uvres. The layout is unusual. There is a single-storey above ground with a courtyard at the front and a terrace surrounding the pool at the back, while three of the seven bedrooms are downstairs in the former cellar. "It took seven months of building work to carve out the [legally required] nuclear bunker and make the rooms," says Cardozo. "Coming from London, we were used to making the most of underground space." The couple bought just under four acres, and used the footprint of the house to obviate strict planning laws and create 6,000 sq ft of comfortable family home.

On the other side of the courtyard is Cardozo's studio, a modest and well-ordered area with plenty of light from glass doors facing the lawn. Life-sized figures of gymnasts and dancers compete for space with half-finished smaller figurines - the bronzes are fired at the Swissart foundry in Jussy, just down the road. Small figures are often private commissions for Russian yachts or Asian clients, while a larger three-quarter size study in the corner was modelled on the British-Croatian socialite Petra Ecclestone. "It took me eight weeks to complete, from drawings to finish, and I took it out to her mansion in Los Angeles this January," says Cardozo, referring to Ecclestone's 56,000 sq ft estate in Bel Air, which she bought for $85m in 2011. Such bronzes start at about £50,000 for a half life-size and reach more than £100,000 for the large-scale monuments that Cardozo has completed for public buildings.

It was during her exhibition at the Beau-Rivage Palace hotel in Lausanne in 2010, next door to the Olympic Museum, that she first had the idea of including her work at the London 2012 Olympics. After being approached to supply sculptures of gymnasts in the Olympic Museum, she wrote to Lord Coe, who headed London's bid to host the Games, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson and David Cameron, the British prime minister, only to have her ideas rejected.

Then she was approached by a charity, Youth With A Mission, and asked to make a four-metre public monument for display outside Westminster Abbey. A three-metre gymnast by Cardozo was also installed at Heathrow's T5 Gallery during the Games, which now sits outside Wellington Barracks near Buckingham Palace.

The project gave her a taste for bigger sculptures in public places, something she plans to do more of in the future. "I do feel if you are given a talent, then it should be used for the good of others," says Cardozo. "And I want to make sculptures where people can enjoy them for free. Beauty and art enhance people's lives and I'm in a fortunate position to donate occasionally."

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Buying guide

Pros

- Access to other European cities from Geneva is easy for business day trips and weekends away

- It is possible to live in the countryside and still be only 10 minutes from the city centre

- A large international community with English widely spoken

Cons

- Very little culture; it might be rather quiet for some people

- Limited shopping compared with the UK, particularly supermarkets

- High cost of living compared with many other European cities

What you can buy for . . .

EUR100,000: A very small studio in an inexpensive area, such as Meyrin, Russin or Aire

EUR1m: A two-bedroom, two-bathroom, 150 sq metre property in an upmarket suburban area

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Romantic getaway for garden lovers

Three nights B&B, from about £1,300

barnsleyhouse.com

Britain is well stocked with stately homes and manor houses, major and minor, that in their heyday sported great gardens. While many have vanished completely and others are still firmly behind closed, private doors, there are a smattering that live on as great hotels, making them the perfect getaway for garden lovers.

Barnsley House hotel and spa in Gloucestershire was the home of Rosemary Verey, one of the most influential gardeners and garden writers of the second half of the 20th century. Verey was arguably better known in the US than Britain, although the Prince of Wales was a disciple and regular visitor to Barnsley House. The gardens are undergoing sympathetic restoration and the potager - an old idea that Verey resurrected and popularised - now supplies the kitchen of the hotel's superb restaurant.

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Wawa folding rocking chair

From £300.00

wawa.co.uk

Designed 20 years ago by former sculptor Richard Ward, the Wawa folding rocking chair has been relaunched this year with fabrics from some of the best established and most exciting up-and-coming designers. The rocker's folding mechanism is beautifully simple, superficially like a deckchair and with similar portability thanks to its very light weight, making it ideal for conservatories and gardens. The fabrics for the relaunched range are from designers such as Eleanor Pritchard, whose work has a strong mid-century aesthetic, and Margo Selby, known for her popular handloom designs.

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Capricorn mohair welly boot socks

£11.95 a pair

capricornsocks.co.uk

Christmas socks may be the ultimate cliché gift, but as any gardener knows there is no less inviting place on a freezing winter day than a cold, dank wellington boot. So if you intend to buy foot knitwear this Christmas, you may as well go for a sock that does the job. Capricorn Socks are British made, using mohair from Angora goats. Mohair in a sock makes it hard-wearing, warm, comfortable and machine-washable. Those of a delicate olfactory nature will appreciate one of mohair's most remarkable qualities - the socks don't smell after being worn.

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Moonlight design garden lighting scheme

From £5,000

moonlightdesign.co.uk

Gardens don't sleep when the sun goes down, but they are much harder to enjoy after dark; especially in winter. Lighting makes a garden more accessible at night and can have a genuinely transformative effect - a carefully lit tree trunk can have the presence of a Corinthian column at night, becoming just a plain old tree trunk when the sun rises again. Well-placed lighting can create almost theatrical effects; light washes, highlights and shadow patterns. The result extends the garden's usable time during the summer months, and in winter creates an illuminated outdoor picture to enjoy from the warmth of indoors.

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Floral arrangements

From £50

philippacraddock.com

Former marketing and advertising executive Philippa Craddock retrained as a florist, quit London and set about designing innovative and distinctive floral arrangements from her studio in Pheasants Hatch, East Sussex. She has built up an impressive list of clients including Tiffany & Co, Lancôme, Claridge's and the Saatchi Gallery, leading to Condé Nast Brides magazine describing her as the "must-know florist". She now sells through Selfridges as well as online, including a range of Christmas wreaths.

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Tobisho secateurs

From £69

niwaki.com

If there are three things worth spending money on in life, so my grandmother used to say, it's underwear, eyewear and secateurs. Poor quality secateurs are not only a false economy but a health risk too; blunt blades are far more likely to result in an injury. These Tobisho secateurs are hand forged in Japan, using the same blue paper steel technique employed in the ***manufacture*** of Samurai swords. Because the blade and handle are formed from one piece of steel they are exceptionally strong, and feel beautifully balanced in the hand. Most importantly, they have a refined cutting action and smooth, precision cut. Drawn from a leather holster, you can combine cowboy and ninja fantasies in one fell swoop.

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Honda Versatool

£399

honda.com

"Split shaft" power tools have been around for a while, but have always risked being a jack of all trades and master of none. The idea is simple; take the engine and driveshaft from a brush cutter and split the shaft halfway along its length so that multiple heads with different functions can be plugged in, like a piston-powered Swiss Army knife. Honda's Versatool uses a powerful four-stroke engine promising less noise than a two-stroke and no fiddling around with oil/petrol mixtures. It has seven attachments, including a soil cultivator, a pruner, an edge cutter for tidying lawn edges, and hedge trimmers. Honda's reputation for quality should ensure the various implements do the job intended, and don't languish unused in the garage.

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Cacoon hanging chair

£225

hang-in-out.com

The husband and wife team behind Cacoon have spent the past 20 years making sails for ocean-going yachts. On a work trip to Mexico they spotted a colony of weaver birds with their distinctive suspended nests, and the idea for the Cacoon was born. Made from light but incredibly strong sail cloth, the Cacoon is part hanging chair, part hammock, part floating tent. It makes a great garden hideaway for grown-ups and a fun play den for children. There is something irresistibly relaxing about swinging gently in the breeze; fortunately the Cacoon comes equipped with cup holders, should you get a little too chilled out and drift off to sleep.

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007's Barbour jacket

£399

barbour.com

J Barbour & Sons has been making outdoor clothing for field sports enthusiasts, farmers, sailors and gardeners for more than 100 years from its base in South Shields in northern England. The Beacon sports jacket is based on the limited-edition version worn by Daniel Craig as James Bond in Skyfall. A slim-fit, blazer-style waxed jacket in olive drab, it has neat touches like leather-bound cuff edges, and classic Barbour tartan lining. Slim-fit jackets are ideal for gardening as there are no loose flaps of cloth to get caught in machinery or tools, while the waxed cloth repels thorns and rain with ease. A season out in the elements will give it a cool patina that money can't buy.

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The Book of Palms, by Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius

$150

taschen.com

This wonderfully whopping folio (442 pages and measuring 12.4in x 17.1in) was based on the author's 1817-1820 expedition to Brazil and Peru with the zoologist Johann Baptist von Spix. The pair travelled through the Amazon basin - the most species-rich region of the world - sketching and collecting specimens. The 240 chromolithographic illustrations are beautifully detailed, and represent a landmark in taxonomic description, botanical illustration and the realistic representation of species in the landscape. Such was the significance of this work that when von Martius died in 1868 his coffin was carried to the grave decked in palm leaves.

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Most visitors to the tiny Cornish village of St Mawes can see why its housing market has emerged from the downturn relatively unscathed, even as property prices in neighbouring places remain depressed.

The village, with a permanent population of only 850, is on a beautiful hillside in the Roseland peninsula giving many properties uninterrupted water views, sometimes on two sides. For boat owners it is near Falmouth and Mylor, two of southern Cornwall's sailing havens, while gastronomes are no more than 15 minutes' drive from several Good Food Guide restaurants, such as the Michelin-starred Driftwood in Portscatho and Tabb's in Truro, as well as many old-fashioned country pubs.

Houses in St Mawes are unusually large by Cornish standards. Whereas most high-end parts of the far southwest of England are dominated by elaborately modernised fishermen's cottages with little outside space - Port Isaac, Padstow and Fowey, for example - St Mawes has a significant proportion of large, modern and detached houses in substantial grounds.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the village's housing market is strong. The average price of property sold there over the past five years is £607,000, while in Cornwall as a whole it is just £236,000, according to the website Zoopla. And, although average prices across Cornwall are still falling (down 3.8 per cent over the past year, according to the Land Registry's October figures), local estate agents say St Mawes is now over the worst.

"It was affected between 2009 and 2012 as the recession restricted second-home buyers," says Ben Standen of Jackson-Stops & Staff. "But in 2013 there have definitely been more buyers than sellers, hence prices have stayed strong."

"It's our view that early 2012 saw the bottom of the market when we saw two sales concluded at over £2.5m each [despite] one of these selling at a much higher level in 2007," says Jonathan Cunliffe of Savills. But the typical St Mawes buyer now seems to be returning, he adds: a mixture of wealthy retirees and second-home buyers from London.

There has been an increase in international interest, too. The village had its first Russian purchaser in 2010 and Savills has sold two homes to German buyers this year, while other agents report interest from Hong Kong and Australia. On top of that, there are returning British expats, "who start looking five years before they move back, giving time to have work carried out and to visit on holidays," says Nicola Oddy of Stacks Property Search, a buying agency.

One major driver for consistently strong prices is St Mawes' sailing tradition. Knight Frank says the village is one of the top seven locations in southern England with the highest premiums on properties with water views, especially if they are accompanied by direct river frontages and moorings. The agency claims a private slipway can boost the price of a property in St Mawes by more than 100 per cent, while private access to a jetty will add 80 per cent.

However, buyers inevitably have a limited choice of homes in such a small location. This winter there are some 25 St Mawes homes on the open market, just four of which are on for more than £1m. A similar number are for sale in nearby villages Portscatho, Tregony and Veryan.

Savills is selling a new three-storey house in St Mawes with 6,300 sq ft of space. The property has five bedrooms and a galleried hall, plus extensive outdoor terracing - all designed to optimise water views. It is on the market for £2.35m.

Nearby, a colonial-style house, built in the 1930s and frequently remodelled, has four bedrooms, 2,800 sq ft of space and is being marketed by agent H Tiddy for £1.85m.

For those with long-term plans for a customised house, a plot on the edge of St Mawes is being sold with consent to build a 6,100 sq ft home for £1.39m through Carter Jonas. Its unusually large 48-acre grounds come with 1,500ft of creek frontage. A more modest three-bedroom Georgian semi-detached house - still with views across St Mawes harbour and the village itself - is on sale for £850,000 through Miller Countrywide.

These high prices persist despite what some prospective buyers may regard as significant disadvantages.

Not only is St Mawes 290 miles southwest of London - a six-hour drive not including breaks - but the final 20 miles leading to the village are on narrow lanes. To travel from St Mawes to the nearest town centres of Falmouth and Truro you must either drive a dog-leg route to the head of a river or use undeniably charming but slow ferries.

St Mawes is only 30 miles from Newquay airport but easyJet has recently closed its Newquay-Gatwick service citing insufficient demand, while Gatwick and Heathrow are both about 280 miles away.

Even the mobile telephone signal can be patchy - "which frustrates holiday makers and business people alike," says Nicola Oddy. But perhaps it is the peacefulness of the area that appeals to its better-known residents and tourists.

Sir Frank Williams, owner of the Williams Formula One team, has a property in the village, as does David Richards, former F1 team principal and now chairman of Aston Martin. This year, Richards opened a 20-room boutique hotel called Idle Rocks in St Mawes. It is aimed at young families and is a rival to the Hotel Tresanton, a 1940s yacht club transformed by the Forte family's Olga Polizzi in 1997 and frequented by Tony Blair, the Prince of Wales and a host of celebrities.

St Mawes clearly still has pulling power, despite Cornwall's economic landscape not yet enjoying the green shoots of recovery seen elsewhere. A powerful combination of natural beauty, water views and spacious housing has been its recipe for staying strong, even in a downturn.

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- In August - at the height of the holiday season - there were just two reported crimes in St Mawes: one for antisocial behaviour, the other for burglary

- A significantly higher-than-average 39 per cent of residents are pensioners. The southwest of England has an average of 22 per cent, while the national average is just 17 per cent

- 65 per cent of homes are detached, double the average across southwest England

What you can buy for . . .

£500,000 A refurbished three-bedroom cottage near the harbour

£1m A detached four-bedroom house with views and a lawned garden

£2.5m A five-bedroom period villa with large grounds on the water

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The Mill, Pigna, Liguria, Italy, EUR1.5m

Where: In the northwest corner of Italy, on the border of France, 1.5km from the medieval village of Pigna, 15km from the beach, and a one-hour drive from Nice Côte d'Azur airport.

What: A converted olive mill, built in 1850, with an older attached stone mill, a detached cottage and a small rustico (stone shed). In total, the property has eight double bedrooms, five bathrooms and 620 sq metres of internal living space.

Why: Built at the junction where two rivers cross, with no other properties nearby, the plot amounts to just under half an acre. It is surrounded by olive groves and woodland.

Who: Chesterton Humberts, chesterton-international.com, tel: +44 203 040 8210

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Little Bokeelia Island, Gulf Coast, Florida, US, $29.5m

Where: Off the coast of Pine Island, western Florida. Journeys by car and boat take an hour from Southwest Florida international airport in Fort Myers.

What: A 104-acre private island, with 3.5 miles of shoreline. The Spanish-style main house has four bedrooms and there is also a two-bedroom guest house. Within the grounds there is a museum, pool, tennis court and staff quarters.

Why:Little Bokeelia offers complete privacy, with the area around the island a designated nature reserve.

Who: Michael Saunders & Company, michaelsaunders.com, tel: +1 941 522 5228

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303 Campbell Hill Road, Scotsburn, Nova Scotia, Canada, C$699,000 ($665,000)

Where: On the southeast coast of Canada in Pictou County, 82 miles from Halifax international airport.

What: A new three-bedroom, three-bathroom home, with 3,711 sq ft of living space. In the grounds are a whirlpool tub, a golf driving range and a trout stream.

Why: On a hilltop within an 85-acre country estate, the house is designed for privacy, being 2km from the nearest neighbouring property.

Who: Tradewinds Realty, tradewindsrealty.com, tel: +1 902 275 5613

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Eilean Righ, Loch Craignish, Argyll and Bute, Scotland, UK, £3m

Where: Off the coast of Argyll, in the Inner Hebrides, 25 minutes by helicopter from Glasgow airport, or a ten-minute boat trip from Ardfern on the mainland.

What: A refurbished four-bedroom main house and three-bedroom farmhouse, plus 261 acres of land. There is an observatory, boathouse, jetty, two slipways (suitable for seaplanes) and a 500 sq metre helicopter hanger.

Why: Eilean Righ, or "The King's Island", was once owned by Sir Reginald Johnston, who retired here after being the tutor to Pu Yi, the last Emperor of China.

Who: Knight Frank, knightfrank.co.uk, tel: +44 131 222 9600

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Farmhouse, Esporles, Mallorca, Spain, EUR6m

Where: In the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain, 8km from the town of Esporles, 24km from Palma airport.

What: An estate comprising of a main house, a staff apartment and a casita, making a total of nine bedrooms and seven bathrooms. It is set in 160 acres of land, mostly woodland, with level terraces for cultivation, a pool and patio area.

Why: The property is in a remote location high in the Tramuntana mountain range, at the end of a 5km dirt track. It is self-sufficient for heating with wood-burning stoves, while water is supplied from three wells.

Who: Savills, savills.co.uk, tel: +44 207 016 3740

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Once a sleepy backwater favoured by hippies seeking an escape from Auckland's rat race, Waiheke Island is now the go-to holiday home destination for wealthy New Zealand urbanites.

Investor Graeme Hart, the country's richest man, owns a property here - as does former All Blacks rugby coach Sir Graham Henry. In the 20 years up to the end of 2011, median property prices rose 582 per cent, according to figures supplied by the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (Reinz). In the past year alone, prices have risen by about 10 per cent, says Brad Roebuck of real estate firm Bayleys.

It is easy to understand the appeal. Waiheke lies 11 miles off the coast of North Island and is just a 40-minute ferry ride from Auckland, the nation's financial hub, making it increasingly popular with commuters and owners of second homes. Indeed, it is sometimes referred to as the city's "island suburb" - although this is not a term favoured by locals.

Waiheke has stunning scenery (lush vegetation, rocky sea coves, translucent waters and breathtaking hilltop views), more than 30 vineyards producing some of the country's best wines (the local Syrah is a favourite) and an attractive microclimate. Add to that the growing numbers of boutique shops, bars and restaurants, including the award-winning Mudbrick in Oneroa, and it is no great surprise that while Waiheke has just 8,000 permanent residents, its population swells to more than 30,000 during the holiday months.

"Ten to 15 years ago, Waiheke became a place for the trendy Aucklanders to go to," says Peter Thompson, managing director of Auckland estate agents Barfoot & Thompson. "Predominantly, the buyers today are local Aucklanders who look at Waiheke as a lifestyle change, either on a permanent basis, or as a place for a holiday home." Its infrastructure has improved, he adds, but it has retained its community-oriented feel.

The west coast of the island draws the most punters, in particular the beaches near the island's main town Oneroa and at Onetangi, its largest and arguably most beautiful beach. "Typically [house] prices range from NZ$500,000 (£260,000) to NZ$1.2m - though some more palatial places in excess of NZ$5m are not uncommon," says Thompson.

Barfoot & Thompson is selling a Mediterranean-style villa at Onetangi, at a guide price of NZ$1.95m with four bedrooms, olive groves, a small vineyard and a small orchard producing many fruits including the local feijoa or pineapple guava. A little farther afield, Savills is selling a modern, glass-fronted villa with four bedrooms and a 4.27-hectare estate with award-winning olive groves, at a guide price of NZ$4.5m. Modern properties have become increasingly popular, agents say, slowly replacing old-fashioned bachs, the more modest timber holiday homes once synonymous with New Zealand's coastline.

The eastern side of the island, around areas such as Man O'War Bay, is far more remote, has worse road access (some properties have helicopter pads) and is sparsely populated. It is less popular with commuters, but conversely appeals to a niche set of super wealthy buyers for whom privacy is a priority. It is here that some of the most impressive houses are to be found, says Thompson. "Properties here tend to range from between NZ$5m up to as high as NZ$15m."

The most expensive house for sale on Waiheke at present is a NZ$7.5m four-bedroom modern property, with a solar-heated infinity pool, at Oneroa on the island's northwest coast.

Where Waiheke has the edge over other New Zealand holiday hotspots is not just its island feel and boutique-filled villages, but also its proximity to Auckland. "The other similar area that purchasers are looking at would be Omaha Beach [on the mainland], about one-and-a-half hours north of Auckland," says Roebuck. "The prime minister [John Key] has his holiday home there and it is quite an exclusive and expensive area. However for many, Waiheke has the edge because of its vineyards, choice of beaches, schools and, of course, accessibility."

In the past, Roebuck adds, property price rises had as much to do with mid-range family buyers moving to the island for reasons of cost as well as lifestyle reasons. A three-bedroom home 10 years ago would have been significantly cheaper on Waiheke than in Auckland. Now, however, that price difference is negligible.

The NZ Property Report for April 2013 states that the average asking price for property in Auckland has reached a record high of NZ$612,167, compared with the national average of NZ$447,275. The average asking price on Waiheke is just over NZ$600,000. Overseas buyers, some of whom spent time here during the 2011 Rugby World Cup, are beginning to take note, agents say. Roebuck has recently seen prospective buyers from Australia, Switzerland and the US.

Paul Tostevin, an associate in residential research at property specialists Savills, attributes Waiheke's success with local buyers to the growing wealth across the bay. "Waiheke Island's rising property market has been fed by the growing wealth in Auckland, where prices are now 26 per cent above their 2007 peak, compared with 11 per cent nationally," he says. Savills recently included Waiheke in its report for Candy & Candy on the global prime sector as an example of a luxury enclave dependent on domestic wealth.

"Inevitably, when wealth is created," says Tostevin, "playgrounds for the wealthy spring up nearby. International interest is the likely offshoot in the long term, despite the remoteness of Waiheke."

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Buying guide

- The main hourly ferry from downtown Auckland to Matiatia Wharf on Waiheke takes 40 minutes. A return ticket costs NZ$36 (£18.50)

- Alternatively, it is possible to charter a plane or helicopter from Auckland to Waiheke's private airport

- Surrounded by the Hauraki Gulf to the east of Auckland, Waiheke is partly sheltered from southwest winds. Average temperatures on the island range from about 15C in July to 24C in January

- Non-residents are permitted to buy property in New Zealand and there is no stamp duty equivalent at the point of purchase

What you can buy for . . .

NZ$500,000: A modest bungalow with a deck near Ostend

NZ$1m: A three-bedroom, hilltop house with stunning views

NZ$2m: A modern house with four bedrooms and a pool in a prime location, such as Onetangi, with olive groves or an orchard

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In 1986, Leonard Wantchekon, then a student leader in Benin, west Africa, escaped from Segbana jail after being tortured and held for 18 months for organising university protests against the dictator Mathieu Kérékou. "I escaped and made it across the border to Nigeria, then the Ivory Coast, and a year later to Canada," says Wantchekon. "I was a political refugee, without a home country."

Now a professor of politics at Princeton University in the US, he reflects on the long journey he took, from a dank prison cell to one of America's top universities.

Outside, it is a cold and drizzly autumn afternoon and red maple leaves paper the pavement. Inside the 1970s-style duplex, which Wantchekon, 57, shares with his wife, Catherine, a university financial manager, the rooms are decorated in calm, neutral colours and are filled with artefacts and family photographs.

He has just one complaint: "It's too quiet for me - I like student energy on campus." Even on football weekends? (Princeton's football stadium is visible directly across from the house) "American football is surprisingly quiet," he says.

Although he teaches full-time at Princeton, Wantchekon has recently embarked on a parallel mission in his native Benin: to create a first-rate university from scratch, complete with a new campus. Named the African School of Economics (ASE), it has grown out of a research institute that Wantchekon founded in Benin in 2004. ASE, which will partner with Princeton, will officially open in the autumn of 2014. "We'll start with 300 graduate students and rent a location while we build the new campus," he says.

At home in Princeton, Wantchekon has turned his window desk, with its neat piles of papers, into a virtual planning site. "This house is five minutes from my office. But when I'm home, I'm on Skype two to three hours a day with colleagues in Benin. This is where I sit, think and work." He opens his laptop to show off architectural designs for striking concrete and glass-sided buildings. Time is also being spent devising courses. "Mathematics and statistics will be the core," he says.

A top maths student himself, Wantchekon began organising protests while still at school. "I became a pro-democracy leader," he says. And his activism got him expelled from the National University of Benin in 1979. "I lived in hiding, organising students, writing for the underground newspaper." During a brief amnesty in 1985, he re-enrolled as a student only to mobilise a larger protest and the rallies that led to his arrest.

It was only after he had settled in Canada that Wantchekon finished his degree, before moving to Northwestern University in Illinois, where he completed a PhD in economics. Then in 1995, he was hired by Yale and, after a stint at New York University, he accepted the post at Princeton in 2011.

Wantchekon's attention turns to objects in his sitting room. "I bought this in Cotonou," he says, pointing to an African mask on the wall. "It's an ancestor's mask. You have street vendors who sell you masks and they're very, very talented," he says, adding that, although not religious, the masks are thought to protect the home. "Masks are believed to capture the spirit of the ancestor looking out for us. They're popular throughout Africa."

On another wall hangs a colourful painting of a waterfall. "It's a watercolour from South Africa," he says, "but I think of this [simply] as an African landscape."

The idea of a pan-African identity, a concept that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s during the struggle for African independence, has inspired Wantchekon's vision for ASE. "We will draw the best students from across Africa and teach them to become future economists, political leaders, CEOs," he says. "The research centres are [already] open. We have one masters programme in economics and statistics. Next year, we'll be upgrading to economics, mathematics and statistics, then we're adding an MBA [and] an MPA." A humanities programme, he says, "is on the books for 2016".

So how does he respond to those who, citing trade restrictions and regional instability, among other issues, dismiss the notion of an African identity? "I strongly disagree," says Wantchekon. "In academia, there are more pan-African institutions than ever: African Economic Research Consortium, Afrobarometer, African University of Science and Technology," he says. "And now our applicants are coming in from 25 African countries.

Wantchekon envisages a future Africa of tightening economic and political integration along the lines of the EU. "Market fragmentation is inefficient, [it] reinforces division and [allows] limited development . . . Eventually, we need an African central bank," he says. "Now the francophone countries have their central bank based in Dakar and it's still led by the Banque de France. Former British colonies have their central banks."

His hope is that ASE will help to sow democracy across the region. His own Benin-based research, published in the October issue of the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, compares town hall meetings with rallies in campaigns. "We've found that town hall meetings are much more effective in reinforcing issue-based voting." Africa's most valuable resource, he adds, is its young people. "We have a very young, dynamic, ambitious population. We just need to train them."

Students from ASE have already impressed their counterparts at Princeton. "I brought 14 grad students from Princeton to Benin and they realised some students there were even stronger. They didn't expect that," says Wantchekon.

Arranged on the shelves of a large bookcase to the right of the eating area are photos of his two grown-up children, Travis and Kristia. "I put pictures of my children everywhere. I have my son here playing football," he says. Meanwhile, he credits Catherine for giving him balance. "I met her when I was running, in hiding. She isn't an activist. She gave me a sense of reality," he says. Still, Wantchekon sees building his school as an extension of his early struggle. "Now Benin is a democracy. But we fought for it. I remember when it seemed impossible."

Wantchekon has secured the land for the ASE campus in the city of Akassato in southern Benin and is currently raising construction funds, but his plans will not stop there. "We'll eventually have a museum of social history," he says, "a botanical garden, even a football stadium."

Continuing his tour of the house, Wantchekon walks out to a shared back terrace with iron-grate furniture. The couple have recently bought another house nearby, which they will co-own with the university. Wantchekon is looking forward to more space and says he is pleased they will remain close to the activity and bustle of student life, adding, "I get inspiration from my interactions on campus."

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The first object Wantchekon selects is an old book from school. "I still have my sixth-grade African history book, Les Peuples Noirs," he says, retrieving a tattered textbook from Benin. "It's rigorous and nicely written," he says, "I'm puzzled how, over four centuries of slave trade, African families and culture survived. You had migration, people permanently on the run to escape slave trade, war, disease. They didn't have homes." The second object is his certificate from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. "It was moving," says Wantchekon, of his election in October as the first African voted into the academy. "I was touched by messages from across Africa: Cameroon, Mali, Congo, Malawi. I was congratulated not as a person from Benin, but as an African; for representing Africa."

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David Tang, entrepreneur and founder of ICorrect, offers advice on questions about property, interiors - and modern manners for globetrotters

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As an atheist I'd be interested in your views on saying grace. On one hand, I've always considered letting a meal go cold to be the greatest disservice one can pay to the ***animal*** that died to make it and to the cook. On the other, I see there is value in reminding myself that I am lucky to have food and good friends to eat it with. Also, when my wife invites over friends from church should I adopt their gracing ways or they mine?

So let me get this right: you don't believe in God, but you believe in being considerate to a dead ***animal*** and a cook? I must confess I find this slightly bizarre. In any event, any cooks worth their salt should be able to time their cooking to arrive after grace is said. But of course if you were to have plated food already on the table before you sit down, then you are beyond social redemption.

On the point of others wishing to exercise their convictions, you would do well to respect them in an open and tolerant society. After all, you would not mind taking your shoes off when visiting a mosque, or doing a hongi to a Maori? So why irk over a few seconds in which others might like to say grace? If friends of your wife were involved, all the more reason to be accommodating and score a few brownie points with her.

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You have mentioned Belgian detective Hercule Poirot twice in the recent months. Though he wasn't originally from Brussels, he reminds me of the city during the heydays of art nouveau, with fantastic architecture such as Stoclet Palace. As a seasoned traveller, you surely have been to Brussels. However, and despite its cultural gems, I fear you may have left as fast as you could.

I have always been suspicious about Belgium. OK, it produced Magritte, but he never made it to the big league. The country also produced Sax, who invented the saxophone, but it is hardly an indispensable instrument. There is, of course, Tin Tin, but he was fictional. But worst of all, the name "Brussels" evokes, other than sprouts, the tyranny of the EU, with its countless greedy and bureaucratic members savouring their lunches and dinners in Michelin-starred restaurants washed down with fine wines on expense accounts. This is a country of self-indulgence by foreigners and for the Belgians, I hesitate to think what happens beyond all of their net curtains. Its veneer of respectability gives me the creeps.

If I were to pass through this country, I would scarper with speed. Maybe the only point of interest is the site of the Battle of Waterloo where Bonaparte, who was already short, was cut down to an even smaller size. This geographical coincidence seems to be the greatest contribution Belgium has made to European peace.

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What do you do if you were host at a dinner at which your guests start arguing with each other? Do you let them fight or do you intercede and try to make peace? Would you react differently if your guests were eminent people and you selfishly wished to hear them?

The best thing to do is allow your guests to carry on arguing. I always like some firm disagreements over the dinner table to liven up the food and beverage, or some interesting anecdotes, which, if told with proper embellishments, are far superior to jokes. I once had Freddie Ayer, the brilliant philosopher, and Roald Dahl, the great children's writer, come for dinner. They both boasted about their squeezes like a game of call-my-bluff. To claim decisive victory, at least in quality, Dahl told a story about sleeping one night in the bunker of The Dorchester hotel, and how he saw Ernest Hemingway two beds away, separated by a woman in between them. Of course what Dahl recalled from that night might well have been one of his vintage "Tales of the Unexpected". I simply couldn't tell. Ayer, arguably the world's most authoritative empiricist by virtue of his logical positivism, was naturally sceptical about Dahl's anecdote. But for me, the two fossils bantering for the higher status of virility was faintly sad but also quaint. That's the kind of dinner I like.

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Is black tie for funerals?

Yes, if you mean wearing a tie that is black. But not "black tie" as an ensemble, which nowadays is regarded as formal wear, usually with ghastly bows already knotted, irregular lapels, dubious waistcoats and unacceptable colour handkerchiefs over the top pocket.

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No one can afford to buy a house in London any more." Once again, rising house prices are a topic of conversation at metropolitan dinner parties. Over the past 50 years, figures from the Halifax show Greater London house prices rising relative to those in the rest of the UK by a modest but cumulatively significant 0.5 per cent per year.

But people plainly can afford to buy houses in London. House prices can be high and rising if - and only if - people can afford to pay these prices. Some people who used to be able to afford central London house prices are now unable to do so, while others who used not to be able to afford them - or chose not to afford them - can now do so. If prices are rising, it is because the latter group outnumber the former. What has changed is not housing but the backgrounds of the people who live in these homes and their sources of wealth.

Carlton House Terrace is possibly the most desirable address in London. The street overlooks The Mall, the approach road to Buckingham Palace. A house in Carlton House Terrace is at present on the market with a reported asking price of £250m. If that price is achieved, the house would be the UK's most expensive property. The current owner is thought to be a Middle Eastern prince.

Two doors away is the London residence of the Hinduja brothers, scions of the family-owned, Indian-based industrial and financial conglomerate. They have spent hundreds of millions of pounds on the most opulent of restorations. Most of the rest of the street is occupied by bodies which benefit from the favour of the freeholder, the Crown Estate. The British Academy and the Royal Society are on opposite sides of the steps leading down to The Mall. In a glorious, if incongruous, conjunction the Turf Club sits next to the Royal Society.

In the 19th century, all properties in the street were private residences. Some occupants were politicians - Lord Palmerston and William Gladstone both lived in Carlton House Terrace. So did Baron Stockmar, the shadowy counsellor to the young Queen Victoria. But the majority of residents were aristocrats whose names have faded into obscurity.

Democracy chose a different type of politician, and the power and wealth of the British aristocracy waned. In the 20th century Carlton House Terrace took on a more commercial tone. One resident was Weetman Pearson, 1st Viscount Cowdray, the architect of the Pearson Group - the company which today owns the Financial Times, but was then a global infrastructure business which built the rail tracks under New York's East River. His neighbours included George Stephen, the Scots-Canadian financier of the Canadian Pacific Railway; Harry Gordon Selfridge, who established the eponymous department store; and Lord Revelstoke, of the Baring banking family. George Nathaniel Curzon, the grandest of India's viceroys, returned from the subcontinent to become the terrace's most superior resident, although he never accomplished his real property ambition - a move to 10 Downing Street.

A home in Carlton House Terrace is the ultimate "positional good". This is a term coined by Fred Hirsch in an insightful work titled Social Limits to Growth (1976). Economic growth is associated with increased availability of most commodities, but for some the absolute supply is fixed. Beautiful landscapes, paintings by Rembrandt. Properties in Carlton House Terrace and other prize London locations such as Belgravia's Eaton Square, Kensington's Pelham Crescent, and Hampstead's Bishops Avenue. The staff needed to service grand properties are also positional goods. The positional good is one which by its nature can only be available to a few people.

The price of positional goods will normally rise faster than incomes. People aim to spend more of their income on positional goods as they become richer, but only a few can ever realise these ambitions. So such goods will always held by the people who are at that time the richest, but who these people are may vary from time to time. The range of house prices - and the availability of servants - will reflect the underlying inequality of incomes. The price of prime property in central London will be a direct function of the levels of income and wealth of the most affluent people who want to live in London.

The story of subprime central London property is more complex. The invention of motorised transport in the 19th century made possible the development of large cities, with large populations. In 1801, 1m people lived in London: in 1901, there were 6.5m. The first underground railways allowed the geographical expansion of London's inner core - the grand houses of Earls Court were a direct result. But the attractions of these houses proved shortlived. With the growth of a suburban rail network, a new word - commuter - entered the English language to describe the holder of a season ticket. The expansion of London continued as the transport network grew. In the 1950s, John Betjeman would celebrate "Metroland" - the developments to the northwest of the city made possible by the building of the Metropolitan Railway.

The street of terraced houses in which I live is considerably more modest than Carlton House Terrace but was built at about the same time, though for artisans and tradespeople rather than aristocrats and statesmen. The first occupant of my house was a carpenter who occupied the lower floors with his wife and family while their two servants huddled in attic rooms. But as the character of London changed to become a commuter city, this type of centrally located property entered a long and steady decline.

By the end of the 19th century, the house was in multiple occupation: a house painter and his family occupied the ground floor, with three rooms let to lodgers. When the architectural historian, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner surveyed London's architecture in the 1950s, he would describe the area as slummy. But not for much longer. Expansion of London's boundaries had reached its limits: a "greenbelt" constricted further expansion. The improvement in transport links came to an end; commuting to London is generally no easier or quicker today than in 1939. The supply of London houses was once more a fixed number, and London property as a whole - not just its trophy residences - became a positional good. The composition of employment in London was also changing. ***Manufacturing*** and wholesale distribution now suffered rather than benefited from a London location and moved out. For much of the postwar period, official policies encouraged that relocation. In their place, financial and business services expanded and clustered in the capital.

Another new word - gentrification - was invented to describe the resulting changes, as kitchen stoves gave way to Gaggenau appliances. The skips have long gone from my street - they have moved steadily outward from the centre, as Hackney and Stoke Newington take on a new identity as Islington East, and Kilburn becomes West Hampstead. Where gentrification has a longer history, you can identify successive layers of incomers, as on an archaeological site: most houses are occupied by people who could not now afford to buy them. Most residents now work in business services, but, in a further turn of the wheel of fortune, many of these people now struggle to afford property in central London; they are squeezed by those who acquire positions, or the money that goes with positions, from their parents. Thus, the historic rise in house prices aids the transmission of inequality through the generations. There is a certain irony in noting that now my most famous neighbour is the son of Tony Blair, the former UK prime minister.

In Carlton House Terrace, British politicians and aristocrats gave way to British businessmen and financiers. Briefly, at about the time of the second world war, reduced inequality diminished the attractions of these properties and limited the ability to find the staff to keep them going. But, as inequality again increased, and an improvement in international communications made world, rather than domestic, inequality relevant, these prime properties became havens for a global elite, and London the world's most desirable - and hence the most cosmopolitan - city. The positional good of a prime London property became a universal aspiration. A terraced house in Marylebone was a positional good when it was built in the early 19th century, and 200 years later it would be a positional good again.

The monetary rewards attached to different occupations and social positions change from one period of history to another. The houses remain, the backgrounds of their occupants change. Central London houses are always affordable. The economic and political climate determine who can afford them at any particular point in time, and that in turn determines the social complexion of the capital.

John Kay is a columnist for the Financial Times

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I have a friend - let's call her "Mrs X" - who has developed an unfortunate habit. Through years of investing her time and energy in her garden Mrs X has become a knowledgeable plantswoman and great enthusiast, a voracious reader of horticultural literature and frequent visitor to gardens great and small. The trouble is, her own plot is relatively modest in size, and long ago Mrs X's ambitions outgrew its boundaries.

Denied the acreage needed for further horticultural expression, Mrs X has instead taken the seasonal process of "editing" to extreme levels. Perennials are lifted and moved - they rarely get big or established enough to need dividing - every year, sometimes twice a year. Shrubs are not immune to her restless eye either, provided they haven't attained a size that makes them impossible to shift. The object of this exercise isn't simply to resolve any shortcomings in planting combinations. It is more a constant reinvention of the garden, to the point where it is almost unrecognisable from one year to the next, which for Mrs X is entirely the point.

Regular reinvention on such an unequivocal scale may be unusual - and potentially hazardous to one's sanity - but a desire to keep gardens fresh, dynamic and changing is not uncommon, regardless of plot size. This is where annuals and specifically "direct sown" annuals have an invaluable role to play.

The term refers to hardy annual plants that can be grown from seed sown directly into a prepared seedbed outdoors, where they are free to grow and flower, rather than sown into trays or pots in a glasshouse and then slowly hardened off ready for transplanting. The benefits are easy to measure: no specialist kit is required, no glasshouse or cold frames, no pots, trays or potting compost. After sowing there is no need for the close monitoring associated with a glasshouse environment, and limited aftercare is required apart from a little thinning out of seedlings. Watering is usually only needed at the vulnerable germination and seedling stage, and then only if the weather turns very dry. Because these are hardy annuals the risk of weather damage from late frosts is reduced too, so there is less of the anxious weather-watching associated with the planting out of pot-grown annuals.

There are also aesthetic advantages to direct sowing: scattering seed around through established plants often results in happy accidents. Just as in the wild, seeds seem to find a way of germinating in the least auspicious places, with plants emerging from patches where it would be impossible to plant a pot-grown plant.

There are two main seasons for sowing. Traditionally, late spring has been touted as the optimum time to sow, just as the soil is beginning to warm and day length is increasing. In the wild, however, the annuals from which almost all our garden varieties are derived will have set and shed their seed in late summer or early autumn. Sowing across both seasons seems to be the optimum for some annuals: an autumn sowing takes advantage of the warm soil to encourage germination by late autumn. The resulting seedlings are surprisingly robust and will make it through even cold and snowy winters, resulting in a mid-spring show of flowers - by when it is time to sow again for a midsummer display. Sowing through spring and early summer in succession keeps things bubbling along nicely until late summer. Before sowing, the soil should be dug over and raked to a fine tilth, but if this is impossible - such as when sowing between established plants - make a seed bed by applying a layer of loam and sand to the surface of the soil.

The umbellifers make a useful contribution to the hardy annual tribe. There are several to recommend for their airy flower heads. Ammi majus, from the Nile river valley, is a classy cow parsley, about 120cm tall topped with white, lacy flowers. It prefers full sun or partial light shade. The variety "Graceland" is a good one, with larger heads and strong stems that make it good for cutting. Technically a biennial or shortlived perennial, the "true" cow parsley, Anthriscus sylvestris, has a handsome purple foliage form, "Ravenswing". It gets a mention here because once established it will seed around and form a colony that will ensure a succession of flowering plants, suitable for a wild garden or meadow. Perhaps the most beautiful of the umbellifers is Orlaya grandiflora, the Minoan lace flower. At 60cm it prefers full sun and well-drained soil, and given those conditions will flower freely, producing flat clusters of long-lasting flowers that look like miniature lace-cap hydrangeas, that cut and keep well in a vase. In colder climates this is probably best left to a late spring sowing. Any of these white flowered umbellifers would make a classy counterpoint to silver-leaved foliage plants, dark-flowered salvia or metallic purple alliums.

Garden favourites such as Love-in-a-mist (Nigella damascena), Pot marigold (Calendula officinalis) and Plains coreopsis (Coreopsis tinctoria) are reliable colonisers too. Once sown they will usually reappear year after year, although it is important not to rely on their self-sowing capacities alone. Without regular topping up through a succession of sowings over a number of weeks the self-colonisers will flower and go over all too soon. Nigella is a plant that is as attractive in seed as in flower, and a succession of pale blue flowers alongside the papery, bladder-like seed heads should be the aim. Perhaps the best of all the colonisers is Eschscholzia californica, the Californian poppy. Behaving either as a perennial or annual, it will spread its filigree glaucous foliage and sunny orange flowers wherever there is sharply drained, gritty soil and plenty of sunshine. Once established, the need to resow diminishes, and the trick to keeping it flowering over a long period rests instead in dead heading, cutting back the spent flowers before they get a chance to form the distinctive, narrow seed pods. But let at least 25 per cent of the flowers go to seed if you want the colony to continue to thrive and regenerate. A broad sweep of Eschscholzia looks wonderful alongside the squirrel tail grass, Hordeum jubatum - another direct sown annual. Even the "common" cornfield weeds are worthy of consideration. The cornflower, Centaurea cyanus, has been heavily hybridised in recent years resulting in interesting colour breaks, dark purples and pinks, and a longer flowering season. This, along with varieties of Coreopsis and Tagetes, featured heavily in the annual meadows at the London 2012 Olympic Park.

Above all, direct sown annuals bring with them a somewhat haphazard aesthetic, a floral joie de vivre. In part, this must be because it is impossible to sow them in straight lines, unless one is spectacularly anal about such things, and so instead they pop up all over the place. And as so many are genuinely wild plants - or if not, first cousins of wild plants - there is something about them that touches a part of the soul other plants may not reach. They add vibrancy and movement to established planting schemes, fill empty nooks and crannies and refresh tired plantings with an injection of colour. I must post Mrs X a few packets.

Matthew Wilson is managing director of Clifton Nurseries, London

Robin Lane Fox is away

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Tesco is operating four corporate jets, despite its sales going backwards and its international empire shrinking.

Britain's biggest retailer - which is expected to report next week that underlying sales are falling in all of the countries where it operates - has also taken office space in Mayfair since Philip Clarke became chief executive and Sir Richard Broadbent became chairman in 2011.

The corporate jets and St James's office have raised eyebrows among some investors and within Tesco, which was originally known for its "pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap", mentality.

One top 10 shareholder described the corporate jets as "egregious," particularly after Tesco spent more than £1bn on its failed US business and made a U-turn on its growth plans in China.

"Shareholders have been talking to the company for a while now about some of this largesse, which stems back from a period in time when everyone thought Tesco and [former chief executive] Sir Terry Leahy and the management team walked on water," he said.

Another investor said that, even if the corporate jets and office made little difference to Tesco's financial performance, there was an issue of "perception".

Tesco operates three corporate jets stationed at the UK's Luton airport, including a Gulfstream G550, used by Mr Clarke. One of the jets, a Hawker 800, flies between the UK and central Europe, and also within central Europe.

A fourth aircraft, operated through a management company in Asia, is based in Hong Kong, and is used for travel between Tesco's businesses in the region.

The London office, which is not above a store, is used by the chairman and Tesco board members. Before it opened, Tesco directors had always made the journey to Tesco's 1960s offices in Cheshunt, north of London, to meet.

The company said: "Tesco is a FTSE-listed multinational business with 7,000 stores in 12 markets. We use only the tools which allow us to work efficiently and effectively. Aircraft allow our executive team to use their time efficiently as they travel between and within the 12 markets we operate in and the more than 70 we source from. Our headquarters is based outside London because it is more cost-effective, and we rent a small office for meetings in central London."

The developments come ahead of Tesco's third-quarter trading statement on Wednesday. Underlying UK sales are forecast by Tesco's own brokers to fall up to 1.8 per cent.

This is expected despite Mr Clarke pledging to invest £1bn to reinvigorate the domestic business after Tesco's first profit warning in decades in January 2012. Sales from stores open at least a year are also forecast to fall in Asia and central Europe.

Some senior investors are concerned that Tesco will be forced to issue another profit warning because it cannot maintain its operating margin in the face of weak sales.

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The Shrink

I recently came across a wonderful list of topics that were considered unworthy of conversation by the Buddha. He cautioned against discussing: tales of kings, robbers and ministers of state; war, terrors and battles; food and drink; clothes, beds, garlands and perfumes; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities and countries; women and heroes; gossip; tales of the dead; idle chat; legends about the creation of the land and the sea; and speculation about existence and non-existence.

In case you're worrying that your own conversation may turn out to be less than edifying, bear in mind that the Buddha was talking to and about monks, not giving general advice for lay people.

One of the items on the Buddha's list was gossip. But hasn't gossip been rescued from its bad reputation and rehabilitated? According to this view, gossip has evolved as a mechanism for social lubrication and bonding, somewhat like primate grooming. Recent research has also showed that it comes in handy as a way of warning people about dishonest others. Still, no one would deny that malicious gossip is real, harmful and to be avoided.

The Buddha's list is clearly not a viable prescription of allowed topics for conversation, otherwise we would all have to fall silent. But it could be food for thought. There's little escape from words nowadays, and even less with the advent of social media. All this talking can make you giddy. And it's hard not to feel a pressure to add your own words to the mix, to keep chatting, almost as if by not joining in you'd risk dropping out of existence.

Perhaps that's what we could question - that it's always "good to talk", as the old BT slogan would have it. Sometimes it's better to create a bit of quiet instead. To help you do this, you could pay attention to what you talk about and how you talk about it. And do remember that there's no need to feel awkward if you have nothing to contribute to a conversation not worth having.

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The Sage

It's easy - and let's admit it, quite fun - to sneer at the trivia discussed by hoi polloi. However, there is at least one advantage that talking about celebrity sex scandals has over topics such as whether free will is an illusion or artistic taste purely subjective: at least there is reasonable chance of agreeing on the right answer.

Intellectuals have always been mocked for their endless discourse on matters that more practical minds find pointless. Aristophanes sent Socrates to the clouds nearly two-and-a-half millennia ago, and that's where many have kept him and his ilk ever since.

It's not just the improbability, if not impossibility, of reaching a conclusion that makes many dismissive of theoretical questions. There's also a sense of vanity about the whole enterprise. Isn't the very definition of hubris unduly solemn adults pretending that they can even begin to fathom the deepest mysteries of existence? From this perspective, much theology looks like blasphemy - "For who has known the mind of the Lord?" as the Bible puts it.

Faced with this scepticism, some defend more academic pursuits by claiming they are more useful than they appear: philosophy, history, literary theory and the like enable us to live better lives by contributing to our understanding of self and others. True - but only up to a point. You would be hard-pressed to make this claim stand up for most work in modal logic, for example.

A better strategy might be a kind of intellectual judo, in which the force of the objection to academic inquiry is turned against the attacker. We need to embrace its lack of utility, as Wittgenstein did when he rejected Bertrand Russell's claim that philosophy expands the mind and provides a kind of liberation: "People who like philosophy will pursue it, and others won't and there is an end of it."

The value of apparently useless intellectual problems sometimes lies precisely in the fact that we do not discuss them for any other sake than their own. Like all the most precious things in life, we love them for what they are, not what they can do for us.

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The Shrink & the Sage live together in southwest England. To suggest a question, email [*shrinkandsage@shrinkandsage.com*](mailto:shrinkandsage@shrinkandsage.com)

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I believe my collection of pizza delivery boxes is the largest in the world. But to be honest, I don't think there are any other collections of pizza boxes. People just don't do this - most boxes end up in the trash. They're not collectors' items - it's like saving used tissue. But because my life revolves around pizza, to me it's a priceless collection.

I own 597 boxes and store most of them at home.

My obsession with pizza boxes grew out of my obsession with pizza. I got really into it as a kid, growing up in New Jersey. I ate your standard, suburban, New York-style pie, with low-moisture mozzarella and a tomato-based sauce. Nothing fancy. The absolute average pizza but I loved it. It was always takeout, so it always came in a box.

In college I played guitar in a rock band and I even booked our tours based on where there was good pizza. "Hmm, I've never been to Chicago. I hear they have great pizza. Let's go there." Back home, I became the go-to person whenever anyone had a question about a pizzeria. On weekends, I'd take my friends and family to pizzerias in New York, Philadelphia, Boston. Everyone wanted to go. It got to be so many people I rented a bus. After about six months of this, I decided to make it my job. I took out my savings, got a tour-guide licence and, in 2008, launched Scott's Pizza Tours.

A few years ago I went to Israel. Much of pizza and flatbread history comes from the Middle East, so it was a pizza research trip. While I was there I saw a yellow pizza box, and it blew my mind. Growing up, we had these thin paperboard boxes, white with a red drawing, maybe of a pizza or an Italian flag. That was it. When I saw this box in Israel - bright yellow with blue writing - I thought, "This is insane. They're breaking all the rules!" It was like listening to punk rock for the first time. I saw how amazing pizza boxes were and how powerful they could be as an art form. I became a serious collector. I went to Italy and brought back a ton of boxes in my suitcase. I travelled to the west coast of the US and went to 52 pizzerias in 14 days. I felt like an ***animal***.

One of my favourite boxes was designed by the artist Ed Hardy, who did a limited edition for a pizzeria in San Francisco. It's a tattoo of a bald eagle sitting on top of a pizza with a tiger on one side and a dragon on the other. I have a box that's perforated so that the pizza actually pops out of the top. You can make the box into a plane or a dinosaur, and the lid becomes an 80-piece jigsaw puzzle. On another box, the pizza maker in its centre looks exactly like George Clooney.

I hope the US is about to enter a golden age of pizza boxes. My book, Viva La Pizza: The Art of the Pizza Box, shows more than 100 box designs from around the world, and I'm hoping it'll open people's eyes to what's possible. Italy is already having its golden age - the best pizza boxes are being made there. Japan is a close second.

New York has some of the worst pizza boxes. They're almost all generic. They don't value the art here because it's not a delivery-focused market - it's more of a single-slice culture. The best boxes in the US are on the west coast.

I actually dislike eating pizza out of boxes. I love the boxes for what they represent but for transporting pizza, they're terrible. The box traps the pizza in steam, which breaks down the cardboard, which you then end up tasting. New pizza box technology exists but if a box costs a pizzeria even one cent more, it won't go for it.

I realise it's goofy to know so much about pizza boxes. It might look childish to some. But if you talk to a dentist, you want them to know everything there is to know about teeth. I treat pizza boxes the same way. They're the most under-appreciated medium of our time.

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'Viva La Pizza: The Art of the Pizza Box' is published by Melville House, £16.99

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In light of Sarah Palin's decision to write a guide to Christmas this year, the Financial Times has come up with a festive spread of its own, featuring a colourful mix of tree, home and illuminated decorations.

Julie Hassan, senior buying agent at London department store Liberty, thinks the key themes will be fun and colourful. "A bright and playful scheme is set to cheer up the homes of many this Christmas," she says. "Contrasting colours such as purple, yellow, pink and blue provide a cheerful alternative to the traditional red, green and gold." Hassan also cites a trend for ***animal***-themed baubles. "Fairytales and whimsical tree decorations will [allow] people to put a more personal stamp on their Christmas schemes this year."

Christmas in the US will be a glitzy affair, according to Emily Hull-Martin, Bloomingdale's fashion director for the home. "Gold is the hottest metallic finish at the moment in home decor, so we love mixing gold with rich reds for a luxe festive look," she says. Elegant candlesticks and tea lights are also likely to be popular this year.

For those more interested in seasonal delicacies than decoration, there is always one of Palin's festive recipes to try. Merry Christmoose Chilli, anyone? It's made from caribou burgers . . .

Woodland wonder bunting, £8, johnlewis.com

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I should make it clear at the outset that I'm nobody's vegetarian. The moral arguments around killing and eating ***animals*** are complex but I've made a sort of peace with them. I believe humans have evolved as omnivores and can and should eat other creatures; I also believe that as a species we are civilised enough that we should reduce suffering wherever possible and, once we've killed an ***animal***, respect it by cooking it well and eating it all, without waste.

Like many food lovers with this kind of approach to meat, I want to experience hunting the ***animal*** I eat yet I'm troubled by its social ramifications in the UK. Most shooting here is "driven", where reared birds are startled by beaters into flight over or past a line of guns. It requires skill, it's expensive, it has overtones of Downton-like privilege and I find this difficult. Many writers and chefs have taken the other route of deer stalking. This is more challenging than driven shooting, with long hikes and difficult manoeuvring into position for a shot but it's more expensive and, arguably, even more elitist.

What I have been looking for is a model of shooting more like that practised in the rural US and the rest of Europe. No tweed, no beaters, just a walk with a gun to shoot something delicious for the pot. It sounds so simple but the combination of land ownership, gun and game laws in the UK means that such a connection with food is an opportunity open to very few - those with land or gamekeepers. The lore and skills of this kind of shooting - the marksmanship, the tracking, the fieldcraft, the understanding of weather, ***animal*** behaviour and field butchery - are traditionally passed down and, unless you are part of that small community, difficult to get involved in.

Game shooting Chris Wheatley-Hubbard is one of the lucky ones. He grew up on a 2,500-acre estate in Wiltshire. He has had guns and ***animals*** about him all his life - apart from a stint as a graphic designer in London. Initially he learnt his craft from an older keeper and latterly trained as an APSI-certified (Association of Professional Shooting Instructors) advanced shooting instructor. Today Chris also runs bespoke courses for small groups and individuals, so I arranged to spend a couple of days with him at Boyton, the family seat. We discussed my requirements at some length: unlike a driven shoot there would be no guarantees of a kill. Instead I'd build up enough skills to go out and, if I was lucky enough to spot game, dispatch it well and responsibly.

I began by learning to walk. Chris showed me how to place my huge boots carefully so as to make minimum noise when moving through undergrowth and then led me on a half-hour silent walk along the edges of a field. It seemed odd at first, embarrassing for someone who had probably not spent 10 waking minutes in silence in 20 years, but within a short time I was adjusting to "the baseline": the sights, sounds and smells of the environment. The art of tracking is less in being able to identify a species from its footprint and more in allowing the brain's natural, deep-buried pattern-recognition software to alert you to subtle variations on the normal.

Next came a surprise. I'd expected a shotgun - the most common weapon for hunting in the UK, with a close effective range and a wide lethal spread. Instead, Chris took me to a range set up in a valley and produced a .22 rifle with a crosshair scope (telescopic sight). There are many things for which I owe thanks to my old-fashioned grammar school but I never imagined my Cadet Marksman badge would be one of them. I managed creditably, grouping five shots within 6cm at 75m range, pretty good for an out-of-practice urban hack, but then Chris turned my attention to a second target, a paper deer standing 25m further back. This time there was no convenient aiming point, just, as Chris described it, an imaginary vertical line behind the front leg, which I was to bisect halfway up the body.

I managed to get a cluster of shots in roughly the right place and we walked across the valley to examine the target. I was congratulating myself until Chris lifted the target sheet to reveal a diagram of the deer's vital organs. As a cook, my understanding of ***animal*** physiology is pretty good but this was a great deal more immediate. "A little high. You'd have damaged the lungs and possibly the spine. You really need to clear the ribs here ... and hit this area near the heart. That way the hydrostatic shock from the impact bursts blood vessels in the brain and the ***animal*** drops where it stands." To my total relief it's a clean kill but, he adds, "it could be better".

Lunch is brief and conversation revolves around "terminal ballistics" - what happens when the bullet enters the ***animal***, how it deforms, expands and damages internal organs. It's not exactly what I'd choose to discuss over a pork pie but I'm beginning to realise that the process of preparing to pull the trigger is a lot more involved than a half hour on a range.

As the afternoon light mellows it's time for the "deer run". With Chris at my shoulder I have to walk silently a route through woods and field where there will be deer-shaped targets. I am to identify each imagined ***animal***, establish that it's safe to shoot, then, staying out of what would be its sightline, get myself and the rifle into a position to take a single shot. The first target glimpsed between trees appears to be a mother with her calf so I move on. The second is a suitable ***animal*** but, against a background of brush, I can't be sure where my shot will go if it passes through or misses; another no go. Finally, through binoculars, I spot two deer close together, both suitable targets and one with a clear shot.

As Chris quietly instructs, I drop to my knees behind a rise and crawl what feels like 100m or so then drop flat on to my stomach for the final 50m, dragging myself forward on my elbows, pushing the rifle ahead of me. I am momentarily fazed as my chin narrowly avoids a crisp mound of sheep droppings but at Chris's urging I push through. My breathing is now strained, my heart thundering and my brain racing as we crest the ridge to see the target straight ahead.

As I push the rifle into position and Chris slips in the magazine I realise that everything I managed to do on the range now feels almost impossible. I can't get the scope into position to see through it; sweat is pouring into my eye. As I finally see light through the scope I can't find the damn deer. I breathe deeper and try to calm my nerves. The shape comes into view more by luck than judgment and I begin the procedure of cocking the rifle, placing my finger correctly on the trigger and counting breaths. There's a suppressed crack and the job is done.

We stand next to the target and examine the shot. Chris is pleased that it was clean, though a little high and left for perfection - a result of misjudged range and too sudden a pull at the trigger. I, on the other hand, am suddenly shaking.

The target, about the size of a large dog, has been accurately hit - I remembered most of what I'd been taught - but it felt like I'd taken a couple of minutes to sort myself out before pulling the trigger. A plywood shape is hard enough to hit but a real ***animal*** moves unpredictably and suddenly, and all the gory conversation over lunch comes into sobering perspective. Missing an ***animal*** would be humiliating and frustrating but an inaccurate hit would be catastrophic. The responsibility of making that single shot count has become very real. I talk to Chris about my worries.

"I'm really glad you're getting it," he says. "It's a huge responsibility and there are lots of unpredictable factors. Everyone who hunts will take a bad shot at some point but you train so you minimise that chance. A good shooter who makes a bad shot will go straight back to the range and practise for hours before they consider going out again."

As the sun begins to sink we set off in search of real game. I am secretly relieved at the absence of deer. I might have the philosophy squared away to my satisfaction but I'm not sure my technical skills are up to the job. The responsibility for taking a bad shot while under stress is beginning to weigh heavily then, quite suddenly, Chris spots rabbit at a distance I can barely perceive. You, like me, may have seen them in glorious abundance on motorway verges, oblivious to us, but this is not how they behave in their natural environment. Unused to cars and people and wary of predators from foxes to red kites, they occasionally pop up from their warrens but will bolt back underground at the sight or smell of a human.

The choice of the rifle suddenly makes sense - you'd never get close enough with a shotgun. For this reason I'm unprepared for a half-kilometre speed-hike, uphill and upwind of the two rabbits, the long and agonising crawl over wet, thistly, broken ground and a final slither downwards, amply lubricated by more sheep droppings, on to a ridge above the rabbits.

Again, it takes a while to settle myself and this time the targets are smaller and moving. Chris is at my shoulder, whispering quietly. "Left hand one. Wait till it turns sideways on. Brace the stock with your free hand."

"I've lost it."

"Breathe ... and find it again. Wait ... wait ... "

As I squeeze the shot, I blink. The bullet makes an odd, drum-like sound but I can see nothing through the scope.

"Reload. Move right," says Chris. "Take the second one."

The second rabbit is clear in the sight now and I feel suddenly confident - too confident. The shot kicks up dust an inch behind its tail. The rabbit seems unperturbed.

"Reload ... "

I reload and fire the four rounds remaining in the magazine, unerringly grouping them an inch behind the rabbit's tail. Once again the incorrect positioning of my trigger finger is dragging the rifle far enough offline to make a difference. At this range and on a small target, it's enough to spare the rabbit, which looks calmly around and disappears down its burrow before we can consider reloading.

As we scramble down the bank I'm surprised to find the first rabbit. A mercifully accurate shot. It's lying entirely placid with eyes wide open. There's a tiny entry wound exactly on the line and a slightly larger exit on the opposite side of its neck. "That noise [was] the shockwave as the bullet hits," says Chris. "An instant kill."

We gut and skin in the field, the messy yet oddly intimate process that somehow translates the rabbit from creature to meat. We head home and soon I'm back on more familiar territory, the butchery at the farm shop where we bone the rabbit and wrap the saddle around the chopped and seasoned leg meat to make a simple ballotine. It is literally a handful of meat and obtaining it from a live ***animal*** has been a two-day process - probably the most labour-intensive method imaginable. Yet, as I had hoped, every step has made me think more about what my decision to eat meat has meant. More particularly I realise that, as a society, we've made this rite of passage all but unattainable when, in a fairer world, it would be compulsory.

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Four Feathers Shooting School, Boyton Estate, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 0SS, [*www.ff-ruralcourses.co.uk*](http://www.ff-ruralcourses.co.uk); prices from £750 for a three-day residential weekender; prices for bespoke courses on request

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At Walmart's annual meeting last year Doug McMillon took the stage and made a cocktail. He poured a can of Coca-Cola into a glass of cumin, black pepper and lemon juice to make an Indian masala coke. "Can you start to imagine what that tastes like?" he asked.

Mr McMillon, head of Walmart's international business, needed a guinea pig: "Where is Mike Duke?" he asked. "Mike, c'mere." Mr Duke, his boss and Walmart's chief executive, came forward, took a long slurp, and declared "fantastic" - unconvincingly. As he returned to his seat, Mr McMillon said: "You know that taste you have in your mouth right now? That taste is gonna be there for about 48 hours." The audience of Walmart employees burst into laughter.

The moment was typical of Mr McMillon, who is renowned as a soft-spoken southern charmer - but one with a hard edge. That day he came across like a precocious teenager having fun at the expense of his ponderous father. Now it is time for him to take over the family shop. Walmart said this week that Mr McMillon would become its chief executive on February 1.

The 47-year-old is very much a child of Walmart, where he has worked for nearly three decades, schooled in the folksy yet ruthless ways of its founder Sam Walton. He grew up in Walmart's home state of Arkansas and is a favourite of the children of "Mr Sam". Their near 50 per cent stake in Walmart gives them the final say on big decisions at head office in Bentonville, as well as a $130bn fortune.

Mr McMillon will be taking over a business that, with sales of $469bn last year, ranks as the world's biggest company, but he will inherit a raft of challenges. Walmart has been too slow to change in the US, where its sales are falling, and too hasty overseas, where he has increased annual revenues by nearly $37bn but made mistakes in a rush to expand in China and Brazil. He is also likely to be in charge at the conclusion of a corruption probe that began with bribery allegations in Mexico but has extended to Brazil, China and India.

Mr McMillon first worked for Walmart as a teenage warehouse hand in the summer of 1984. He met his wife Shelley at another summer job at the Bank of Bentonville. In 1990, while he was studying for his MBA at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, he rejoined Walmart as a trainee buyer at store 894.

Robert Morris, a friend at the time, recalls winning a church basketball tournament with Mr McMillon. "He was literally one of those guys everyone liked. He had it all. He was good looking, good at sports, he was smart, he had great work ethic," he says. "All the guys loved him and all the girls loved him too."

Mr McMillon moved to Walmart headquarters in 1991. Arriving then, the year before Mr Walton died when he was still chairman, gave him first-hand Mr Sam stories that Mr Duke, a later arrival, never had. On his first day, Mr McMillon found a note on his desk complaining that fishing line at Kmart was cheaper than Walmart's. He handed it to his boss, who reacted with horror: "This is from Sam Walton. Have you fixed it?" The lesson, according to Mr McMillon, was to pay attention to detail and act with urgency.

He rose through the ranks mostly as a merchant picking Walmart products. Then in 2006 he took charge of Sam's Club, Walmart's buy-in-bulk warehouse store, before becoming chief of its international business in 2009.

Mike Cockrell, a former executive who worked for him in India, says that Mr McMillon set about visiting the most important markets - and brought his wife and two sons. "It sort of humanised him in all of the countries. And it gave his family a good understanding of what his job was. The reason he's going to be gone a lot."

On the job Mr McMillon is deliberate and decisive, Mr Cockrell adds. "He's got high standards for people that work with him or around him. He's got a very low tolerance for people who make errors - and that is a Walmart thing. He'll allow you to fail once. You don't want to make the same mistake twice."

Walmart's critics say it underpays its staff, a charge the retailer rejects. John Marshall of the United Food and Commercial Workers union says: "The jury is out on Doug McMillon." The optimistic view is that he will do things differently. "The cynical view is that the choice of McMillon, who has been the heir apparent for many years, represents a continuation of Bentonville's rigidly anti-worker philosophy."

Cameron Smith, a Bentonville headhunter who works with Walmart and its suppliers, says Mr McMillon is one of the few genuine "keepers of the culture". That moniker is often applied to Don Soderquist, an executive who became Mr Walton's standard bearer (and wrote that he founded the company on "principles found in the Bible"). When Mr Smith shared a table with both men this year, he says, "I reached over and snapped a picture because I thought, wow, this is past and future".

Leslie Dach, who stepped down this year as a Walmart executive, says you can believe in the culture and also push for modernisation. He stresses that Mr McMillon has done both. Analysts say Walmart needs to change in the US because its giant Supercenters are getting old as shoppers turn to convenience stores and ecommerce. In several emerging markets, Walmart is yet to crack the right combination of pricing, products, store design and location.

At this year's annual meeting, Mr McMillon had his boss performing again. Calling Mr Duke on stage, he said: "We've never seen him demonstrate his athletic ability." He had brought a set of football goalposts guarded by a Brazilian keeper and wanted Mr Duke to take a penalty kick. Mr Duke had other ideas, bringing in a ringer to take the shot. "That's not right," Mr McMillon complained. Mr Duke's stand-in missed the goal, blazing the ball high over the bar (he was English). Sam Walton's children need Mr McMillon to be a surer shot.

The writer is US retail correspondent

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As December arrives, the filming and production of Christmas specials is in full swing. Last year I agreed to humiliate myself beyond belief by appearing on Christmas University Challenge. This year, surely, it would not be possible to show myself up still further. But indeed it was. My manager, a Prominent Theatrical Agent, suggested that I participate in the Christmas series of Come Dine with Me. Why ever not?, I thought.

A confession. When I agreed to do the programme, I had never seen it. I still hadn't seen it when we started filming. For those of you similarly unacquainted with the show, the format is a competition that runs over five nights. Contestants take turns to dine at each other's homes. Each evening is then scored, taking in the food, the hospitality and any entertainment. The prize is a £1,000 donation to charity, which seems to me worthy of effort.

Besides, how difficult could it be? A few evenings - albeit ones requiring a different camera-friendly outfit each night - of going to people's houses for dinner plus a day at home cooking, followed by an evening entertaining people I might otherwise never have met.

Once I had signed up, I started to reflect on what I had taken on. You do not learn who your fellow guests are until the first dinner. I knew that the others would be drawn from the world of entertainment and sport and that there was a good chance that I - someone who would always choose The Economist over Hello! - might not recognise some of them. I also knew that guests usually arrive with a gift for the host. But what to give someone you have never met?

My first concern when I embarked on the project was that four total strangers and a TV crew were going to be visiting my house. Naturally, we started Operation Clean-up: how is it that I have accumulated so much stuff? "Stuff" just appears everywhere - it seems almost to breed. I really admire people who manage not only clean-desk policies but clean-house policies; alas, I am not one of them.

My second concern was what I was going to cook. I almost never don an apron these days: Mr M is the Chef Laureate. Could I possibly outsource the cooking to him or to the pub next door? No, I could not.

My fellow contestants were Rebecca Adlington, the Olympic gold medallist swimmer, Jennifer Ellison, the actress and singer, Alex Carter, the soap actor and radio presenter, and the very handsome Rav Wilding, a former policeman in Peckham who now presents crime and action shows.

At times, I felt like I had landed from Mars. Four out of five of us had Wikipedia entries; I was not one of them. Four out of five of us left school at 16; I was not one of them. Four out of five of us did not have a PAYE job; I was not one of them. Three out of five of us had a tattoo; I was not one of them.

The others were also very familiar with celebrity reality shows: Ellison had won Hell's Kitchen in 2004 and made the quarter finals of last year's Dancing On Ice; Wilding was in Strictly Come Dancing in 2009 and won 71 Degrees North in 2011; and Adlington went almost straight from my dining room to Australia to take part in I'm a Celebrity . . . Get Me Out of Here! I am old enough to be the mother of every one of them, just. But we all got on really well and in my companions I recognised the energy, work ethic and enthusiasm for life that I have myself.

I cooked venison, a seasonal favourite of mine. Who won? You will have to tune in to find out; the show will probably go out the week before Christmas. But I won't be watching: our family will be in Australia, celebrating my mother-in-law's 80th birthday. This will be just as scary as Come Dine with Me, presenting yet another occasion for which one must buy a special present and dress up for a dinner. I may well be in for another humiliation - but at least it won't be on national TV.

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One of the world's strangest astronomical observatories, based on a cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice, has opened a new window on the universe. The $270m IceCube facility at the South Pole has started to detect high-energy cosmic neutrinos - subatomic particles that reach Earth from deep space.

Ordinary telescopes look at incoming photons (light particles) at various wavelengths, from radio through visible to X-rays and gamma rays. IceCube, however, sees neutrinos, which stream across the universe in unimaginable quantities but are extremely hard to detect because, unlike photons, they hardly ever interact with ordinary matter. They carry no electric charge and very little mass.

The US-led IceCube consortium chose the inhospitable polar location to maximise the chance of observing cosmic neutrinos. They melted holes in the ice cap and lowered 5,160 light detectors to depths of between 1,500m and 2,000m beneath the surface.

Although trillions of neutrinos travel unscathed through the observatory every second, a precious few arrive at exactly the right angle to hit an atom in the ice. This collision generates electrically charged particles which radiate light that is picked up by the detectors. Then computers calculate the energy and incoming direction of the neutrino from the pattern and intensity of the light emitted.

(A similar method, with detectors buried in deep mines rather than Antarctic ice, is being used - so far without success - to identify the more elusive particles of "dark matter" that pervade the universe, according to cosmologists' confident predictions.)

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&gt; In a paper in Science last week, the IceCube team said that they had detected 28 high-energy neutrinos coming from beyond the solar system over two years. Lower-energy neutrinos reach us in vast numbers from the sun and also from the interaction between cosmic rays and Earth's upper atmosphere.

These 28 neutrinos are too small a sample to derive any conclusions about what produced them, but whatever it is must generate staggeringly high energies. Two of the detected neutrinos had more energy than a fly in flight, packed into a single subatomic particle.Likely sources include supernovae - exploding stars - and material being sucked into huge black holes.

The great advantage of neutrinos as astronomers' probes is that they travel in absolutely straight lines from their source without being deflected by magnetic fields or absorbed by matter. They escape more readily than photons from, say, the core of a supernova.

"It is gratifying to finally see what we have been looking for," says Francis Halzen of the University of Wisconsin and IceCube principal investigator. "This is the dawn of a new age of astronomy."

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Resurrection plants: designed to survive

The plant-breeding industry is making a big effort to develop crop varieties that are more tolerant of drought - through both conventional techniques and genetic manipulation. Few modifications would do more to extend world ***agriculture*** than enabling crops to grow in really dry conditions.

For Jill Farrant, professor of plant physiology at the University of Cape Town, the answer lies in "resurrection plants". Most plants die when they lose 10 to 45 per cent of the water in their tissues; resurrection plants can survive for years with 95 per cent water loss and then spring back to life within a day or two of rehydration.

"Only about 350 plants - 0.1 per cent of the total number of species in the world - can tolerate extreme water loss and then revive on rehydration, and 90 per cent of them occur in southern Africa," says Farrant.

Resurrection plants are not edible, however. "Their leaves are very bitter," says Farrant. "No ***animals*** will eat them." So she is investigating the molecular and systems biology of resurrection plants with a view to using them as a source of genes to transfer to staple crops such as maize.

Resurrection plants switch on a series of specific genes to protect their tissues as they dry out. Normal plants have some similar genes but these are only active in their seeds, which can often survive desiccation for many years.

"Resurrection plants shut down photosynthesis and curl up their leaves to minimise exposure to light," Farrant says. "They also make sunblocking pigments to protect themselves. With maize, I want to increase the amount of sunblock pigments in the leaves, but it would not be feasible to make maize fold its leaves in drought."

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New light on Michelangelo

The five million tourists who crowd into the Sistine Chapel every year to see Michelangelo's ceiling will have a far better view from next February - the 450th anniversary of the artist's death - when the Vatican switches on a new lighting system to match the illumination to the paintings.

The current lighting system, based on 1980s technology, has conventional spotlights and halogen projectors fitted with plastic covers to absorb ultraviolet light that might damage the paint. This bathes much of the ceiling in a low-contrast twilight that fails to bring out the colours in Michelangelo's masterpiece.

The replacement LED (light emitting diode) system will enable visitors "to experience the art in a completely new diversity of colour", says Osram, the German lighting company that developed it in collaboration with European universities and with EU research funding. Light levels will be 10 times higher than today - 50-100 lux rather than 5-10 lux - while both energy consumption and ultraviolet radiation levels will be cut.

The 7,000 individual LEDs have a spectrum that is tuned to suit Michelangelo's paint pigments, which were analysed by colour experts at Pannonian University in Hungary. The artist is believed to have mixed his colours in daylight rather than by candlelight or torchlight.

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Predicting height through DNA

Forensic scientists are gradually gathering data to help determine the physical appearance of unknown criminals from genetic material left behind at a crime scene. A study in the Netherlands shows that scientists can now predict with reasonable accuracy whether someone is tall on the basis of DNA alone.

The researchers looked at 180 DNA variants associated with height in a Dutch population sample including 770 very tall people and 9,000 normal controls. Predicting height on the basis of these genes gave an accuracy of 0.75 on a scale from 0.5 (random prediction) to 1.0 (complete accuracy).

"The achieved accuracy is approaching practical relevance in paediatrics and forensics," the scientists conclude in a paper in the journal Human Genetics. Although forensics may be the main application of the work, paediatricians would also benefit from a genetic test that would predict the adult height of infants with parents of abnormal stature, to help decide whether to administer hormone treatment.

Manfred Kayser of Erasmus University ***Medical*** Centre in Rotterdam, the study leader, says: "Although the achieved DNA-based prediction accuracy for tall stature is still somewhat lower than we previously established for eye colour, hair colour and age, I expect that upcoming new knowledge on height genetics will further increase the accuracy in predicting tall stature, and eventually the full range of body height, from DNA."

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. . .

Kantha Hottie Cover

£29, toast.co.uk

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The line-up: leather

Ally Capellino Specials

For the Christmas season British label Ally Capellino, best known for its beautifully made leather and waxed cotton bags, has issued a set of limited edition "Specials". These include the "Kodak" (£65), an alluringly old-fashioned collared camera strap made from sturdy bridle leather. There is a slimmer "Ilford" strap too (£55) as well as cushions, umbrellas and purses.

allycapellino.co.uk

Autoban Sleepy Rocking Chair

This chair by Istanbul-based design studio Autoban features a base and arms made from a single piece of wood; it's available in chestnut, walnut, oak and ash. Autoban also offers a choice of leathers (as pictured, in black) and fabrics. Available from the new Staffan Tollgard Design Store off Chelsea Embankment in London - a showcase for the designer's handpicked pieces.

From £1,818, tollgard.co.uk

Loop Mirror

Paul Blease studied ceramic design at Central St Martin's and has an MA in industrial design but his extremely popular Loop Mirror shows his elegant sleight of hand for home furnishings. The mirror comes suspended from a wooden peg with a leather strap that is now available in a small rainbow of colours, from Bordeaux to Royal Blue. The frame is available in walnut or ash.

From £140, beingblease.com or fao-shop.com

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Henrietta Lovell, 42, travels the world to source tea direct from farmers for the Rare Tea Company, which she founded in 2004. She supplies exclusive blends to The Fat Duck, Noma and St John, among others.

. . .

What was your childhood ambition?

To fly. Not in an aeroplane - I thought I could learn to fly myself.

Public school or state school? University or straight into work?

Public school: a boarding school in Oxford and two day schools in London. Then I studied philosophy at Edinburgh University. I loved it, though I wish I'd had a slightly more studious attitude.

Who was or still is your mentor?

No one person, but there are many friends I admire and turn to for advice.

How physically fit are you?

Fighting fit.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

Neither - I think it's tenacity.

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&gt;

How politically committed are you?

Very - though not party politically committed. I'm an ambassador for the International Festival for Business in Liverpool next year, to encourage UK exports. I think that's the way we're going to move on as a nation. I'm also very committed to our partners in the second and third worlds, and to working fairly with the farmers. Working directly with them means that you can have a collaborative relationship rather than an exploitative one.

Do you consider your carbon footprint?

Absolutely. I think it's a mistake to leave these considerations to governments - business people need to take responsibility.

Do you have more than one home?

No. One tiny little one.

What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?

A secret day when the world stops, everyone else is in suspended animation and I don't have to try to keep up or catch up.

What's your biggest extravagance?

Going to good restaurants. I love cocktails, I love food and I'm greedy.

In what place are you happiest?

In bed in the morning when I have my first cup of tea. I tiptoe off to the kettle with my eyes still closed, pour the tea in bed and get adjusted to the world.

What ambitions do you still have?

I want people to appreciate good tea the way they appreciate good wine and I'm not there yet. People understand wine and don't mind paying a bit more for something beautifully crafted and delicious. If people felt the same way about tea, people on tea farms would thrive.

If I can make people appreciate tea, it will change the world.

What drives you on?

Caffeine!

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

I haven't achieved anything great yet.

What has been your greatest disappointment?

That I can't fly.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would she think?

"Blimey, that really does look like hard work." I don't think I knew what hard work was when I was 20.

If you lost everything tomorrow, what would you do?

Go and live in a bothy in the Highlands and maybe work in a pub, pulling pints.

Do you believe in assisted suicide?

Yes, absolutely.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

No, but that doesn't worry me. I love the poem by Edna St Vincent Millay: "My candle burns at both ends/It will not last the night/But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends/It gives a lovely light!" My life is very busy and adventurous and at the end it will be a nice rest.

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

Ten. I have an optimistic outlook.

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Two men carried out the "cowardly and callous" murder of soldier Lee Rigby, running him over by car and then trying to decapitate him, with one witness describing the actions "like a butcher attacking a joint of meat", prosecutors have alleged.

Michael Adebolajo, 28, and Michael Adebowale, 22, have been accused of the murder of Rigby near the Woolwich barracks in southeast London. The men, who are being tried by a jury at the Old Bailey, deny the charges against them.

Prosecutor Richard Whittam QC, opening the case, told the court that "the circumstances of his death are shocking".

The court was shown graphic CCTV footage of the moment the men's car allegedly mowed down the soldier. It was later shown clips of his body in the middle of the road. Some of Rigby's relatives left the courtroom close to tears as the footage was played.

The jury was told that on May 22, the two defendants drove a Vauxhall Tigra car straight at Rigby as he walked across the road in civilian clothes, wearing a Help for Heroes hoodie top and carrying a camouflage backpack.

Mr Whittam told the jury the two men then got out of the car armed with a meat cleaver and knives and attacked the motionless body of the soldier. He was "repeatedly stabbed" and the prosecutor claimed it appeared that "Michael Adebolajo made a serious and almost successful attempt to decapitate him with multiple blows to his neck made with the meat cleaver".

At the same time as Mr Adebolajo used the meat cleaver, Mr Adebowale was using a knife to stab and cut at Rigby's body, Mr Whittam alleged.

The prosecutor told the court that one witness, Gary Perkins, had described the actions as being "like a butcher attacking a joint of meat".

Another witness, Thomas Seymour, described that he believed one man "was trying to cut the victim's head off", Mr Whittam recounted.

He added that Amanda Bailey, another witness, had told how the driver of the car "repeatedly hacked at the right side of his neck just below the jaw line".

The court heard that the two men dragged Rigby's body into the road because they wanted members of the public to see what they had done.

The jury was also shown footage of Mr Adebolajo with bloodied hands, who could be heard saying: "The only reason why we've killed this man today, is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers."

A letter containing religious references was also handed by Mr Adebolajo to one woman at the scene.

The jury was told that members of the public behaved with "bravery and decency" and one woman tried to stroke the lifeless body of the soldier "to provide some comfort and humanity to what had unfolded".

The suspects then moved towards a police car as it arrived at the scene, which was within yards of a primary school, prosecutors said.

Mr Adebolajo and Mr Adebowale both deny one count of murder and one of conspiracy to murder a police officer. They also face a charge of attempted murder of a police officer, which they also deny.

The trial continues.

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I have become my Uncle Cyril. The moment was bound to come and now it has. I should be clear at this point that there is nothing wrong with Uncle Cyril or any of the sundry "aunts and uncles" that comprised the key members of that universally recognisable group, the old friends of your parents.

These so-called aunts and uncles were probably no more than 40 when I became aware of them but they were unarguably part of a different era. Naturally they were all at my wedding, where they sat with the other oldies at the oldies' table, until halfway through the evening the band struck up some oldies' music and all of them suddenly got up and danced in an oldie way.

Anyway, last weekend marked my evolution as I enjoyed my first wedding as an oldie - the precise definition being someone about whose presence the happy couple are utterly indifferent, part of the crowd that at least one of them refers to as the "hangers-on". To be fair, there is a second cousin-ish bond between the bride and my wife but, fundamentally, we were in the "friends of my parents" cohort. It was, I should say, a lovely, warm, joyful affair but we were distinctly aware that, as people began to coalesce into groups, we were in the one that knew none of the couple's friends. As to the groom, I'm fairly sure that he would still struggle to pick me out in a police line-up.

Admittedly the boundaries between the generations have slipped enough for the divide to be less marked than it was at my own wedding. For one thing, a key facet of being in the oldie crowd is demonstrating that you are still young enough not to be. In fact, now that I think about it, showing you are still young enough has been a feature of a number of recent parties. You have the 50th birthday parties where everyone pretends they are still 40, and 40th birthday parties where everyone pretends they are still 20. The latter are often themed evenings - Seventies or Eighties nights, where everyone tries to squeeze into the kind of clothes they were wearing 20 years earlier. (Who knew flares were so comfortable?) Happily, I can still attend fancy-dress parties as one of the Blues Brothers; it's just that there is no longer any pretending I'm the Dan Aykroyd character.

But at least at these events we are all in the same boat. It is different at weddings. The cool kids do not want to be in the way when a herd of middle-aged relatives stampede on to the floor to dance Gangnam-style. You see the teens and twentysomethings melting away to smirk by the bar. At least the oldies of my youth could dance. They knew how to jive and swing. We only know comedy dances and how to make the letters of the YMCA. On the upside, however, it clearly alarms the spawn; the boy has already begun asking us to refuse invitations to receptions that he is attending.

Still, the hosts at the wedding were nothing if not considerate and did their best to cater for us. There can surely be no other explanation for why the band suddenly launched into Dire Straits' "Walk of Life" - a fine song but not one you expect to find on any self-respecting millennial's playlist.

There are worse fates at weddings, however. At least we were not on the miscellaneous table, among the disparate group of guests who are not part of any particular crowd and who open all conversations with "So how do you know ?"

Of course, there will be weddings of closer relatives where we are on less of an outer ring. But standing at the bar on Sunday night happily singing along to a song recorded before either of the couple was even born, I recognised that I had indisputably passed one more milestone on the journey towards decrepitude. I have hit the level at which you remain until you are so old that your mere presence is a minor miracle and you are singled out in the groom's speech for a special mention just by dint of not yet being dead. You may be ancient, wheelchair-bound and afflicted with umpteen complaints but at least you are relevant. It's something to look forward to, I suppose.

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We were talking about things that made us anxious, as groups of doctors sometimes do. "My fear," said my colleague, a GP registrar, "is that I will see someone for 10 minutes, in between the nail infection and the bad back and the odd-looking mole and the cough - and she will be the one who is really in trouble. And I'm going to miss it. And then she will go off somewhere and kill herself." My colleague used to be a surgeon. "I could sit on an abdominal pain [ie wait and see], and feel confident I was right: this was appendicitis, this probably wasn't, this needed a little more time to evolve. And if you were in doubt, you could always give them a Swann-Morton scan [Swann-Morton is a Sheffield ***manufacturer*** of surgical tools: this is local slang for performing an operation]. But with mental health I just can't get a feel for how much danger they're in."

There are obvious pathways to diagnosis: history, examination, investigation. But softer skills are also vital. You must be able to recognise when something is serious. This apparently intuitive gift is often just the ability to summarise the facts and apply them to the appearance of the patient: the so-called "end of the bed test". You can tell your colleagues "he doesn't look right" and everyone knows exactly what you mean. With experience you learn to identify the sick, or those in danger of becoming sicker. But what kind of informed glance can we give our depressed patients at an appointment lasting just a few minutes?

In Britain, GPs train by rotating through a mixture of jobs in general practice and hospital specialities. There is no set roster of posts; and the hospitals must meet their staffing needs, which influences the jobs you are given. You may or may not do a rotation in obstetrics, or paediatrics, or ENT. And it is easily possible to qualify without ever having held a psychiatric post - your experience of serious psychiatric illness may well be limited to a few weeks' internship at ***medical*** school. Nice states that one in three GP consultations has a mental-health element and 90 per cent of mental-health problems are treated in primary care. When you start consulting in this unfamiliar field you can feel like a cat without whiskers.

Which is why you need to become comfortable with the tools, even if some of them are blunt. You need to know what to ask, and how to phrase it, and how to react to the reply. And you must find out if your patient is thinking of hurting himself or herself, by saying something like, "Do you have any thoughts about harming yourself?"

The first time you ask this, the question seems to hang between you. "I shouldn't have said that," your non-***medical*** brain thinks. You feel sick with nerves. Not only have you infringed a taboo, the private space of someone's anguish, but also you worry that you've given them an idea. After a few years of consultation, it becomes inconceivable that you wouldn't ask. Where else can someone confide? And how can they tell you anything - especially something so painful - if you don't give them the explicit space in which to do it, or take away the stigma by offering the thought first? The question is there in the PHQ-9 (the questionnaire GPs use to monitor the severity of depression - usually unfeelingly administered by handing the patient a printout and asking them to tick off their responses). Avoiding painful topics is bad practice, not to mention medicolegally indefensible. Making things better is a whole other subject.

Sophie Harrison is a hospital doctor in South Yorkshire

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I recently gave a talk at a large venue to nearly 1,000 people. It seemed to go well but who am I to judge? The experience of giving a speech is radically different from the experience of listening to one. An adrenalin-drenched emotional rollercoaster for a nervous speaker may nevertheless be unbearably tedious for the listeners. A superbly honed performance may produce a sense of suspense, surprise and delight for the audience; the result of many hours of rehearsal and repetition for the speaker. Yet it can be very hard indeed for the speaker to know what worked and what didn't.

Audience comments aren't much help, either. People are polite, and they know that giving a speech is difficult, so a handshake and a "well done" could mean anything from "you moved me to tears" to "you bored me to tears". A speaker can float through talk after talk in a warm bath of gently encouraging remarks.

On this particular day, though, I was in for less of a warm bath, more of a bracing shower. The Geoffrey Boycott of personal financial advisers was in the audience - a tall Yorkshireman with lots of unvarnished opinions that he felt duty-bound to share with me in the lobby afterwards.

"For a start, I kept wanting to offer you my tie. Next time, wear one. And your shoes - I notice things like that." He gestured towards my evidently-slightly-too-comfortable footwear.

"But that's not what I wanted to tell you," he continued. I waited, a little bemused. "Your first slide, instead of just telling us that it was John Maynard Keynes, you could have asked, 'Does anyone know who this is? Anyone?' It just gets your audience a bit more involved. I teach public speaking, you see."

I nodded and thanked him for the suggestion but the flow of comments was relentless. "Don't get me wrong, I liked it. But then, what you could have done, was "

As a piece of rhetorical advice, it was too much "public speaking for beginners" to take entirely seriously. But the conversation was an absolute masterclass in how to give feedback: arresting, friendly, frank - and above all specific. My self-appointed speaking coach had identified a set of particular points he wanted done differently, and listed them clearly, with reasons, examples and the occasional word of encouragement.

Such feedback is standard in certain environments - Olympic coaches, editors on deadline and school teachers all provide focused constructive feedback if they're any good. But it is rare for criticism to be quite so practical: it's usually vague and verging on flattery or cruelty.

An alternative is the "praise sandwich", a thin but chewy sliver of specific feedback, squeezed between two thick, doughy slabs of praise. This seems like a common sense way to combine criticism with kindness, but it is not always helpful. The economist Richard Thaler once posited the idea that we practise "hedonic editing" - lumping together good and bad news to make ourselves feel better. (An example: why fret that I lost my wallet, when my house gained thousands of pounds in value just this month?) Hedonic editing allows us to take the rough with the smooth; but that makes it a dangerous way to process critical comments. It helps us feel better but it doesn't help us perform better.

Yet there's no use blaming the critics for being too vague: they're vague because they know that specific criticism is not always welcome. I have taken to seeking out specific suggestions for improvement, when I can muster the courage.

It's draining to ask for such comments. It is also difficult to provide them: if you ask people to think hard about something you should have done differently, they will often be lost for words. But there are certain, glorious exceptions. If they don't buttonhole you in the lobby, they're worth seeking out.

'The Undercover Economist Strikes Back', by Tim Harford, is published by Little, Brown

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Can there be a worse musical experience than Nicole Scherzinger trilling "Memory" from Cats with the Il Divo boys doing their swelling-chest, tightly smiling, pop-operatic business alongside, all set to an arrangement so sugary that you feel an urgent need to wash out your ears and brush your teeth afterwards?

As it happens, yes, there is a worse musical experience. It's Il Divo turning "You'll Never Walk Alone", from Rodger and Hammerstein's Carousel, into the most gaudy and overblown outburst of decibels in the history of human singing.

Il Divo

A Musical Affair

(Syco)

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Emerging from the nocturnal Finnish winter are the jolly young men of Beastmilk whose debut album contains such sidesplitters as "The Wind Blows Through Their Skulls" and "Death Reflects Us".

Those guys! They describe their style as "apocalyptic post-punk", which proves an accurate enough designation for the gloomy riffage of "Nuclear Winter" in which singer Kvohst intones "There's no future" in the deep tones of a 1980s goth who has just been told the local chemist has run out of black eyeliner.

Beastmilk

Climax

(Svart Records)

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It's the perfect commission for British Sea Power: a soundtrack to a documentary of archive footage about Britain's relationship with the sea.

The resulting recording, which comes with a DVD of Penny Woolcock's film From the Sea to the Land Beyond, finds the Brighton band toning down the bombast for a more muted, elegiac style, all gently swelling guitars and hypnotically tugging rhythms, lowing trumpets transmitting a sense of nostalgia for a lost way of life like foghorns in the mist.

British Sea Power

From the Sea to the Land Beyond

(Rough Trade)

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bEEdEEgEE looks like a talented toddler's first attempts to touch type. In fact it stands for the initials of Brian DeGraw, keyboardist with New York experimentalists Gang Gang Dance, here making his solo debut. An intriguing sprawl it turns out to be too.

Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor lends his tender croon to the very Hot Chippy "(FUTD) Time of Waste" while CSS singer Lovefoxxx crops up on the brooding electro-ballad "Flowers". "Bricks", with its mix of ghostly rave vocals, stop-start beats and fluid bass, sums up both the busyness of DeGraw's imagination and his ability to channel it productively.

bEEdEEgEE

SUM/ONE

(4AD)

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Financial Times: Last night [Tuesday] you gave an important speech about the economy; the dire state of the economy. What are your plans to revive the economy and were you shocked by the state of economy when you took office?

President Hassan Rouhani: This government has inherited serious economic problems. Although we witness both [economic] stagnation and inflation in the country, we are very hopeful about the future of the country's economy. This is not only my view. My economic team holds a similar view that we can tackle economic problems within a short period of time.

The reason for our hope is that we have been able to curb the fast growth of inflation to some extent over the past three months. I think [point-to-point] inflation has gone down from 43 per cent to 36 per cent. This is a good sign and we will continue this path through two ways of curbing liquidity and improving the business atmosphere.

On the recession, the economic growth rate in 1391 [the Iranian year that ended on March 20 2013] was minus 5.8 per cent, which we will try to pull up to zero by the end of Esfand [the Iranian month that ends on March 20 2014]. In the next [Iranian] year, the economic team has predicted positive growth. Meanwhile, the Geneva [nuclear] agreement has created a positive atmosphere in the economic field and this atmosphere will further improve with the implementation of the agreement.

FT: Does your forecast depend on the lifting of economic sanctions and how important is it for the Iranian economy for sanctions to be lifted?

HR: No. If you go through my [economic] report, you see that under the existing sanctions we have managed to lower inflation. Under the existing sanctions, we have predicted that our economic growth rate will be positive next [Iranian] year. But at the same time if sanctions are lifted or eased, we can naturally see its impacts on the economy.

FT: The interim nuclear deal is very important for mutual trust between Iran and the rest of the world. What can Iran do to reassure people in Washington and Congress that you really want a deal, you don't want to build nuclear weapons? And do you have a red line when it comes to the size of the low-level uranium enrichment programme?

HR: The nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran as has been repeatedly said will be purely for peaceful purposes. The reason is that all our nuclear activities are under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As you know, all our nuclear sites are being constantly inspected with IAEA cameras. And as a matter of principle, our doctrine has no room for weapons of mass destruction. How much we will expand [uranium] enrichment or as you put it how big the size is going to be will depend on our needs for nuclear fuel.

You know that we have completed other parts in Iran to make fuel rods and with the plan that we have given to the IAEA, almost from now on whatever [uranium] is enriched will be converted into fuel rods for the [Tehran Research] Reactor.

FT: Is dismantling nuclear facilities in Iran a red line for your government?

HR: 100 per cent.

FT: Obviously this will depend on the future agreement but can you envisage a resumption of bilateral relations with America? Is Iran politically and psychologically ready for such a move? And we shouldn't forget Britain, the smaller fish.

HR: Regarding the US, we need to decrease tensions at this stage and create mutual trust step by step. The problems created over 35 years cannot be resolved over a limited time. The best test to see whether we are capable of building trust or not is this nuclear issue.

If the first steps taken in Geneva are implemented carefully and precisely, it would mean that we have taken one step forwards towards trust. What I witnessed in New York was a bit of change in the atmosphere compared with the past. I felt in my meetings with intellectuals, university professors and [members of] think-tanks that the [presidential] election has had a lot of impacts.

But as for "the small fish" you mentioned, the situation is very different. We have had relations with the British government that were hugely downgraded under certain conditions.

After [Iran's presidential] election, some steps to improve ties have been taken. In my telephone conversation with Mr [David] Cameron last week, I had a feeling that the two sides were willing to move step by step towards better relations.

FT: Are you ready perhaps in the future to invite President Obama to Tehran? What do you make of him in terms of a political reformer figure?

HR: In our telephone conversation [in September], I found him to be someone with very polite and smart language. As I said earlier, Iran-US problems are very complicated and cannot be resolved over a short period of time. Despite the complications, there has been an opening over the past 100 days, which can later widen.

FT: The nuclear talks are a touchstone and mutual trust is building. Also, your election signalled a change. But there are sceptics in countries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia and conservatives in Washington and in Congress who say we are still very worried about Iran's presence in Syria, its support of Hizbollah. How far can you build trust when you still have those problems, when there is mistrust over Iran's foreign policy?

HR: On Syria, a major concern is the presence of terrorist groups on Syrian soil. This should worry all [countries]. I basically consider the continuation of the bloodshed and civil war in Syria to be against the region's stability. For this reason, I am currently in negotiations with regional and western countries over the future of Syria. We are doing our best to help put an end to the civil war in Syria and for all terrorists to leave Syria. This will depend on the negotiations between the Syrian government and the opposition to pave the way for holding free elections. Whatever the Syrian people wish for in the election, we all have to surrender to.

FT: Are you involved quietly in negotiations with the Americans and with western powers regarding Syria?

HR: Not with the US. But [we are in talks] with Europeans. If Iran participates in the Geneva II talks [a forthcoming peace conference on Syria], it will naturally talk to all members who will be present there.

FT: You are said to be a natural optimist. But you have to be pretty optimistic if you think Bashar al-Assad is going to step down from power in a free and fair election.

HR: I am not an optimist, but I am not a pessimist, either. I cannot predict the future of Syria. But the ground should be prepared for the people's decision. If people do not vote for Mr Assad, it is fine. Whoever people choose, we will bow to people's choice.

FT: Are you talking to Saudi Arabia regarding Syria in order to contain this conflict and prepare the ground for a settlement?

HR: We are not in negotiations now. But we have no problem to negotiate with Saudi Arabia or any other country. We have had various and close negotiations with the UN special envoy [on Syria], Lakhdar Brahimi. He was in Tehran a couple of days ago and we met. We have close relations and hold negotiations with the UN over the future of Syria.

FT: You won a decisive victory in June partly with the support of reformists. Do you share their view that it needs to be political reform in Iran or are you merely focused on economic efficiency and better relations with the west and your neighbours?

HR: Obviously economic problems and foreign policy are important but these would not stop us from thinking about cultural issues and domestic politics. As I promised during the election [campaign], I am seeking to devise a civil rights charter. With the end of 100 days in office, I put up a draft of the charter on the [president's official] website yesterday so experts can comment on it. I will complete this charter after receiving the views of intellectuals and experts and will present it to the society and will pursue its enforcement. So, this government cannot be bound only to economic and foreign policies.

FT: There's a lot of relief over the nuclear deal and also impatience for change, impatience also at why some political leaders are in jail. Do you feel strong enough in the near future to release [Mir-Hossein] Moussavi and [Mehdi] Karroubi?

HR: Some issues in the country need consensus of other branches and officials. My government is trying to implement its duties in this regard. Of course not within 100 days. More time is needed for such consensus. You called me an optimist. At least in this case, I am optimistic.

FT: When?

HR: I said I am not a forecaster but I am optimistic.

FT: Can the FT assume that on its next visit to Tehran, it can tweet like you and the supreme leader and other very important people in this country?

HR: You can do it even now.

It should be no problem. It will be resolved sooner than your previous question.

FT: Where do you want to see the country at the end of your first term?

HR: The Islamic Republic of Iran at the end of these four years will be in much better condition economically, with regard to regional influence, culturally and politically at home. We have already seen the signs of progress in all these fields during the past 100 days.

FT: One Iranian says it is wonderful that Iran has moved from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in three months.

HR: I do not agree with such terms. But people's dynamism and cheerfulness during this period have been rising significantly.

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Iran's president is visibly cheerful as he strides into a sprawling hall at his pink-marbled palace in Tehran. Impeccably dressed in clerical black robe and white turban, Hassan Rouhani, the new gentler face of the Islamic republic, has encouraging news to share with visitors.

Only a few days earlier, Iranians noticed growing signs of fatigue on the 65-year-old president's face, as if he had, in a matter of just a few months, aged several years. But when he spoke to the Financial Times this week, Mr Rouhani had capped his 100 days in office with the first signs of improvement in an economy ravaged by sanctions and the monumental mismanagement of the outgoing administration led by the populist Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad.

Most significant was his 99th day, when he delivered the six-month nuclear agreement with world powers, the first easing of tensions with the west in a decade. The deal offered modest relief from punishing international sanctions in return for Iran's suspension of the most controversial parts of its nuclear programme.

Mr Rouhani, an experienced technocrat with a doctoral degree from Glasgow Caledonian University, is breathing a sigh of relief. So is a beleaguered nation of 75m people, weary from the bellicose authoritarianism of its leadership and the pressures from western powers suspicious that Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme is intended to produce nuclear weapons.

One of Mr Rouhani's most troubling discoveries upon taking office was to find the treasury empty. Astonishingly, Iran earned $600bn in oil revenues over the past eight years, more than its total accumulation since oil was discovered more than a century ago. The economy, however, was on the verge of collapse.

"This government has inherited serious economic problems," begins the president, seated under a picture of the two Ayatollahs who cast a long shadow over Iran - the late Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader to whom Mr Rouhani answers. "But we are very hopeful about the future of the country's economy . . . The nuclear deal has created a positive atmosphere."

Since his June election, Mr Rouhani's emphasis on the economy and engagement with the world has begun to change international perceptions of Iran and shift the mood at home.

He has moved quickly to bring back veteran professionals and experienced diplomats, many of whom were marginalised or purged by the previous Ahmadi-Nejad administration.

Yet in Tehran and capitals around the world, Mr Rouhani's intentions are still being tested. The verdict has yet to be delivered on whether his charm offensive is an attempt by Iran to secure temporary relief from international pressure or a signal of a strategic shift in the behaviour of the Islamic regime.

The question on everyone's lips: is Hassan Rouhani for real?

The man

Mr Rouhani comes across as personable and engaging, a man who appears to understand the depth and scope of change required in Iran but also mindful of making promises that are beyond his ability to deliver.

He is forceful and resolute when he speaks of Iran's red lines in negotiations that will now proceed to find a permanent solution to the nuclear programme. Demands in Israel and the US Congress for Iran to dismantle its nuclear facilities meet with firm and swift rejection. No, "100 per cent," he says.

Asked how he could have a Twitter account (and a very active one) when the site is one of many that are blocked in Iran, he deflects the question with humour.

"You can do it even now," he tells his visitors, as the hall packed with aides erupts into laughter. Then, shifting to a serious tone, he suggests that this is the kind of problem that he should be able to resolve soon.

A regime insider whose experience has largely been in the security and diplomatic establishments, Mr Rouhani is more technocrat than cleric. He makes little reference to religion and is said to be particularly fond of studying statistics tables.

He belongs to the conservatives' pragmatic wing that considers diplomatic engagement rather than confrontation essential to the survival of the Islamic Republic.

He is, however, something of an accidental president. Some people who know him suspect he ran in the June election to raise his political profile, rather than because he believed he would win.

It was only after his mentor and ally, the influential Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was barred from the race that he became a serious contender.

The reformist opposition, determined to claim back the presidency it was denied in 2009, allied with Mr Rafsanjani and threw its weight behind the centrist Mr Rouhani in the final days of the campaign. He won an outright victory in the first round.

So surprising was the Rouhani triumph that a story making the rounds in Tehran (though it is not clear if it is fact or legend) has it that at 2am after the election, hundreds of Revolutionary Guards surrounded Mr Rouhani's residence in northern Tehran. He stepped out to meet them unsure whether their presence was designed as protection or a prelude to his arrest.

Part religious authoritarianism, part democracy, Iran's political system needs elections to shore up its legitimacy. But as Iranians discovered in the 2009 flawed presidential vote, even this limited democratic participation is not guaranteed to reflect the people's choice.

The pressures

Mr Rouhani faces a delicate balancing act to fulfil the social and economic expectations of Iranians and satisfy the demands of the outside world. He is conscious that he must tread carefully at home, referring obliquely more than once during the interview to other centres of power.

If Mr Rouhani has put so much emphasis during his first three months on foreign policy, it is probably because success can help him consolidate the authority of the presidency and, most importantly, revive the economy.

For now, the president has secured the support of the supreme leader, the most powerful figure in Iran's theocracy. Ayatollah Khamenei is backing the nuclear negotiations and the economic reforms. Perpetuating this consensus between the two men, however, depends on whether Mr Rouhani can deliver an acceptable final nuclear deal and bring an end to sanctions.

Obtaining a lifting of sanctions, however, requires satisfying a very different constituency - western powers whose restrictions have shut Iran out of the global financial system (between $50bn and $100bn of Iran's foreign exchange holdings are frozen) and slashed its oil exports by more than half.

One of the toughest elements in the negotiations will be the size of the low-level uranium enrichment programme Iran will maintain. The west will want it small; Iran will want it to be as large as possible.

The president says the size should be determined by Iran's domestic needs for nuclear power - a remark that suggests scale but still leaves some room for negotiation.

Mr Rouhani, however, is not waiting for the end of sanctions to wage economic battle. The government, he says, has started to restrict the money supply, reduce inflation and reverse the economic decline.

Among its most egregious actions, the Ahmadi-Nejad administration used Iran's central bank as a piggy bank, ordering it to dole out loans that had little chance of being repaid. Now the central bank has been freed from political pressure, and half-completed provincial projects - another hallmark of the former president's misguided populism - are being cancelled.

Mr Rouhani's team predicts Iran will emerge from recession in the next fiscal year beginning in April.

The hope

Nuclear talks have served another important purpose: to pave the way for a potential historic shift in relations between the US and Iran after decades of hostility.

"Death to America" graffiti is still prominently splashed on facades in the Iranian capital and the slogan is chanted at rallies. But perhaps because of the resolutely anti-American attitude of the regime, the Iranian public is ready, if not eager, to mend ties with America.

So are Washington and Tehran tiptoeing towards a resumption of bilateral relations? Mr Rouhani chooses his words cautiously. The nuclear negotiations, he says, are allowing the two sides to "test" whether they are capable of having a different relationship.

"Problems of 35 years cannot be resolved in a short period of time. We need to decrease tensions at this stage and create mutual trust step by step," he says. "If the steps taken in [the interim nuclear deal agreed in] Geneva are implemented carefully and precisely, it would mean that we have taken one step forward towards trust."

He dodges a question on whether he might invite Barack Obama to Tehran at some stage, but does not dismiss the suggestion outright. He tells the FT about his impressions of the US president, based on the now famous telephone exchange during Mr Rouhani's recent trip to the UN in New York.

"I found him someone with very polite and smart language," he says. "The problems with the US are very complicated . . . but despite the complexities there has been an opening over the past 100 days which can later widen."

The suspicion

As Mr Rouhani engages in a confidence-building exercise with western powers, however, Iran's aggressive regional policies continue to fuel suspicions, particularly with Arab neighbours. Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two regional heavyweights, are fighting a proxy war in Syria, backing opposing sides in the civil war financially and militarily.

As president, Mr Rouhani can influence regional policy. But far more powerful are the hardline military elements in the regime, especially the elite Revolutionary Guard and its al-Quds force.

Mr Rouhani says he is talking to European governments about Syria and is willing to hold broader negotiations if his country takes part in a peace conference scheduled for January (whether Iran will be invited to the talks in Geneva is still unclear).

He points to common concerns with the west in Syria, not least the growing strength of Sunni extremists among the rebels. Iran's solution, he says, is free and fair elections. "Whatever Syrian people wish for in the election, we all have to surrender to."

When the FT suggests that the president must be very optimistic to believe that Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad would abandon power, Mr Rouhani says he is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, acknowledging that he cannot predict the future of Syria.

The difficult balance

Mr Rouhani is seen as a leader in search of economic efficiency rather than the vastly more controversial political change sought by reformists.

Surprisingly, the president rejects this assumption, insisting that economic and political reform must be pursued with equal vigour. "Obviously economic problems and foreign policy are important but these would not stop us from thinking about cultural issues and domestic politics," he says.

Iranians sceptical of his promise for change, however, point to the continued imprisonment of the leaders of the opposition Green movement, Mehdi Karroubi and Mir-Hossein Moussavi. The movement was brutally repressed following the 2009 unrest sparked by the alleged rigging of the presidential vote against Mr Moussavi.

Mr Rouhani says his government is trying to "implement its duties" towards the two men, but cannot resolve the problem within 100 days. "Some issues in this country need consensus of other branches and officials. More time is needed for such consensus. But in this case I am optimistic."

Mr Rouhani appears to have a strategy and - so far at least - the critical support of Ayatollah Khamenei who is muting hardline factions' criticism of nuclear diplomacy.

But just as he desperately needed an interim deal to strengthen his hand at home, Mr Rouhani also needs western reassurance of the benefits of confidence building. His aides warn that another burst of US Congressional sanctions, for example, would not only destroy Mr Rouhani's efforts to restore trust with America, but damage his credibility at home.

The past week has produced a rare moment of hope. It has also highlighted that, within Iran and without, many now have a stake in keeping a smile on Mr Rouhani's face.

The prize of a nuclear weapons-free and prosperous Iran and a more stable Middle East is enormous - but the process of getting there is also exceedingly fragile.

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Hassan Rouhani, Iran's new president, has insisted that Tehran will not dismantle its nuclear facilities, as advocated by Israel and US hawks , but has held out hope for an end to its long estrangement with Washington.

In an interview with the Financial Times in Tehran, Mr Rouhani struck a tough line on Iran's expectations over a comprehensive nuclear deal to be negotiated following last weekend's landmark interim pact.

"One hundred per cent [no]," he said when asked about dismantling nuclear facilities.

While the centrist president, who took office in June, said nuclear weapons had no place in Iran's defence strategy, he made clear that Tehran was determined to maintain a uranium enrichment programme for peaceful purposes.

Mr Rouhani was speaking during a momentous week that capped his 100 days in office and delivered the six-month interim nuclear deal. He said the negotiations were "the best test" of whether trust could be restored between the US and Iran.

Recalling his telephone conversation with President Barack Obama during Mr Rouhani's recent visit to the UN in New York, he said: "I found him someone with very polite and smart language".

"Iran-US problems are very complicated and cannot be resolved over a short period of time. Despite the complications, there has been an opening over the past 100 days, which can widen later," he said.

The US and Iran broke diplomatic relations after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The nuclear deal has started to shift the mood of despair in Iran, where an oil-rich economy has been ruined by the populist policies of the predecessor administration of Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, as well as by crippling US and European financial and oil sanctions.

Mr Rouhani's comments contrast with the views of many in the US Congress who believe that a final-stage deal would need to include the closure of the Fordow enrichment facility, built beneath a mountain, and the Arak heavy water reactor, which could be used to ***manufacture*** plutonium.

A US Senate aide said of the Iranian president's remarks: "This is precisely the sort of comment that is going to make some people in Congress very nervous."

Although the interim agreement says the US will not impose new nuclear-related sanctions during the next stage of talks, there is strong support in Congress for the introduction of further measures that would take effect if the negotiations collapsed.

Robert Menendez, a senior Democrat and chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, said on Thursday that such an approach would allow the Obama administration to say to Tehran: "Hey look, this is what's coming if you don't strike a deal."

In the interview at his presidential palace, Mr Rouhani said the removal of sanctions would help his team's economic efforts, but much could be achieved before a lifting of the restrictions through more efficient management.

"If you go through my programme, you will see that under the existing sanctions we have managed to lower the inflation. Under the existing sanctions we have predicted that our economic growth rate will be positive [in the next Iranian fiscal year]," he said. "But, at the same time, if sanctions are lifted or eased, we can naturally see its impact on the economy."

The interim nuclear deal freezes Tehran's atomic advances in return for a modest relief in sanctions. Iran and world powers are seeking to complete a comprehensive agreement in the next six months. The deal is expected to include further and more permanent curbs on Iran's programme and tough monitoring to ensure that no nuclear material is diverted to weapons use.

Among the most contentious issues will be the size of any low-level uranium enrichment facilities that Iran will be allowed to keep, and the fate of some of the plants that pose the greatest worry. Mr Rouhani said the size of the nuclear programme should be determined by his country's energy needs.

In the US, Mr Menendez has been openly critical of the interim agreement. "We basically have the Iranians running in place," he told the NPR network. "We are going to roll back some of our sanctions, but they are rolling back nothing."

He said the White House had been guilty of "fear-mongering" when it suggested that those who supported new sanctions were engaging in a "march to war".

Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader, has said the chamber will "take a look" at the proposal for new sanctions when Congress returns on December 9. But he has been vague about whether he will allow sanctions legislation to proceed.

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During his lifetime, Romanian conductor Sergiu Celibidache (1912-1996) was overshadowed by Herbert von Karajan and Georg Solti, but his posthumous reputation has grown while interest in more famous contemporaries has fallen. These two DVDs underline the shift.

Celibidache had a deeper philosophy of life: he thought more about music, was less interested in worldly wealth and placed greater emphasis on sharing his knowledge. Busé's film probes Celibidache's background, career and ideas, drawing on documentary evidence as well as interviews with family, students and admirers, including Daniel Barenboim. It is the best attempt yet to explain who this mysterious, uncompromising, guru-like figure was, and why he had such an influence on those with whom he came into contact.

Catapulted in 1945 from obscurity to the principal conductorship of the Berlin Philharmonic, "Celi" was later passed over in favour of Karajan, and spent much of his time thereafter conducting radio orchestras - the only ones that would put up with his stubbornness and extravagant rehearsal demands.

Whereas Schmidt-Garre focuses exclusively on the conductor in his dotage, with footage from a single rehearsal sequence in 1991, Busé's documentary is sprinkled with clips from all periods of Celi's life, capturing his phenomenal knowledge, charisma and obsession with musical detail. It also communicates the belief, central to Celi's nomadic life and work, that music is about the relationship between end and beginning, now and eternity. "At the end I am where I was at the start, but at the same time I have undergone a transformation."

Sergiu Celibidache

Firebrand and philosopher

A film by Norbert Busé

(Arthaus Musik)

Celibidache rehearses

Bruckner's Ninth Symphony

Directed by Jan Schmidt-Garre

(Arthaus Musik)

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The Verdi bicentenary has offered scant opportunity to uncover lesser-known aspects of his oeuvre. This recording of his first opera is a welcome exception.

Verdi disavowed Oberto, but it bears enough of his footprints, including a father-daughter duet and a superb quartet, to merit attention, especially in Hofstetter's stylish concert performance featuring tenor Norman Reinhardt, soprano Francesca Lombardi Mazzulli and bass Adrian Gans.

Verdi

Oberto

Stadttheater Giessen/Michael Hofstetter

(Oehms Classics), 2 CDs

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Manu Chao's third solo album has never, until now, been released in Britain. It is less accessible than his first, Clandestino (also getting a re-release); the lyrics are all in French and the music relatively subdued rather than Chao's usual joyous bricolage.

But once the fragmented album hits its stride, on "100 000 Remords" and "Te Tromper", there is much to enjoy. Long-time fans will have no regrets; newcomers should start with Clandestino.

Manu Chao

Siberie M'Etait Contentéee

(Because)

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Archie Shepp released the funk-backed big band and vocals album Attica Blues in 1972, in outraged response to the murderous put down of the previous year's riot in Attica prison.

This live CD, culled from two French festival performances, reprises the original repertoire and adds Ellington's "Come Sunday" and the saxophonist's James Brown influenced composition "Mama Too Tight". Like the original, it's slightly loose at the edges, but Shepp is gruffly on form, Amine Claudine Myers is among the vocals and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire shines.

Archie Shepp Attica Blues Orchestra

I Hear the Sound

(Archieball)

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The Sachal Studios Orchestra, Pakistan's rough equivalent of the Buena Vista Social Club, had a hit with their arrangement of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five", and most of this album tries to repeat the same trick, placing Western standards by everyone from Stevie Wonder to Lennon/McCartney in a Lahore studio with sitar and dhalaks and tabla.

More interesting are the homegrown "Monsson" and "Five Rivers".

Sachal Studios Orchestra

Jazz And All That

(Sachal Music)

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Gretchen Parlato's whispered, bittersweet vocals border on the mannered. But each note breathes steely resolve and each breath is perfectly placed over the paired-down beats of her outstanding band.

The repertoire is classic 60s jazz mixed with classy pop - Herbie Hancock's "Butterfly" and Simply Red's "Holding Back the Years" define the parameters - but the songs are stretched out and stamped with Parlato's unique musical personality. Taylor Eigsti delivers atmospheric Rhodes, Alan Hampton is on bass and either Mark Guiliana or Kendrick Scott on drums.

Gretchen Parlato

Live in NYC

(Obliqsound, CD & DVD)

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Britney Jean's lead single "Work Bitch" - a preposterous banger produced by will.i.am in which Britney Spears commands credulous listeners to work their assets (emphasis on the first syllable) in order to live like modern-day Marie Antoinettes - turns out to be a red herring.

The rest of the album is calmer, more mature and, oh dear, duller. EDM production tics (booming bass, wild synthesisers) are shoehorned into mid-tempo plodders such as "Til It's Gone" which have no real interest in the dancefloor.

Meanwhile an over-preponderance of ballads makes good on Spears' promise, or threat, to deliver her most "personal" record yet. Her vocals sound less artificial than usual, which may of course be a particularly sophisticated piece of computer trickery, but it would be a stretch to describe them as convincingly emotional.

"I try to act natural," she sings in "Perfume", which finds her wanting to mark a faithless mate with perfume in order to ward off other women. The self-identification with a synthetic product is typical of the singer's cybernautic style; what's untypical is the lack of drive with which Britney Jean animates it.

Britney Spears

Britney Jean

(RCA)

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As pro-European protesters streamed for the ninth day into the same central Kiev square that was the focal point of Ukraine's pro-democracy Orange Revolution in 2004, they carried with them the same question: might their demonstrations shake the political landscape or would they instead be a deeply felt - but fleeting - expression of rage?

It was too soon to know on Friday. But the city was growing tense as anger mounted over President Viktor Yanukovich's failure to sign an integration deal with the EU at a summit in Lithuania.

Heavyset, allegedly pro-government youths - some armed with steel bars - had also appeared in the city centre. Witnesses said some youths had beaten up two journalists, and clashed with anti-government protesters.

These demonstrations differ in important respects from the 2004 uprising, when as many as 1m thronged downtown Kiev. The biggest crowd this time has been the more than 100,000 last Sunday.

Unlike the well-planned 2004 protests over a rigged ballot, which had initially handed victory to Mr Yanukovich, these rallies have been largely spontaneous, sparked by social media, and have caught Ukraine's political opposition unprepared.

"Many people came with high hopes but it's not clear what to do now," said Halyna Oliynyk, a 50-year-old Kiev museum employee. "There is a void in organisation and leadership. The politicians were sidelined by grassroots activists and students, but in my view they now need to lead the people forward."

As the Vilnius summit ended on Friday, EU leaders sought to turn up the pressure by rebuking Russia in unusually blunt terms for pressurising Mr Yanukovich.

"Actions taken by Russia [towards] Eastern Partnership countries are incompatible with how international relations should function on our continent in the 21st century," said Herman Van Rompuy, European Council president, adding that Moscow's actions breached international treaties giving sovereign countries the right to "freely define relations" with other states.

Mr Yanukovich, meanwhile, said that Brussels had failed to take "decisive steps" to deliver a "programme of financial-economic aid" to help Kiev deal with a severe cash crunch and offset Russian trade retaliation.

In Kiev, the protests have been hampered by the fact that Ukraine's political opposition is fragmented and lacking figures with the popularity of Viktor Yushchenko and charisma of Yulia Tymoshenko, the Orange Revolution leaders.

Mr Yushchenko, who became president after the revolution, is no longer a political player after a presidency that failed to deliver on protesters' hopes. Ms Tymoshenko, who lost to Mr Yanukovich in 2010 presidential elections deemed to be generally fair, was imprisoned in 2011 on abuse of office charges that many Ukrainians and EU leaders believe were politically motivated.

There are fears Mr Yanukovich's government may be more prepared to crush mass protests than the administration of departing president Leonid Kuchma was in 2004. Presidential allies have bussed in supporters for rival pro-government rallies, including one earlier on Friday at which many participants openly admitted they had been paid to attend.

Anti-government protesters were on Friday uncertain of how to go forward. Gathering in street underpasses, cafés or huddling around oil barrels used as heaters to keep warm amid freezing rain and sleet, they sang Ukrainian folk and patriotic songs to lift spirits.

"There are two views," said one protest organiser, who asked to remain anonymous. "To dissolve the protests for now, coming back later in larger numbers, or the radical scenario - to stay on the streets, putting more pressure on Mr Yanukovich, calling for snap presidential and parliamentary elections, blocking government buildings or even - in theory - toppling his regime . . . If we muster crowds of 300,000, some think we can achieve this."

A decision this week by university students to strike has kindled hopes that large numbers could be mustered.

There were also nascent signs that anger at Mr Yanukovich was bringing together one-time opponents. Vitali Klitschko, the world heavyweight boxing champion who is now Ukraine's most popular politician, and Arseny Yatseniuk, leader of Ms Tymoshenko's party, sat with others at a joint news conference in Vilnius earlier on Friday and declared they were united.

Leading opposition figures have suggested, however, their main focus is to try and force Mr Yanukovich from power not in the streets but at the ballot box in a presidential election due in spring 2015.

Valentyn Strasser, a 50-year-old programmer taking part in the protests, said young Ukrainians needed time to organise before the presidential poll.

"The president is a bandit and it is clear his ruling regime will not give up power democratically," he said. "We need a revolution to push his ruling regime aside."

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It's coming up to that season again. No, not the December holiday season, but the rainy season in Iraq, which lasts from about now until March, during which the dust storms that plague low altitude air operations, and any other rotating precision machinery, are at least partly dampened.

From Tel Nof to Tehran, young people are looking intently at the bright lights of their battle management system displays.

While the world's diplomats and headline writers are celebrating the possibility of peace among men, or at least between the western allies and Iran, not every person in the financial markets seems to be quite so optimistic.

You will recall how interested we've been in Alliant Techsystems (ATK), the monopoly supplier of various high technology munitions to the US military and certain of its allies. With stagnant or even declining sales, indifferent earnings, and threats of government shutdowns, ATK wouldn't look like a high growth stock, and yet there it is: up from $49 or so a bit over a year ago to more than $120 today, just as if they'd invented a new social network. I think it is more likely some believe ATK could benefit from reorders of its products to destroy certain social networks.

Still, the diplomats say peace with Iran is on the way. And the six months that temporary sanctions relief has bought for the slowdown of the country's nuclear programme overlap not coincidentally with the rainy season. After March, any sustained attack on Iran through Iraqi airspace would be far more problematic. Yet, as if in rebuke to the optimistic headlines, ATK's stock hit new highs this past month.

There is also another season coming up: the renewal of reinsurance contracts that starts at the beginning of January. The reinsurance companies have had the prices of coverage for catastrophic risks pushed down by what did not happen this year past: any major hurricanes hitting the US coast, or earthquakes shaking California or Japan.

Also, the capital bases of the reinsurers and their parent companies had very few losses on the credit product in their books, and liquidity that continued to be underwritten by the Bernanke/Yellen Fed.

When the new coverage year begins next month, the reinsurers can expect weak pricing. The question is how much of the market share of the $250bn world catastrophe market will be skimmed off by "nontraditional" capital, such as buyers of three- to five-year catastrophe bonds issued to the market, or one-year privately placed fully collateralised catastrophe contracts placed more discreetly with private holders.

At this point, the nontraditional suppliers of catastrophe coverage have taken about a $45bn share of the trade, and those who track the market's progress, such as Swiss Re, believe that cut will grow at a sustainable, though not hyperbolic, pace.

Even for next year, the alternative reinsurance providers are expected to continue to be concentrated on prospectively underinsured perils such as "US wind", or hurricanes from the Hamptons to the Florida Keys. The question is how far beyond these "modelable" risks the nontraditional reinsurers will venture.

Some of us think the alternative providers are the thin end of a wedge that will transform the bureaucratised and ingrown global insurance business. John Seo, with his brother, manages Fermat, a Connecticut-managed but Irish-domiciled Ucits cat bond fund, which, along with other accounts, adds up to more than $4bn in assets.

Mr Seo has not just money, but a theory. "The global reinsurance industry has acted a lot like AT&T [the US telephone company] before its 1984 break-up. It was a so-called natural monopoly to provide universal coverage and service. That meant implicitly the good business subsidises the bad. The underwriting profit has been coming from the catastrophe business, just like AT&T made all their money from long distance calls. The insurance industry doesn't realise how their industry is being restructured by insurance-linked securities."

The securitised, cash or Treasury-collateralised coverage offered by the ILS market, is really limited to risks that are "modelable" and "granular". If you want coverage for movie stars' failing to show up, or Godzilla attacks, or drugs that work the wrong way, you have to go back to the specialists at Lloyds. But models and measures improve over time. When I first used a mobile phone in 1982, no one thought there would be more than two providers in any American market.

"It's a Marmite strategy, ILS," says Alasdair MacDonald, of pension consultants Towers Watson. "You either like it or loathe it. Since the risks are not correlated with other markets, it really does add diversification." One problem, he says, is that "You can really struggle with measuring alpha [investment managers' skill] in this area, since it is so left-tailed [all the risks are to the unlikely downside]."

Has the tsunami of alternative capital that has flooded the reinsurance business compressed returns to an unattractive point? "It's a good question," says Ryan Bisch, the head of Mercer's alternatives advisory business in Canada. "On an absolute basis, yes, spreads have come down, but the returns still look better than for, say, some credit classes."

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Five years after another Indian trade minister, the private jet-flying Kamal Nath, helped to scupper the Doha round of international negotiations in the name of India's poor, his successor is vying for the spotlight.

When he arrives in Bali for next week's biennial meeting of World Trade Organisation ministers, Anand Sharma, India's commerce minister, will be greeted warily by the US and other interlocutors.

They suspect him of putting a spanner in the works of a deal they consider within grasp - purely to win pre-election political points back home for the governing Congress party and its policy of generous food subsidies.

A former student activist who, according to his official biography, worked closely with the late Rajiv Gandhi, the bearded Mr Sharma, 60, has the demeanour of a gruff aristocrat. He has served almost half his life in parliament and is regarded in trade circles as an unpredictable and occasionally charmless opponent.

Another failure for the WTO in Bali could put India in the uncomfortable position of repeat offender. Mr Nath was blamed by many for scuppering talks in Geneva in 2008 and an earlier attempt to reach a deal in Hong Kong in 2005.

Mr Sharma appears to have neither the political clout at home nor the wiliness in negotiations abroad to match Mr Nath. EU officials, for example, have been baffled by his stop-start attempts to negotiate an EU-India trade agreement, which has failed to materialise after six years of discussions.

But he has built a record as a sharp-tongued spokesman for the government on economic matters.

Earlier this month he accused Goldman Sachs of interfering in Indian politics after it upgraded its assessment of the economy on expectations that Narendra Modi, the opposition leader, would win next year's general election.

"Goldman is parading its ignorance about the basic facts of the Indian economy, and it also exposes its eagerness to mess around with India's domestic politics," he told The Economic Times.

On Friday, Mr Sharma acknowledged there was a "stalemate" in trade talks in advance of the Bali meeting. But he insisted that India had been "seriously and sincerely engaged in the negotiations" and enjoyed the support of other developing nations on key issues at stake.

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&gt;Chief among those is India's demand - affirmed at a cabinet meeting in New Delhi on Thursday - for a "peace clause", intended to give another four years to negotiators to come up with new WTO rules for farm subsidies and the prices paid for staples bought as part of government programmes to supply food to the poor.

Other participants have accused India of backing down from an agreement struck earlier in November over that peace clause and thereby putting at risk a broader deal that would set about removing red tape at borders around the world and, advocates claim, add as must as $1tn to international trade.

The food security issue is of particular concern to India. The parliament in New Delhi last summer passed a bill pushed by the Congress-led government that expanded cheap food programmes for the poor to cover 70 per cent of India's 1.3bn population.

On Friday, Mr Sharma rejected the accusations that India had misled anyone by initially accepting and then rejecting the "peace clause". The government was now seeking a ceasefire that would automatically be extended until a permanent solution to the issue was crafted.

"India's final position" would become clear in Bali, he said. But India was "very clear" that any interim solution would have to last "until a permanent solution is put in place", and that it expected everyone "to commit to negotiate all issues for a permanent solution".

&lt;&gt;The embattled Congress party is due to face national elections by May and state ballots in Delhi and Rajasthan next week, and Mr Sharma has in recent weeks couched his stand in the WTO as a matter of national sovereignty. "As far as what we give to our poor people that is our right," he said on Friday. "That is a sovereign space and for India it is sacrosanct and non-negotiable."

Farm groups and leftwing parties have urged Mr Sharma to take a tough stand.

But there are also fears elsewhere within India that, were it to block a deal in Bali, the government would be shooting itself in the foot. Many in the trade world and in Indian business see next week's meeting as a last-ditch attempt to restore credibility to the WTO in the face of growing US interest in regional agreements over multilateral ones.

"Anand Sharma is under a lot of political pressure at home," said Pradeep Mehta of the Consumer Unity and Trust Society think-tank. But "a No deal in Bali will be terribly sad and India is walking into a trap", he said. "India needs the WTO - as do a lot of developing countries."

In a carefully worded statement, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry said that it recognised the importance of food security as an issue for the country. But "if Bali fails to deliver, then it will weaken the multilateralism and the credibility of the WTO as an institution", said Naina Lal Kidwai, its president. "Failure in Bali would be very disappointing."

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Bonuses for UK bankers earning more than EUR1m rose last year and now average almost four times their salary, setting up a potential conflict with the new bonus cap that comes in next year, a report by Europe's banking regulator shows.

The data collected by the European Banking Authority also reveal that total pay for the 2,714 people who topped EUR1m in 2012 rose by more than a third that year.

Average total pay, including fixed salaries and bonuses for the UK's top-earning bankers, grew from EUR1.4m in 2011 to EUR2m last year.

These highest earners received bonuses averaging 3.7 times their base salary, up from 3.5 times in 2011, and highlights the potential impact of the European Union bonus cap.

The controversial EU-wide limit will restrict variable pay to 100 per cent of salary, or at twice that level with explicit shareholder approval.

Banks are already drawing up plans to deal with the restriction by paying their affected staff with monthly allowances that will not count as bonuses, but will be reviewed annually, based on seniority and not included in pension calculations.

EBA is currently working on final rules on which employees will be captured by the bonus cap and is likely to finish before Christmas.

In a draft version, the regulator proposed applying the cap to anyone earning more than EUR500,000, potentially affecting tens of thousands across the City.

EBA's data show that the UK employed more than three-quarters of the European Union's top earners in banking, highlighting the extent to which London in particular will be hit by the bonus cap.

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&gt;The number of UK bankers earning more than EUR1m in total pay rose from 2,436 in the year before to 2,714 in 2012.

Germany has the second-largest number of top-earning bankers, at 212. But German high earners on average received bonuses worth only 211 per cent of their base salary, a number that is only slightly above the upper proposed cap.

There are 177 high-earning bankers in France while 10 EU members, from Bulgaria to Slovenia, have none at all.

Greece and Cyprus, where banks had to be bailed out by the state amid the eurozone's sovereign debt crisis, had one and three bankers respectively earning more than EUR1m.

The increase in UK top-bankers' pay came as profits and revenues across the industry improved slightly. This was reflected in an increase in the total variable pay pot from EUR2.7bn in 2011 to EUR4.2bn in 2012, according to the EBA data.

Four-fifths of the top-earning bankers in the UK worked in investment banking and the rest in retail, asset management and other business areas.

EBA's numbers include bankers employed at UK banks and also those working for the London operations of banks from other EU countries.

It has collected the data across Europe for the second time now after new rules were introduced three years ago that force all banks to submit the number of high earners to their national regulators.

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A decade ago on a British chat show, Nigella Lawson was asked how she would depict herself if she were still a journalist.

"I would be so horrible," she joked. Her former husband has now saved her the trouble.

You "poisoned your child with drugs and trashed your life", Charles Saatchi wrote in a now-public email, accusing her of being "off her head" for much of their 10-year marriage.

It is rare for someone who, like Mr Saatchi, has spent three decades in advertising to be "completely astonished" by cocaine use.

It is even more remarkable given that he and Ms Lawson are witnesses for the same side in the criminal prosecution of their personal assistants for fraud totalling £685,000.

The lasting impact of his words may be to add his ex-wife to the list of celebrities who floated close to perfection, only to find themselves in need of redemption.

"Nigella is having a Kate Moss moment," says Hamish Pringle, author of Celebrity Sells, referring to the supermodel once photographed snorting cocaine.

"[She] will come out the other side even more in demand, but only if she's not convicted of a crime."

Ms Lawson has yet to comment on the allegations, other than to tweet a Holiday Hotcake recipe to thank her growing number of Twitter followers (a few responded with jokes about cold turkey this Christmas).

In her favour is her continuing popularity; even Mr Saatchi told the court on Friday that he still "adore[s]" her.

There are also the stories of Ms Moss, US television personality Martha Stewart, footballer David Beckham and golfer Tiger Woods, all of whom have recovered from indiscretions to restore at least part of their commercial pulling power.

"If a brand's been around for a long time, the public has quite a large amount of forgiveness," said Vince Mitchell, a professor at Cass Business School. "It can afford to cock up."

The difference with Ms Lawson is that her brand is relatively narrow.

Unlike Kate Moss and Tiger Woods, she has no sponsors to offend. In the past year her commercial activities have been limited to filming The Taste, a reality TV show in the UK and US, and selling her own range of kitchenware.

By comparison, fellow chef Jamie Oliver has invested in his own YouTube channel, signed licensing deals with supermarkets in Australia and Canada, and opened half a dozen restaurants from St Petersburg to Perth.

Nigella has no book in the pipeline; Jamie has a contract to write four.

The other distinguishing feature is that her image as a domestic goddess - which she once described as "obviously ironic" - is built around indulgence.

"She's not Delia Smith. The brand is not a religious Christian who's also a demon cook," said Andrew Franklin, the founder of publishers Profile Books.

"But she can only come back it if she can make it on television."

Of immediate concern is the US, which Ms Lawson has struggled to crack over the past decade, and where The Taste's first series on ABC garnered meagre ratings.

She is thought to earn more from a single series of the programme than the £650,000 sum her personal assistants allegedly stole from her and Mr Saatchi in four years. They deny the charges.

It is unclear whether she will continue to remain silent, like Mr Woods who initially ignored allegations about his private life before an orchestrated, teary apology.

"That silence was very damaging to him," says Mr Pringle. "In the absence of a mea culpa, the rumour mill continues to churn."

For the once reclusive Mr Saatchi, who was cautioned after a domestic violence incident in June, redemption may be less of a concern.

"I don't think he cares what people think," says Mr Pringle. "He never has."

Martha Stewart

"This is a victory for the little guys," said one juror, after convicting Martha Stewart of obstructing justice in 2004. Yet Ms Stewart kept up her domestic goddess persona in jail - "That place was sparkling when I left" - then launched a TV comeback. She is now back chairing the company she founded.

Kate Moss

The supermodel went from heroin chic to cocaine rehab in 2005, after incriminating photos appeared. She was dropped by sponsors H&M - whose chairman supports an anti-drug charity - but the publicity meant she soon earned twice as much from other brands. She will receive a special award at next week's British Fashion Awards.

Tiger Woods

Mr Woods has not won a major golf title since driving into a fire hydrant in 2009 and confessing to multiple affairs. Yet he is the world number one, and has new sponsors including Rolex. "His brand is about excellence," says Vince Mitchell of Cass Business School. "Being faithful is not core to that job."

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What do we have to be thankful for? Americans are in the middle of the annual process of counting their blessings as the year begins to wind down.

Following tradition, President Barack Obama wrote a proclamation calling on his compatriots to give thanks. There is irony in this, after 12 bad political months for him. After winning an election in which inequality was a decisive issue, it has been a great year for the wealth of those Americans who were already wealthy, and particularly those among the richest "1 per cent".

Those invested in US stocks, up more than 30 per cent in 12 months, should be thankful. And what can they thank for their good fortune? Here is a list of happy surprises from the last 12 months:

- The US did not fall over the fiscal cliff 2013 started amid Washington intrigue over looming automatic tax rises and spending cuts. In the end, swingeing automatic cuts were administered through the "sequester", while tax rises for the wealthy went through - but it did not feel like falling off a cliff.

- The US did not default on its debt Nine months into the year there was another case of political brinkmanship, which ended with a decisive defeat for the Tea Party-backed Republicans who had pushed it. The president is unpopular, but there was no public support for the use of a threat to force a default on US sovereign debt as a political weapon.

- The eurozone avoided another crisis And it did so despite ample opportunity. The response to the Cyprus crisis in March, when an attempt was made to impose losses on insured bank deposits, was badly botched. There is ongoing political turmoil in Italy. Yet sovereign debt markets remain calm, and there are even signs that the region's economy is moving towards a (weak) recovery.

- China's economy kept on the rails The bubble in China's real estate did not burst. Growth, according to official data, stayed on track. And this month, the Communist party even surprised with a more ambitious reform agenda than most had anticipated.

- The west did not escalate its involvement in the Middle East Many Syrians might not feel very thankful for this, but for markets, it was a bullet dodged. Broad-based western intervention in the region would, as always, have been packed with risk and uncertainty.

- Iran's relations with the rest of the world improved Iran and the risk that either it successfully built a nuclear bomb, or Israel were provoked into attacking it to avert this, has been at the top of "risk lists" for a decade. The negotiated agreement to freeze Iran's nuclear programme, while controversial, is great news for geopolitical risk. Oil, as measured by Brent Crude, is the same price now as it was last Thanksgiving, almost to the penny.

- Japan opted for Abenomics Japan's incredibly aggressive monetary policy sank the yen, but did wonders for the stock market (up 70 per cent since last Thanksgiving, and now at a closing high for the year). A resurgent Japanese economy would have a big impact on the rest of the world.

- Inflation stayed under control Expectations for US inflation, after a brief move upwards, are now comfortably lower than they were last Thanksgiving. Low inflation is almost always reason for savers to be thankful - although in this case it implies the risk of deflation (note significant falls for industrial metals and ***agricultural*** goods in the last year), so the good news is not unadulterated. Gold investors, who have lost almost 30 per cent over the past year as inflation fears eased, may not be too thankful either.

- Emerging markets averted a crisis In August, there appeared to be a real risk of an old-fashioned emerging markets crisis as the currencies of countries with significant current account deficits tumbled in the wake of higher rates in the US. But the Fed stepped back from reducing its stimulus to markets, and there was a partial recovery. India's rupee shed 21 per cent against the dollar at one point; now it is off only 13 per cent over 12 months.

- Turkey Appropriately on Thanksgiving, Turkey has reason for thanks. Its currency has been hit in the last year, and the yield on its bonds has risen, reflecting international concern. Yet its stocks are up almost 10 per cent in local currency terms.

This is quite a list. But the fear remains that investors are most thankful for the Fed, and its decision to keep up its QE bond purchases. From last Thanksgiving until the Fed started talking of tapering off QE in May, the S&P 500 rose 22 per cent. Since the Fed opted not to taper in September, it is up 6 per cent. It was flat from May to September.

We should be thankful for much genuine good fortune. But the valuations on offer in the current dizzying US stock market suggest that this has turned into a justification for misplaced optimism.

We should count the blessings of the last year. But there is reason to worry about the future.

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House prices in prime areas of central London have stalled in November, raising the possibility that the capital's property boom is diminishing.

Residential prices in the City, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and other central areas such as St John's Wood rose by only 0.2 per cent in the month, according to Knight Frank, the property consultancy, leading to annual growth of 6.9 per cent - the lowest figure in four years.

The weak monthly figures, in what has been the hottest part of the property market in Britain since 2009, suggest that London's house prices will struggle to rise ever higher than other parts of the country for much longer.

Figures from the Nationwide Building Society show that prices in the capital are almost twice the national average, the biggest differential in at least 40 years.

On the two previous occasions when London's house prices were more than 80 per cent above the rest of the UK, the gap shrunk rapidly over the next few years. London house prices fell 31 per cent between 1989 and 1992; and while prices did not fall in the early 2000s, a much bigger boom elsewhere narrowed the gap with the capital.

After the financial crisis, the capital's house prices recovered much faster than elsewhere, led by the prime central London market that had the advantages of foreign demand and cash buyers who do not need mortgages.

Betting against London prices has proved a mug's game for most of the past 40 years, with the exception of the crash in the early 1990s recession. It is after all, a vibrant capital city with severe limits on new home building.

But with the prime market slowing down and capital gains tax about to be levied on foreign owners, the Bank of England withdrawing some supports from the mortgage market and the gap with the rest of the country so large, an important question is what could set the London property market back in the style of the 1990s.

Sentiment turns

Bubbles burst. To the extent that home buyers in London have been rushing to purchase, for fear of further price rises, a change in expectation of future gains would have a radical effect. Those wanting to purchase property would be willing to wait, while owners would want to offload their stock as quickly as possible. With a change in sentiment, prices can turn very quickly.

Although there are straws in the wind in prime central London and in properties over £2m, prices in the rest of the capital are still rising fast, but Liam Bailey, head of global residential research at Knight Frank, says there are natural limits even for the plushest homes. "In the long term, price growth above earnings growth isn't sustainable and even central London can't expect the performance [of the past four years] to continue".

The City becomes unattractive

Ask bankers in the City of London what keeps them up at night and withdrawal from the EU will be high on the list.

Given a referendum on membership may happen after the 2015 election, it is worth asking what a serious setback to the City's status as Europe's financial capital would do to house prices.

The last financial crash took its toll on prime central London property, with residential values dropping 24 per cent between March 2008 and 2009 before staging a comeback.

Another reason foreign investors might tire of London is if the city starts to burst at the seams. Dick Sorabji, director of policy at London Councils, the umbrella group for the city's 33 boroughs, said: "If we fail to keep up with the infrastructure needs of 100,000 more Londoners every year, as the projections suggest . . . that will slow the growth and damage the city. But I think investors will keep coming."

Government policies

Estate agents operating at the most expensive end of the London market have noticed the weakest area is now for so-called "mansions" above £2m, which have been subject to 7 per cent stamp duty since April 2012.

If that tax on transactions is having an effect, there are many other threats from government policies that could cause prices to slip.

An annual "mansion tax" would exacerbate that effect, reducing prices without making London's prime homes any more affordable.

For the bulk of London property, what is happening in the prime market is largely irrelevant, but a revaluation of Council Tax bands, the imposition of capital gains tax on foreign ownership of property, further action from the BoE, or a revolution in house building could pull the rug out from under the whole market.

A sterling crisis

London property has been described as the new reserve currency for a global elite - but like any cross border investment, it is at the mercy of exchange rates.

Were the pound to fall rapidly, the values of foreign property purchases in London could be hit, which could cause a stampede for the exit.

But a currency crisis is a double-edged sword.

The pound's slide from 2007 to 2009 - combined with falling house prices - enabled foreigners to snap up "bargains" in London: 50 per cent cheaper in dollar terms in the space of a year and as much as 60 per cent less to someone financing a purchase in yen.

This prompted a surge in overseas buyers in the prime central London market.

Experts say the risks of foreign capital flight require vigilance. Andrew Heywood, consultant and editor of Housing Finance International said: "We need to shape that [foreign] investment but avoid doing so in a way that causes an abrupt collapse, which would ***feed*** into falling house prices, negative equity, collapse of development and damage to the affordable homes programme through the potential impact on cross subsidy of affordable housing."

Affordability

Ultimately, living in London could become too expensive for "ordinary" families and companies, particularly if the BoE raises interest rates causing a sudden reversal in London property prices.

Evidence is mounting that the high cost of living in the capital is causing more residents to slide into poverty, defined as having an income less than 60 per cent of the national median.

This is particularly marked for London's working poor. Over the ten years to 2011-12, the number of people in in-work poverty increased by 440,000, according to data from the Trust for London, a charity.

Foreign money pouring into the capital has exacerbated that trend by raising the cost of living and any sudden withdrawal could also be highly damaging.

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If a small city state had adopted Bitcoin as its national currency, it would now be in the grip of deflation as foreign speculators siphoned away its supply of the virtual currency. Money would be scarce, and prices would fall dramatically. Authorities might try to lift prices but they would lack one of their most powerful tools. Central bankers can create money at will, by printing notes or creating deposits. Bitcoin is based on digital tokens, which are generated at an unalterable rate by cryptographic algorithms running on the computers of volunteers, making it impossible to match supply to demand.

This is an improbable fantasy. But Bitcoin's undulating value makes it unsuitable for all but the most limited purposes. Speculators are the keenest acquirers of the currency. For some, it is a way of stashing wealth where authorities cannot find it. Others want to make purchases without leaving an obvious trace. Silk Road, the online contraband emporium that was closed by authorities last month, was one of the few businesses to insist on payment in Bitcoin. But many prices were pegged to the dollar; the virtual money served merely as a way of disguising the flow of hard currency.

Still, if Bitcoin's applications are limited, its emergence as a workable means of exchange nonetheless reveals something surprising. Friedrich Hayek argued that the government should cede its monopoly over the money supply, leaving consumers free to choose between competing currencies. It turns out that they were already freer than they thought. Authorities have so far tolerated the virtual currency. Yet the product of the state-owned incumbent has proved more attractive than Hayek expected.

The experiment is an indication of how monetary systems might change in future. Many believed it impossible to create a form of electronic cash that did not rely on a bank to keep tabs on account balances. Bitcoin proved them wrong. But many are uneasy about reversing the technological accident that has made financial transactions more traceable in the era of electronic banking.

Some see tamper-proof virtual currencies as preferable to physical ones that central bankers can easily debase. The island of Alderney has gone so far as to mint physical coins that are backed by Bitcoins in its electronic vault. But enthusiasts should be careful what they wish for. An unstable price level is dangerous. Removing the steering-wheel is the wrong way to prevent central bankers from driving the economy off the road.

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The Channel Islands have long held an outsized role in the world of financial services.

But while Jersey and Guernsey compete for offshore banking business, their tiny neighbour Alderney is bidding to become the first international centre for Bitcoin transactions.

As the price of a single Bitcoin has climbed above £1,000 this week, the British crown dependency sees an opportunity in the rising global popularity of the virtual currency.

The territory, which is part of the British Isles but close to the coast of France, belongs to the Bailiwick of Guernsey and relies on its bigger neighbour to provide public services for its population of 1,900.

But Alderney has long dreamt of being financially self-sufficient and sees Bitcoin as a potential path to prosperity, along with its growing role as a gambling centre.

Changes to the law in 2005 meant the island was able to attract licensed operators who could advertise gambling in the UK.

It earns about £40m from e-gaming revenues, but must pay £37m of that to Guernsey in fees. Alderney balances its books, while its neighbour has seen its deficit increase - fuelling the island's desire for financial independence.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of Bitcoin has rapidly taken off.

The popularity of the decentralised digital currency - a form of electronic cash - has mushroomed from its original base of tech fans to investors, businesses and speculators. Businesses and entrepreneurs have lobbied hard to governments to recognise the currency as legitimate, the main stumbling block being its association with fears of money laundering and buying drugs online.

But its ties with the Silk Road website, shut down by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and various hacking scandals have not stopped its value taking off.

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&gt;In January its price hovered around $15; on Friday, it hit a peak of $1,242.

Robert McDowall, Alderney's finance minister, over the summer was put in touch with Michael Parsons, a banker and adviser on Bitcoin. Over a meal at City restaurant Sweetings, they discussed the potential of Bitcoin and the idea of bringing it to Alderney with a physical coin was born.

The Royal Mint, which had a longstanding relationship with Alderney, was brought on board and proposals were drafted over the following weeks. The plan had "top level support", a Mint official said in an email.

Meanwhile, the Treasury, which oversees the Mint, invited the Alderney team for talks on how a licensing regime could work, according to correspondence seen by the Financial Times.

The Bitcoin financial services hub would include exchanges, paymentsservices and physical storage for coins for wealthy clients - and would diversify the island's revenues from gambling alone.

The plan would need to be voted through by the island's parliament and then legislation could be passed to finalise the project. If passed, it will become the first jurisdiction to introduce a regulated environment for the coin.

Advocates of the scheme hope it will help enduncertainty over the virtual currency's status.

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The tiny Channel Island of Alderney is launching an audacious bid to become the first jurisdiction to mint physical Bitcoins, amid a global race to capitalise on the booming virtual currency.

The three-mile long British crown dependency has been working on plans to issue physical Bitcoins in partnership with the UK's Royal Mint since the summer, according to documents seen by the Financial Times.

It wants to launch itself as the first international centre for Bitcoin transactions by setting up a cluster of services that are compliant with anti-money laundering rules, including exchanges, payment services and a Bitcoin storage vault.

The special Bitcoin would be part of the Royal Mint's commemorative collection, which includes limited edition coins and stamps that are normally bought by collectors. It would have a gold content - a figure of £500-worth has been proposed - so that holders could conceivably melt and sell the metal if the exchange value of the currency were to collapse.

The hype surrounding Bitcoin has escalated in recent months and its market value has rocketed; the price of a single Bitcoin hit a new peak of $1,242 on Friday on the Mt Gox exchange, established in Tokyo in 2009 as a trading card exchange.

Critics warn of a speculative bubble although its proponents believe that the currency could be widely adopted as a method of making payments outside the traditional banking system. Ben Bernanke, chairman of the Federal Reserve, and other government officials around the world have said virtual currencies could have benefits if they can be regulated to prevent money laundering.

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&gt;Holders of the Alderney Bitcoin would not be able to spend it in stores but would be able to exchange it for a virtual Bitcoin by travelling to the island.

Alderney hopes that by minting the first physical Bitcoin it will raise its profile as the "go-to" destination for the virtual currency, as it seeks to expand its offshore credentials beyond the online gambling sector.

David Janczewski, head of new business at the Royal Mint confirmed it had been approached by the finance minister of Alderney to "explore the possibility of ***manufacturing*** a physical commemorative coin with a Bitcoin theme".

"Discussions have not progressed further and at this stage it remains nothing more than a concept," he added.

But the controversy around Bitcoin has made the Alderney plan a sensitive subject. The Treasury, which owns the Royal Mint, declined to comment on the plans. George Osborne, the British chancellor, also holds the title of Master of the Mint.

The plans have been steered by chairman of the island's finance committee, and are understood to have the support of Alderney's president, although they still need to be approved by the island's 10-member parliament.

A number of private companies have produced physical Bitcoins, although they are not backed by an official mint. Instead they feature a holographic strip, which is peeled off to reveal the private key then redeemed online.

How would Alderney's plan work?

An independent company will provide the Bitcoins. If the price plunged, neither Alderney nor the Royal Mint would lose anything.

The company would put the Bitcoins in an escrow account at an agreed price.

Meanwhile, the Royal Mint would take customers' orders for its minted Bitcoins and receive money from those coin sales.

The virtual Bitcoins backing the physical coins would be held in digital storage facilities by Alderney.

The Mint would issue the commemorative Bitcoin, paying for the value of the gold content itself. Alderney would receive royalties from sales of the coins.

Coins could be redeemed for sterling at any point in Alderney for the price of a Bitcoin on that day.

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From Mr John Hywel Jones.

Sir, Simon Kuper asserts that good European writers seldom bothered with sport ("Whole new ball game", Life & Arts, November 23).

Hazlitt wrote about boxing in "The Fight" and his "The Indian Jugglers" is an eloquent obituary of Cavanagh, the fives player.

Louis MacNeice, in his "Autumn Sequel", has a meditation on the death of Dylan Thomas and Wales' great victory over the 1953 All Blacks (in rugby union football).

Perhaps Mr Kuper was too concentrated on football (association).

John Hywel Jones, Annecy-le-Vieux, France

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From Mr Garrett Lynch.

Sir, Alistair Budd (Letters, November 23) has a point that satisfying employment does take the edge off of long hours.

However, as the holiday season begins, news reports always highlight people working long hours in low-wage jobs during the holidays themselves.

Enjoying the tasks is irrelevant if you are working long hours during time meant to be spent with one's family and still cannot make ends meet. Employment that is both satisfying and financially rewarding, sadly, is still at the top of many a Christmas list.

Garrett Lynch, New York, NY, US

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From Mr Paul Treuthardt.

Sir, Your report "Carmakers put wheels in motion to attract young drivers" (November 23) has a serious error where it talks of saving "4,471 [road] deaths a year".

Ministry of Transport figures say the total road toll for 2012 was 1,754, incidentally the lowest since records began in 1926.

Paul Treuthardt, London SE3, UK

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From Mr Graham Hall.

Sir, I was surprised to read, in "Poor cultivation" (House & Home, November 23), that visitors on their way to Lenin's tomb were passing through Waterlow Park in London.

Although Lenin had visited London when he was alive, he was last seen dead and embalmed in Moscow. Perhaps the author is confusing him with Karl Marx, buried in Highgate Cemetery.

Graham Hall, Wingham, Kent, UK

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From Mr Robert Schroeder.

Sir, Lawrence Dritsas (Letters, November 23) is correct to say that, as humans mature, the gene that produces lactase shuts down because the body has presumably been weaned from mother's milk, expecting never to consume it again. What is unique about human behaviour is that, once we reach adulthood, we voluntarily consume milk that comes from a different species.

Robert Schroeder, Ewing, NJ, US

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Albemarle & Bond's shares slumped 53 per cent this week after another profit warning, in which the pawnbroker admitted to melting down gold jewellery to raise quick cash and avoid breaching debt limits.

A falling gold price and increased competition has shrunk the size of A&B's pledge book, and its problems were compounded by the cost of a failed rescue rights issue. The group's biggest shareholder, EZCorp of the US, this month refused to back plans for a £35m cash call. But Shore Capital was hopeful A&B could avoid administration, arguing that lending banks would not want the "hassle" of putting its pledge book into runoff.

Shares in Topps Tiles jumped 33.8 per cent this week after the retailer reported higher demand in the last two months. A revival of bid rumours also helped the rally.

But shares in Asian Citrus fell 5.4 per cent after another disappointing trading update, in which the Chinese orange grower warned of falling volumes because of poor weather. Demand also fell, partly in response to reports that other Chinese growers had been selling unripe oranges dyed with a carcinogenic chemical.

Aim new issue Kalibrate Technologies, made a strong debut, though. Shares in the petrol station software provider rose 9 per cent, after the group raised £13.1m for expansion.

VP boosted by focus on core areas of retail rental

VP has a good grasp of the basics tool hire. "We buy equipment well, we rent it well throughout its life and we sell it well at the end," says Neil Stothard, group managing director, writes Andy Sharman.

Unlike its bigger rival Speedy Hire, which wants to be seen as a services company and has big overseas ambitions, Harrogate-based VP is concentrating on its core areas of retail rental for the construction and DIY trades, as well as supplying excavation equipment and forklift trucks.

Interim results highlighted the rewards stemming from this focus. Revenues in the first half rose 9 per cent to £91.3m. Profit before tax and amortisation was up 17 per cent at £12.8m. Hire Station and Groundforce - the biggest parts of the business - benefited from improving market conditions in the housebuilding and construction industries.

VP's shares, which are up 60 per cent in the year to date, jumped about 8 per cent on the day of the results announcement.

Talvivaara gains ground in fight to stave off bankruptcy

Shareholders in Talvivaara, the London-listed Finnish miner, find themselves between a nickel-rich rock and a hard place after its warning this month that it faced possible bankruptcy if it fails to gain extra financing, writes Michael Kavanagh.

That warning, which came six months after its last fundraising, compounded a fall in Talvivaara's shares that had already lost more than nine-tenths of their value so far this year.

On Friday, however, the withdrawal of support for an application for corporate reorganisation by creditor Nystar appeared to give the company more breathing space.

Shares in the company, which owns large deposits of low-grade ore that can only be mined profitably when nickel prices are high, jumped 40 per cent to 4.61p on news of possible respite in its crisis.

But they remain bombed out compared to highs of almost 170p reached in 2011 amid hopes that clever leaching technology combined with growing demand for industrial metals could deliver fortunes to investors in a business bought from Outokumpu for a EUR1 coin in 2004.

With shares so low, eternal optimists who still hold stock can at least be content that remaining risk is predominantly on the upside.

Manroy sets course to abandon quote on Aim

Manroy, the Sandhurst-headquartered maker of machine guns and weapons systems, seems set to abandon its quote on the Alternative Investment Market, writes Kate Burgess.

On Tuesday, Manroy announced it was in talks with three potential bidders - US Ordnance, Beretta and Herstal - who had until Christmas Eve to make a bid. Then, on Thursday, it announced that the talks with US Ordnance had ended and talks with Beretta were not active. However, talks with Herstal are. Manroy's shares closed the week up 15p to 74p, valuing the company, at £14m.

That was the price at which the business was floated on Aim in 2010 - valuing the company at about £10m. Manroy came to the market to fund expansion into the US and to diversify its product range. A year later, its shares had risen above 120p, but profits have since been hit by delays to big contracts. Manroy reported a £2m pre-tax loss to the end of September 2012.

People familiar with the company said the management felt its lumpy revenue stream made it ill-suited to the public market.

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From Mr Christopher Langdon.

Sir, You order when your supplier has the stock; you pre-order when he is still waiting ("Does this pre-fix make any difference?", November 23).

Irish pubs have to process several orders at once; Guinness takes such a long time to settle ("Efficiency is not always in an app", November 23).

This comment is a better example of efficiency - answering two FT letters at once.

Christopher Langdon, Hastings, E Sussex, UK

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When he stepped down as a senior independent director at Standard Life last year, Lord Norman Blackwell declined the invitation to give a speech at his leaving dinner. Instead he asked the board to find him a piano.

The assembled directors at Edinburgh's swish Prestonfield hotel - plus a coterie of passing guests who crowded around the doorway - were treated to a mini-recital of Schubert and Chopin. "It was concert pianist quality," says Standard Life's longtime chairman, Gerry Grimstone. "Norman really is the archetypal renaissance man."

It is just as well. Lord Blackwell, 61, is set next week to be reborn as the next chairman of Lloyds Banking Group, taking on the highest profile role of his career, as Britain's biggest high-street bank prepares to return to full private sector ownership, after the humiliating part-nationalisation of 2008.

The appointment, revealed by the Financial Times on Thursday, is expected to be rubber-stamped by the board on Monday, paving the way for Lord Blackwell to take over the Lloyds' chairmanship from incumbent Sir Win Bischoff early next year.

On paper at least, the former banker-cum government adviser-cum career non-executive, is the perfect choice. Lord Blackwell's early career flip-flopped between stints advising government and at McKinsey, the consultancy, before he moved to NatWest bank, where he became head of strategy to then chief executive Derek Wanless. Since 2000, he has held a succession of company directorships, and chairs construction business Interserve.

Those who have worked with Lord Blackwell admit he has been an understated figure for much of his career. "He is low-key to the point of being boring in some people's eyes," says one former colleague. But most praise his style and his substance. "He's old-fashioned in the best kind of way," says Mr Grimstone - a trait that will mesh with the image Lloyds seeks to exude: a traditional lender that has spurned some of the racier investment banking strategies undertaken by many rivals.

Despite being a life peer, associates say Lord Blackwell - married with five grown-up children - is very down-to-earth, living with his family in an unremarkable Victorian villa in Epsom.

All those who have worked with him praise twin skills in the prospective Lloyds chairman - a keen intellect and a great diligence. "He's assiduous in keeping up to date with changes in rules and regulations," says one former colleague at KPMG. "He comes to all our seminars on international accounting standards."

Lord Blackwell's style will contrast with the ebullient ways of the outgoing Sir Win. But he is expected nonetheless to jell well with António Horta-Osório, chief executive. "He will be quite a good foil to António," says one adviser. "He might be understated but he is such a detail man that he won't be fobbed off. He will be a serious challenger to the bank's executives."

That prospective dynamic is understood to have played a vital role in Lord Blackwell's selection for the job ahead of other candidates, including rival board member David Roberts. "Some people thought David still had CEO ambitions and would have rivalled António rather than complementing him," says one person involved in the process.

Capping Lord Blackwell's suitability for the job, in the board's eyes, was his deep political connections. Though he has not been directly involved in government since heading former prime minister John Major's policy unit in the mid-1990s, he remains close to the current leadership and sits on the board of the Centre for Policy Studies think-tank.

Lloyds remains 33 per cent government owned, and liaising with the Treasury, as that stake is sold to private sector investors over the next couple of years, may be the most crucial part of Lord Blackwell's job.

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The Co-operative Bank's retail bondholders have voted almost unanimously in favour of a rescue restructuring, enabling the lender to push ahead with plans to fill a £1.5bn capital hole by the end of the year.

Results from an early participation vote, which closed on Friday, showed that more than the required two-thirds of investors submitted their forms. Of those that did, 99.91 per cent supported the recapitalisation, the Co-op said.

The result will be welcome news for the Co-op, which has had a rocky few weeks since it announced the restructuring deal with bondholders on November 4.

The bank was thrown into crisis shortly after, as its former chairman, Reverend Paul Flowers was filmed allegedly trying to buy illegal drugs. The Co-op has admitted that the events have damaged its reputation and contributed to a loss of current account customers in recent weeks.

In a statement released on Friday night, the Co-op said the bank and its parent group were "delighted at the overwhelming levels of support for the liability management exercise at this critical juncture . . . We are now highly confident that our £1.5bn recapitalisation plan for The Co-operative Bank can be achieved."

The bank is being forced to raise the fresh capital after being hit by large losses on bad debts, and charges relating to mis-sold payment protection insurance and a mishandled IT upgrade.

The outcome of the vote will also be a relief for a group that represented holders of the Co-op Bank's lower tier two bonds, LT2, and its advisers - Moelis, the investment bank, and Shearman & Sterling, the law firm - which together led the bank recapitalisation talks with the Co-op.

The LT2 group consisted of several hedge funds, which built a blocking stake in the lower tier two bonds and used it to negotiate a better deal for creditors than the Co-op had proposed. Aurelius - the biggest hedge fund in the consortium, and one that was central to the recapitalisation talks - sold almost its entire holding days after the plan was announced.

The Co-op and the LT2 group had some concerns that they may not receive sufficient numbers of votes from retail investors to approve the recapitalisation. Many of the retail investors are pensioners in their 80s and 90s.

If the bank had failed to secure support from investors, its recapitalisation plan would have collapsed and it would likely have been put into resolution.

The final deadline for votes is December 6 and the Co-op will announce the full result midway through next month.

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From Mr Bertrand Horwitz.

Sir, Simon Kuper discovered the beauties of sports writing at the age of 10 through reading anthologies of baseball writing ("Whole new ball game", Life & Arts, November 23). Among such articles and the one that stayed with him the longest was two-time Pulitzer Prize winner John Updike's New Yorker magazine profile of Boston Red Sox star player Ted Williams, still renowned for being the only modern baseball player to record a seasonal batting average over .400. The essay is evaluated by Mr Kuper as better than "any sports writing I ever encountered growing up in Europe".

But as a life-long baseball fan, I wish he had read the baseball essays of another American writer who, to my knowledge, never wrote fiction - Stephen Jay Gould, the polymath scientist. His essay about New York Yankees baseball icon Joe DiMaggio, "The Streak of Streaks", whose hitting streak of 56 straight games in 1941, the same year as Williams' unique achievement, still brings tears to my eyes at age 86.

After quoting the poets Omar Khayyam and Alexander Pope and determining the near impossibility of such a run of hits, Gould concludes his essay: "DiMaggio's hitting streak is the finest of legitimate legends because it embodies the essence of the battle that truly defines our lives. DiMaggio activated the greatest and most unattainable dream of all humanity, the hope and chimera of all sages and shamans: he cheated death, at least for a while". The article appeared in the August 18 1988 issue of the New York Review of Books.

Bertrand Horwitz, Asheville, NC, US

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From Prof Yeomin Yoon.

Sir, A Chinese friend of mine points out that I committed an "amusing error" by mislabelling (or misspelling) the Chinese Communist party as the Chinese Community party, in my letter on "Policy on Tibet is at best confusing and contradictory" (November 23). As an individual who truly wants to become a zhengyou (friend who speaks the truth) to the Chinese people, I sincerely thank the FT for overlooking this Freudian slip, which only reflects my fervent wish to see the advent of such a party or parties; this would signal the beginning of transforming China into a multi-party society where diverse and multivocal ideological and political forces vie peacefully to accommodate a governance structure that serves the entire 1.3bn-strong Chinese community.

Yeomin Yoon, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, US

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From Mr Steven Short.

Sir, So it's Jony Ive who is to blame for doing away with the simple task of plugging a cord into a socket, and turning it into a chore requiring me to get up from my chair, lean over my iMac to peer at the bottom of the back of the computer (which I now see upside down) as I search for which of the three small poorly labelled ports in which to insert the device I want to use ("When to cut corners", Books, November 23).

We can all be grateful that his bathroom suite design was rejected.

Steven Short, San Francisco, CA, US

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Kingdom Holding, Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's investment vehicle, will lose another high-profile executive, marking the second such departure in recent months.

Shadi Sadeek Sanbar, chief financial officer at Kingdom Holding, plans to leave the company at the end of the year, people familiar with the situation said. His departure comes after the resignation in June of Ahmed Reda Halawani, the company's director of private equity.

Kingdom has been in the spotlight this year after Prince Alwaleed became embroiled in a public dispute with Forbes magazine over a detailed investigation into his wealth.

The dispute with Forbes emerged ahead of an article which said the value of Prince Alwaleed's stake in Kingdom was much lower than its share price suggested. Kingdom responded with a firm rejection, and described allegations of share-price manipulation as "completely unsupported and biased".

Mr Sanbar's deputy, Mohammed Fahmy Soliman, may be promoted as part of the transition and Mr Sanbar will remain an adviser to the Prince, the people said. Mr Soliman is already more involved in meetings with bankers, they added.

Mr Sanbar became Kingdom's chief financial officer in 2007 and has acted as a special adviser to Prince Alwaleed since 2005. People familiar with the company saidthat working there was demanding, with long hours to match the packed schedule of Prince Alwaleed.

A person familiar with Mr Sanbar said: "He wanted to leave for some time and I am not sure it will have a significant impact on the company." He added that Mr Sanbar planned to retire and to spend more time with his family.

Kingdom Holding did not respond to a request for comment. Bloomberg first reported the move on Friday.

An accounting professional, Mr Sanbar started his working life at the Los Angeles office of Arthur Andersen in the 1970s after studying in the US. He worked at the firm for decades, and stayed on after its integration with Ernst & Young.

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Brazil's state-controlled oil company, Petrobras, has agreed to raise fuel prices but failed to deliver a transparent pricing policy for the future, dealing a blow to investors and the country's struggling ethanol industry.

The Rio de Janeiro-based company said late on Friday that it's board had agreed to raise petrol and diesel prices by 4 and 8 per cent respectively as of Saturday morning.

Under Brazil's unofficial fuel subsidies agreement, Petrobras is forced to import fuel and sell it at a loss in the domestic market to help the government control inflation.

The practice has cost its refining unit over R$40bn since the beginning of 2011, raising doubts about its ability to deliver its $237bn five-year investment plan. It has also caused great anger among minority shareholders around the world.

The moderate fuel price increases announced on Friday should help limit losses but investors had been hoping for more after the company had promised greater transparency on fuel subsidies.

Petrobras said in a surprise announcement last month that it had prepared a methodology that would help match domestic prices to international prices. However, the move needed the approval of the board, led by Finance Minister Guido Mantega.

In its statement on Friday, Petrobras said the price increases were part of the "implementation of its diesel and petrol price policy". However, it said the policy would remain private, prompting criticisms that the company had, in fact, made no significant changes to its practices at all.

Brazil's ethanol industry body, Unica, said on Friday that the announcement would not help as it gave no clarity on future fuel prices.

Producers of the biofuel have suffered widespread losses over the past few years as they are unable to compete with subsidised petrol prices. In Brazil, almost all cars are built to run on ethanol or petrol, leaving drivers to choose depending on which fuel is cheaper at the pump.

"We continue without any system, without a formula with clear and stable parameters, which would make it possible to understand the basis on which petrol prices are maintained or adjusted," Unica said in a statement on Friday.

While Petrobras's management have been keen to push through a transparent methodology, the government is concerned it would boost fuel already high inflation and decided to block the move, according to local media.

Annual inflation in Brazil was last recorded at about 5.8 per cent - below the 6.5 per cent ceiling of the tolerance range but above the 4.5 per cent target.

On Wednesday, the central bank raised the benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points to 10 per cent, adding to what has become the world's biggest tightening cycle this year.

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Brand Republic News Releases

March 3, 2014

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**Section:** TRADING PLACES; Pg. 1

**Length:** 48717 words

**Byline:** Chris Harding brandrepublic.com

**Body**

Mark Craze steps down as chief executive at Havas Media Group UK, Simon Calver resigns as head of Mothercare and James Wildman joins Trinity Mirror, in this week's round-up of people moves in advertising, marketing, media and PR.

TBWA\London has selected Richard Stainer, the managing partner and client services director at Bartle Bogle Hegarty London, as its new chief executive. (Campaign)

Dare has hired Vassilios Alexiou, the founder and executive creative director of the interactive design consultancy Less Rain, in the new role of director of experience design. (Campaign)

Mark Craze, chief executive of Havas Media Group in the UK, is leaving the French marketing group after nine years to explore other 'exciting new projects'. (Campaign)

Alistair Beattie, DDB's EMEA head of strategic planning and innovation, has been promoted to EMEA president of Tribal Worldwide after the departure of Jacco ter Schegget to OgilvyOne China. (Campaign)

Holler, the digital agency, has hired Chomoi Picho-Owiny, a creative director at Possible, as creative director, overseeing output for the London office. (Campaign)

Tom Johnstone, a former head of planning at DLKW, is joining 72andSunny's Los Angeles office as a group strategy officer. (Campaign)

Marketing

Mothercare chief executive Simon Calver, a former marketer at Unilever and PepsiCo, has resigned from his role at the baby products retailer. (Marketing)

Land Rover has recruited former Audi and LG marketer Dominic Chambers to the role of global marketing communications director. (Marketing)

Media

James Wildman, who recently stepped down as the managing director of Yahoo UK and Ireland, is set to take the lead commercial role at Trinity Mirror. (Campaign)

Matt Teeman, the former commercial director of Metro turned group leader of its client sales team, has become the latest high-profile scalp of an ongoing review at parent Daily Mail and General Trust. (Media Week)

PR

GolinHarris has snared Havas Group's UK head of social Neil Kleiner to spearhead its own social media offering. (PR Week)

Former Olympic volleyball player Andrew Pink has joined Brazil to lead its sports division. (PR Week)

Cohn & Wolfe has appointed Helena Roberts, the former EMEA comms head of erstwhile client Burger King, as a director in its consumer marketing team. (PR Week)

AstraZeneca's vice-president of global communications Neil McCrae is to join Royal Mail as deputy director of communications after nearly 20 years in the pharmaceutical sector. (PR Week)

Gavin Grant, the former chairman of Burson-Marsteller UK, has stepped down as chief executive of the ***animal*** welfare charity RSPCA due to health concerns. (PR Week)

[*http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/1282429/*](http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/1282429/). >---------------------------------------!------------------------------R [DC] 04/03/14 11:59:00 AM {TODAY'S date - all two digits} [FN] MEDA0314.OUT {Filename eg MKTG1305.OUT} >----------------------------------------------------------------------R [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Letter from the brand director: Report Card evaluates industry in transition. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 3 [QQ] The agency landscape we once knew has changed dramatically, and nowhere is this more evident than in Campaign's 11th Agency Report Card - the most detailed analysis of advertising and media agency performance in Asia-Pacific.[QQ] The Agency Report Card has been extracted from submissions from 46 of the region's top creative and media networks, independent new business analysis and awards from major festivals around the world - representing in our view the fairest and most quantitative approach possible to review the 12 months of 2013. On page 39 you'll find more on the scoring and the revamped process that set out to allow for greater agency participation in the evaluation process.[QQ] So what does the Report Card tell us? Overall, it shows that networks performed strongly in 2013, and delivered business value. There is evidence of growth in diversifying services and deepening capabilities in digital, which for some media networks now accounts for 40 per cent or more of revenue. WPP's Mindshare for instance counts more than 50 per cent of its business from outside of traditional media activities, from services such as consulting, analytics and activation.[QQ] Talent wise, many of the networks invested in people by hiring talent directors in markets. There were also changes at the top at many of the regional media networks: Cheuk Chiang came in at Omnicom Media Group; Susana Tsui at PHD; Gerry Boyle at ZenithOptimedia; Mark Heap at MediaCom, and Ajit Varghese at Maxus, to name a few. The transitions didn't derail steady growth, and most of these networks have gone from strength to strength, building their businesses and those of their clients significantly while settling in with new leadership.[QQ] After much debate, Campaign moved 13 of the creative networks up and one down. In media, five agencies moved up.[QQ] As always, we look forward to hearing your feedback on the Agency Report Card. The evolution of the industry, the impact of global mergers and the challenge of expanding business revenue are also detailed in our Media360Asia coverage (see page 58).[QQ] Atifa Silk is brand director, Campaign Asia-Pacific[QQ] [*atifa.silk@haymarket.asia[QQ]*](mailto:atifa.silk@haymarket.asia[QQ]) --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Best of the blogs. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 4 [QQ] Advertising can play a powerful role in elevating the status of househusbands, such as leading (and not just simply reflecting) the image of male homemakers and championing the sacrifices these brave men have made for their families.[QQ] Eric Leong[QQ] campaignasia.com/husband[QQ] The traditional approach of advertising output has been the big idea and how it plays out across media. Marketing to today's consumer requires multiple small ideas - each of which is context-aware as it plays out on a different platform.[QQ] Rajdeep Endow[QQ] campaignasia.com/endow[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Campaignasia.com's top 10. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 4 [QQ] [TB] 1 Facebook Paper: Tips for brands campaignasia.com/201403facebook 2 Top new-business wins of 2013 campaignasia.com/201403wins 3 2014 Marketers' Outlook Survey campaignasia.com/201403outlook 4 Mobile and social marketing are dead campaignasia.com/201403dead 5 Facebook + WhatsApp: Why? campaignasia.com/201403whatsapp 6 Philips, Cummings to boost digital campaignasia.com/201403philips 7 Tham Khai Meng's wish for Asia campaignasia.com/201403tham 8 TSLA wins Volkswagen in Singapore campaignasia.com/201403vw 9 Ambrish Jain joins Lenovo campaignasia.com/201403jain 10 Answering briefs via WeChat campaignasia.com/201403wechat [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Media - ZenithOptimedia lures Samsung exec as MD. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] ZenithOptimedia has hired JunHo Kim as managing director of its Korean office, as Jessica Lee prepares to return to Hong Kong. Kim was most recently senior manager of marketing planning in Samsung's global marketing operations division. The agency expects Kim to help attract more domestic accounts looking to expand beyond Korea, as well as new global clients managed out of Korea. Lee, who headed ZenithOptimedia Korea for more than three years relocates to her native Hong Kong to take up a new, as yet undisclosed, position.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Media - Dentsu Aegis brings consultancy to Asia. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Analytics-based marketing-effectiveness consultancy Data2Decisions has launched in the region, with John Perella as managing partner in Singapore. Data2Decisions, which specialises in econometric modelling to help marketers get a handle on the real drivers of effectiveness, got its start in the UK in 2001. Aegis Media acquired it in 2012.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Media - City Chain picks UM for media business. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Watch retailer City Chain selected UM as its media buying and planning agency in Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. The mandate includes full-service support, communications strategy development, and buying and planning across traditional and digital media channels. The remit also includes digital duties in China, a key market for the retailer in Asia. The agency won the account without a pitch following discussions with the agency in September.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Media - Henkel chooses MEC in Indonesia. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Henkel - the maker of laundry and personal-care brands including Syoss, Fa and Pril - has selected MEC for media planning and buying in Indonesia, after a pitch. The agency beat out incumbent OMD and one other undisclosed agency, according to sources. The pitch took place in December, and the brand made its choice in Japan. The brand is reported to have plans to expand significantly in Indonesia, and MEC has already staffed up to support the account.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Media - Wyeth Nutrition appoints Mindshare. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Wyeth Nutrition has appointed Mindshare Indonesia to handle its USdollars 4.5 million media planning, strategy and buying business. Mindshare said it won the business following a competitive pitch. According to incumbent ZenithOptimedia, which did not participate, the move to Mindshare was a result of Nestle's acquisition of Wyeth Nutrition, following which the client wished to consolidate its media.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Marketing - Ambrish Jain joins Lenovo from Samsung. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Samsung's former regional marketing head Ambrish Jain has joined Lenovo as vice-president of marketing for Asia. Jain joined the Chinese PC maker on 8 January. His move to Lenovo comes two months after a restructuring initiative at Samsung. Jain joined Samsung in 2012, where he led marketing operations in the region. Prior to Samsung, he spent 12 years at Procter & Gamble.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Marketing - AT Kearney hires Ashton to lead region. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Boosting its marketing operations in the region, management consulting firm A.T. Kearney has hired Laura Ashton as Asia-Pacific regional marketing leader. Ashton, who will be based in Singapore, was also named as global leader for relationship marketing and event management, the company confirmed. Ashton was previously vice-president and head of marketing for Philips' lighting unit, Ashton was responsible for business-to-consumer and business-to-business marketing for APAC, the Middle East, Russia and Africa.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Marketing - Cummings tasked to drive Philips' digital. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Damien Cummings, the newly appointed CMO of Philips in Asia is looking to drive more digital communication to take Philips through to the next phase of its brand promise 'Innovation and you'. Cummings's predecessor, Arent Jan Hesselink, who has taken up a global role, had focused on changing the perception of Philips from a company that sells products to one that creates solutions. Cummings' key priority is to align marketing with the company's ambitious growth plans.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Marketing - Project: Worldwide boosts APAC presence. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] US-headquartered experiential marketing company Project: Worldwide is expanding its shopper marketing firm and has hired the former MD of Saatchi & Saatchi X, Michael Tan, to do the job. Tan joins the firm as MD of shopper marketing, Asia-Pacific. Based in Guangzhou, Tan will work in partnership with existing businesses in relevant geographies.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Marketing - Male-grooming sector the fastest growing. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Thanks to Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan, sales of male-grooming products in Asia are growing faster (at 9 per cent in 2013) than the entire beauty product segment (5 per cent) and the personal care category as a whole (6 per cent), according to Kantar Worldpanel. However, the value share of the male segment in the personal care category is just 4 per cent.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Advertising - TSLA wins VW account in Singapore. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Volkswagen Group Singapore has appointed The Secret Little Agency as its lead creative agency in Singapore after a three-month pitch involving several competitors. According to Volkswagen, TSLA will drive the brand's integrated marketing, through-the-line support, brand guardianship and overall creative direction over a two-year period. Digital and media duties remain with Tribal DDB and MediaCom, respectively.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Advertising - Havas Worldwide SEA leader departs. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] After a little more than a year, Havas Worldwide's Southeast Asia CEO, Naomi Troni, has left the role and the region. At present Havas WW remains uncertain about Troni's position in the company, and her duties have reverted to Dan Gibson, Singapore group MD. The agency said it is not searching for a new SEA lead. The region is technically helmed by Asia-Pacific chairman Juan Rocamora, who is based in Paris and is also CEO of Southern Europe.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Advertising - Beiersdorf digital all under SapientNitro. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] The international skin care giant has consolidated its digital business under SapientNitro China. A competitive pitch back in October, against four undisclosed agencies, sealed the deal. SapientNitro will be responsible for digital marketing across all interactive platforms, as well as digital creative and technical execution for its skin care and hair-care brands. It is the first time SapientNitro has worked with Beiersdorf[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Advertising - Master Kong chooses Publicis Shanghai. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Maurice Hung, marketing VP of Master Kong China, confirmed that the brand has chosen Publicis Shanghai as its creative agency for its biscuit and cake business. Master Kong conducted a four-way pitch, including both international and local agencies, in late December. Publicis Shanghai has taken over the business from Havas Worldwide Beijing (formerly EuroRSCG).[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Advertising - Infiniti taps Melissa Bell to lead marketing. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Infiniti, the luxury arm of Nissan Motor, appointed Volkswagen's regional marketing director for ASEAN, Melissa Bell, as director of global brand marketing. Bell will be responsible for building and managing Infiniti's overall brand strategy and "bringing it to life", according to Stefan Weinmann, GM of communications. Infiniti works closely with TBWA for its creative direction.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: PR - Burson-Marsteller names leadership. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Burson-Marsteller has announced the appointment of Margaret Key as COO for Asia-Pacific, and Daisy King as president of Burson-Marsteller China. Both continue to report to Patrick Ford, worldwide vice-chairman and Asia-Pacific chair. Key joined Burson-Marsteller in 2010, while King has been with Burson-Marsteller for 14 years.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: PR - Misty Agustini joins Weber Shandwick. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Weber Shandwick has named Misty Agustini to the new role of general manager, Indonesia. A PR expert with nearly two decades of experience, her remit will include cross-practice responsibility, working with various teams to foster growth and drive innovation in Indonesia's fast-developing market.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: PR - Citigate Dewe Rogerson boosts team. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Singapore financial and corporate PR consultancy Citigate Dewe Rogerson, a subsidiary of Huntsworth, has appointed Chia Hui Kheng as MD. Chia replaces Elaine Lim, who assumes the newly created position of chairman. She will be responsible for day-to-day management, growth and development and report to Chris Tang, CEO of Huntsworth Asia-Pacific.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: PR - Carlsberg Singapore appoints GolinHarris. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Carlsberg Singapore has retained GolinHarris to lead its corporate and internal communications and brand marketing efforts in 2014. The 12-month engagement covers Carlsberg, Carlsberg Special Brew, Kronenbourg and Somersby and includes a digital component for Carlsberg.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: PR - InterContinental picks Ogilvy PR. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] InterContinental Sydney has appointed Ogilvy PR as its agency of record following a pitch against six other consultancies. The partnership will involve targeted media relations, an influencer strategy, and content creation. Ogilvy PR aims to cement InterContinental's positioning as one of the city's premier venues.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Mover and shaker - Mark Worman. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] New Job: EVP, Asia-Pacific/global marketing director, McCann Health[QQ] Old job: CEO, McCann Health Australia[QQ] Our view With 18 years of experience at McCann Health, Worman seems a safe bet to lead the region. He has already had a stint as regional director for Asia-Pacific back in the late 1990s. Other roles include president of McCann Consumer Health New York and McCann Health UK, and regional director for Europe. Amar Urhekar, whom Worman is replacing, has done such an impressive job of building McCann Health in Asia that he will be a difficult act to follow. But he leaves the company in good shape for Worman to continue its upward trajectory. Urhekar has been promoted to the new position of president for the Americas.[QQ] Surprise factor: 5/10[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Stat of the month - 23m. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Number of people in China who wil rise out of poverty this year[QQ] Source: TNS[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: Chatter. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] "I have no idea what they will be doing. In fact, I doubt most people in those two companies have any idea what they will be doing."[QQ] At Media360Asia, GroupM president Dominic Proctor suggests he's given up trying to make sense of the 'POG' merger.[QQ] "They're on the hard shoulder changing the wheels, while everyone else is going at 100 mph."[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann of Dentsu Aegis Network also gets in a dig at the apparently culturally mismatched giants.[QQ] "Sometimes you don't need a pitch - you just need a bitch."[QQ] R3 principal Greg Paull suggests clients should treat their relationships with agencies more like a marriage.[QQ] "It's a myth that any big agency pitch was won on price alone."[QQ] George Patten of Accenture is adamant that clients do not just want to cut costs. No sir.[QQ] "You're better off being a pothead than pretending you can multitask."[QQ] Mondelez's Bonin Bough uses scientific findings to shatter a fallacy. He went on to note that mobile usage is "as addictive as cocaine" and commonly leads to "tactile hallucinations" - that is, imagining one's phone to be vibrating when it isn't.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Month: We really like this ad. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Hong Kong institution Tai Hing, a popular cafe, celebrated its 25th anniversary by turning singer Eric Kwok into a hero who bears a striking resemblance (ahem) to the title character in a popular film franchise. See the video at campaignasia.com[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Lowe Profero. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Lowe Profero, the global digital network of Lowe and Partners, has promoted Phil Ely to Asia-Pacific head of communications for Performance@Lowe Profero, the new name for Profero's global digital media offering, Profero Performance.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at TubeMogul. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] TubeMogul has promoted Phu Truong to managing director, Southeast Asia. He was previously director of the company's operations in Asia for 18 months.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at JWT Hong Kong. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Philip Lee has resigned as co-ECD of JWT Hong Kong, and the agency has relocated Craig Howie, previously senior creative director in Shanghai, to Hong Kong as CCO.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Saatchi & Saatchi. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Saatchi & Saatchi has tapped Shannon Cullum to replace Dini Makmun as CEO for Indonesia and chief growth officer for its Asia-Pacific operations. Makmun was named chairwoman and advisor to the CEO. Cullum was most recently CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi Russia since July 2008.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Interpublic Group. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Interpublic Group has made a senior appointments at its media agency umbrella unit Mediabrands' G-14 cluster. Eric Weaver has been named chief social officer, while Roland Fiege is head of social strategy.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Mindshare. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Mindshare has appointed Wendy Walker as regional chief growth officer for Asia-Pacific, based in Singapore. She joins from Australia where she was most recently CMO at iiNet. Prior that this, she was marketing director at Telstra[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Carat. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Dentsu-Aegis Network's Carat has hired Gilad Coppersmith as international client president for GM international operations.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] People moves: Appointment at Innocean. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 6 [QQ] Eddie Wong is Innocean's new chief creative officer in China with effect from mid-March following his impending departure from Draftfcb China, where he is national ECD.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Rankings. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 10 [QQ] Business performance update january McCann and Carat get off to a strong start with wins including Nestle and Friesland Campina[QQ] [TB] CREATIVE AGENCY PERFORMANCE LEAGUE KEY (A) Revenue gained (USdollars m) (B) Recent losses New Last Agency Wins YTD totals Rnk Rnk (A) (B) (USdollars m) 1 (2) McCann WG CSG Comms Aus, Bharti Walmart India, Nestle India project 10.0 Hatton Nat. Bank 10.0 2 (1) Ogilvy Dabur India, Old Navy China, Federal Bank India 5.2 Sukishi 4.9 3 (12) Dentsu Glico Vietnam project, Prudential Thailand project 5.8 4.8 4 (9) Lowe Arda China, Engro Foods India, Book My Show India 3.5 3.5 5 (7) Y&R ASB Aus Project, NRL Aus Project, TPS Indonesia Project 3.5 3.5 6 (5) JWT Trident Group India, Greenlam India 3.3 3.3 7 (6) Leo Burnett Honda Australia, Chevrolet Thailand Project 2.7 2.7 8 (8) Saatchi & Saatchi VW China, Mister Potato Malaysia, Mamee Chef Malaysia 2.6 Mondelez M'sia 2.5 9 (10) Grey Group Dermatix Korea Project, Cadbury India (Digital) 1.6 1.6 10 (4) TBWA PTT Thai, Lee China Project, Mondelez M'sia sales 1.7 0.6 MEDIA AGENCY PERFORMANCE LEAGUE KEY (A) Revenue gained (USdollars m) (B) Recent losses New Last Agency Wins YTD totals Rnk Rnk (A) (B) (USdollars m) 1 (5) Carat Friesland Campina, Mastercard Aus, Ginvera Malaysia 13.4 Beirsdorf China 8.1 2 (2) OMD Beirsdorf China, HelloWorld Australia 8.2 Lasalle Indonesia 7.1 3 (13) MediaCom K2 Eider Korea, JFC Philippines, DBS Indonesia (digital) 5.2 5.2 4 (12) Vizeum Reckitt Benckiser Regional, BMW Korea, Huawei India 3.6 3.6 5 (11) Mindshare Nestle Malaysia 3.0 Tokuyo Taiwan 2.9 6 (7) MEC Ajinomoto Indonesia, HuiYuan China, Lasalle Indonesia 2.6 Chanel India 2.1 7 (4) UM Universities Aus, Baskin Robbins Aus, Moose Indo 1.6 Mastercard Aus 0.9 8 (10) Starcom Quiksilver Aus, Liby China (search), Guangzhou Mobile 1.0 New Balance Kor 0.7 9 (1) Zenith- Optimedia Masan Vietnam, Swarovski Korea 0.9 Reckitt Thailand 0.4 10= (8 PHD Tipco Thailand, Piaggio Vietnam, Save the Children Php 0.6 Beiersdorf Php 0.1 ASIA-PACIFIC TOP 10 CREATIVE WINS Rank Agency Account Market 1 Lowe Friesland Campina APAC 2 Saatchi & Saatchi Volkswagen (some brands) China 3 Leo Burnett Honda Australia 4 Y&R ASB Project Australia 5 Grey Dermatix Project Korea 6 TBWA PTT Corporate Thailand 7 Y&R NRL Project Australia 8 Leo Burnett Chevrolet Sales Project Thailand 9 Ogilvy Dabur India 10 Ogilvy Old Navy China Asia-Pacific Top 10 Media Wins Rank Agency Account Market 1 Carat Friesland Campina Regional 2 OMD Beirsdorf China & Indonesia 3 Carat MasterCard APAC 4 Mindshare Nestle Malaysia 5 Vizeum Reckitt Benckiser Indonesia, Php, Thailand 6 Vizeum BMW Korea Korea 7 OMD Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan 8 MediaCom K2 Eider Korea 9 MEC HuiYuan Juice China 10 MEC Ajinomoto Indonesia METHODOLOGY The New Business League published in Campaign Asia-Pacific has been compiled with the assistance of R3. Data from a number of multi-national agencies is collected and collated on a monthly basis and the collated data is balanced against client estimates, Nielsen ADEX, discounted to appropriate levels and then converted to a revenue estimate by R3. Please note that R3 does not audit the data provided by the agencies or the published results. All comments and queries should be sent to [*greg@rthree.com*](mailto:greg@rthree.com) For a breakdown of the data by country please visit   [*http://www.campaignasia.com*](http://www.campaignasia.com) [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The big picture: China Consumer aspirations - Chinese put family first. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 12 [QQ] New research from Mintel provides insight into the attitudes and behaviour of consumers young and old in China. An overarching study into Chinese consumers points to a strong desire for work-life balance, and continuing anxiety over issues such as food safety, pollution and health. In spite of China's continuing development, career success features relatively low down in terms of life priorities: just a quarter of respondents list it as the most important thing in life. On the other hand, close to 60 per cent put the biggest emphasis on a happy family life. More than 40 per cent seek a healthy lifestyle, pointing to strong potential for further growth for the health and wellness sector.[QQ] The study divides consumers into groups based on lifestyle aspirations: a quarter are defined as the emergent middle class; just under a quarter as 'traditional self-reliants'; around 20 per cent as 'variety seekers' and 'affluent, driven workers'; and 15 per cent as self-contained and living 'life in a nutshell'. The bulk of consumers in their 20s are identified as wealth seekers. Forty per cent of twenty-somethings indicate that they spend more time shopping than they did previously.[QQ] In the over-55 age bracket, most surveyed are relatively comfortable: almost 70 per cent have money to spare at the end of each month, and 58 per cent continue to accumulate savings. In line with the earlier findings around the desire for a healthy lifestyle, 80 per cent aim to take better care of their health; 55 per cent plan to exercise more over the coming year; and 19 per cent spend on health-related products.[QQ] Travel is also important to China's senior citizens. Around 40 per cent hope to travel on holiday in the coming year. Of those, more than half would prefer to travel within China rather than abroad. Most plan to travel with their families, but trips with friends are also popular.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Advertising M&A - Acquisitions turn sour when cultures collide. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 14 [QQ] With many agency groups growing by acquisition rather than organically, what is the best way of making sure they succeed, asks Madeleine Ross.[QQ] The past year has seen some mega acquisitions across Asia-Pacific. Japan's Dentsu is busy absorbing the London-based Aegis Group, which it bought in a USdollars 5 billion deal finalised last March. We're now months away from the Publicis-Omnicom merger, announced last July, which will generate the largest advertising and communications company in the world by revenue. WPP agencies JWT and XM recently snapped up a string of creative and digital agencies, including Hungama Digital, Designercity and Thomas Idea Thailand.[QQ] Acquisitions have always been a key way to increase growth, and with Asian markets now some of the fastest growing globally, it's no surprise holding companies are keener than ever to build and expand their presences in the region. For smaller agency founders, there will always be an impetus to sell up in order to cash out the value of their businesses, and, in many cases, tie their companies to strong networks that can facilitate further opportunities.[QQ] When the two motivations collide, the stage is set for a takeover but, as R3 principal Greg Paull puts it, merging agencies should only ever take place when the end result is likely to be more than the sum of its parts.[QQ] Ensuring an acquisition is successful is a complex game, and history is littered with those that went wrong. Big name flops in recent history include the WPP/STW takeover of legendary Australian agency The Campaign Palace, as well as Photon's acquisition of Naked Communications. IPG has struggled to combine Lowe and Lintas, and Draft's 2005 takeover of FCB was nothing but trouble from the start. So why do so many turn sour? And what are the predicators for success?[QQ] Darren Woolley, MD of marketing management consultants TrinityP3, says things begin to go wrong when initial evaluations focus on pragmatic, tangible factors at the expense of culture and people. In the majority of takeovers, analysis of the agency's finances - its revenue, EBITD, client base and liabilities - is the priority. "The part they don't spend enough time with is ensuring there is also cultural alignment, because advertising is, fundamentally, a people business," says Woolley.[QQ] Melding corporate process with independent culture and personality is no easy feat, and if cultures don't mesh, there is little hope.[QQ] Speaking about WPP's purchase of the Campaign Palace, a former employee says the 'one size fits all' approach thrust upon it by STW (which is 18 per cent owned by WPP in Australia) quickly curbed the agency's nimbleness.[QQ] "You become heavier on the process side and for some agencies it's a good thing because it makes them capable of operating solidly and effecting a much more predictable income. For some it works really badly because it drowns them in processes that they are not accustomed to follow and they lose their agility," he says.[QQ] For XM chief executive Paul Soon, who oversaw the agencies' three most recent takeovers, culture is never to be trifled with. "XM does not set out to change cultures. In fact we celebrate and embrace the difference in cultures and the different ways we speak of digital," he notes.[QQ] Another critical factor in determining whether an acquisition sinks or swims is ensuring the agency's founders stay committed to the cause after the event, and empowering them to do so.[QQ] In the case of Naked, Enero (formerly Photon) made every effort to let the renegade brand stand alone to preserve its culture. The consensus is that it was the loss of its cultural drivers that let it slip.[QQ] "Once they did their earn-out, they walked away," says Woolley. "Enero was left sitting there saying 'What have we really got left here? We really did buy those people. We bought Mike Wilson, Adam Ferrier and John Wilkins and now they've walked away'."[QQ] But it's not just about locking founders into a three-to-five-year earn-out period. It's also about empowering them to be decision makers in their new environment.[QQ] Isobar Asia-Pacific chief executive Jean Lin says this was a key part of Isobar's successful takeover of her agency, wwwins. "Holding companies must empower the founders to achieve what they cannot achieve alone to make it meaningful - and this was exactly my experience."[QQ] Her experience was clearly very different to that of Campaign Palace chief executive Jacques Burger, whose role - according to a former employee - was circumscribed so severely after the takeover that he became incapable of steering the ship away from the iceberg.[QQ] "[Burger] was an absolutely fantastic CEO. I couldn't have imagined anyone more visionary and spot-on for the Campaign Palace," says the former Palace employee. "But his decision-making was completely obliterated by the (STW) CFO, who disabled any decision he was capable of making.[QQ] "STW instigated stringent cost control to the point that they actually cut out a number of very valuable and valid opportunities for growth."[QQ] The best acquisitions are generally those where duplication of skill sets is minimised. Avoiding geographic duplication is also considered wise, although swallowing competitors is often one of the motivations for takeovers.[QQ] Choosing agencies which can offer complementary skills offers obvious new benefits, and also means little or no rationalisation is needed post takeover.[QQ] When it comes to XM's purchase of Hungama Digital, Designercity and Thomas Idea Thailand, all these acquisitions were about adding reciprocal capabilities. Dentsu's purchase of Aegis also talks to this point. At the time of the takeover, Dentsu chief executive and senior vice-president, Tim Andree, lauded the networks' complementary geographic and product portfolios, as well as strong, shared values.[QQ] But, says Soon, at the end of the day, the recipe for a successful acquisition is the same as it is for any partnership - you need high dosages of empathy, humility, sincerity and transparency.[QQ] Only then will one plus one equal three.[QQ] BIG IDEAS HOORAY FOR HOLDING COMPANIES[QQ] We should applaud companies that acquire independent agencies: they are investing in the industry and that's a good thing.[QQ] However, the holding company must be sure it offers the companies it acquires more than just money for the owners. They need to be clear what the end game is, and where the acquisition fits in with that vision.[QQ] Obviously, access to resources and a 'friendly network' makes expanding into new markets and investing in new tools possible as well.[QQ] Another clear value add is the strategic partnership, either vertically, such as the recent Droga5-William Morris Endeavor acquisition, or horizontally integrated, such as amalgamating a 'pitch village'.[QQ] Where things get difficult is when holding companies play around with the culture of the organisations they acquire. Offering things such as training and centralising people management functions might seem an obvious value add, but I wonder if this kind of thing just screws with the culture of the agencies and is too nuanced to be centralised.[QQ] As the saying goes: 'culture eats strategy for breakfast', and if I was a holding company I'd try and leave the culture of the agencies I acquire well alone. Leave the people stuff to the agency.[QQ] Further, if an agency has its own intellectual property, then it stands to reason the only people who should be training that agency is that agency itself. You're buying an agency for what they are - don't try and change them into something else. Holding companies may not even be aware they are doing this.[QQ] In relation to the Photon-Enero acquisition of Naked, they were always incredibly supportive of the Naked brand, and from what I understand still are.[QQ] People like to give holding companies a hard time, but all of them, big and small are investors in advertising and media - and should be applauded for wanting to invest in our industry.[QQ] Be kind to holding companies - you never know, one day it might be your agency you want them to take an interest in.[QQ] Adam Ferrier, partner and CSO at CumminsRoss[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Craig Davis on Ideas... Is it creative to sell a destructive product? [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 14 [QQ] You can be thankful that cigarette advertising is banned in so many parts of the world. Bans remove any temptation to apply your creative skills to these lung busters. Cigarette advertising was the first large-scale ethical dilemma for the advertising business and the first declared 'no go' zone. Many of the dangers of smoking were not understood when the ad wars began, but the weight of science and public opinion proved too much to resist.[QQ] Most of us would give the thumbs down to pushing heroin, hand grenades or nuclear waste, even if they were legal. Some things are just so obviously damaging or dangerous that we draw a line hard and fast. On the flip side, however, are seemingly harmless products and services that are considered fair game: snacks, fast foods, soft drinks, confectionary, financial services and pharmaceuticals, to single out a few.[QQ] They're legal products and they're legal to advertise, so there's no real issue and no dilemma for creative people. Or is there?[QQ] As Brene Brown points out in her legendary TED talk, we are the most overweight, debt-laden and medicated generation ever (at least in America). Obesity, diabetes, stress-related illnesses and chemical addictions are running at epidemic levels.[QQ] Is advertising responsible for stimulating demand for products that contribute to these issues?[QQ] Industry bodies and lobby groups talk about working within the law, responsible advertising, codes of conduct and the ridiculousness of nanny states. But my question is a more intimate one: Are you really being creative when, by exercising your talents brilliantly, you may be amplifying negative and destructive outcomes? Or are you actually being destructive?[QQ] Craig Davis is Founder of Brandkarma and formerly CCO of Publicis Mojo, Saatchi & Saatchi Asia and JWT Worldwide.[QQ] He is on the Board of Conscious Capitalism and blogs at craigdavisnow.com[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Advertising creative interview - Idealist finds a home in digital world. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 16 [QQ] Andy Greenaway relishes the exposure to new ways to convey stories and ideas in his new role as ECD of creative and interactive design agency SapientNitro, writes Byravee Iyer[QQ] Andy Greenaway is a man of principle. In 1998, he was looking to move out of Hong Kong, but faced a fairly large tax bill, and needed to find a quick and easy way to pay it off. He decided to become an artist and started doing Rembrandt copies. He put his ad sense into play and found a gallery willing to give him space. His work got into the papers; he did several interviews on radio and TV, sold 10 paintings, received 11 commissions, and made HKdollars 60,000. But he quickly become disillusioned, believing using his ad skills to sell paintings betrayed the art world's trust. Eventually, he paid off his tax bill, but turned down lucrative gallery deals and stopped painting.[QQ] At work, Greenaway's idealism is still strong. It's one of the reasons he left Saatchi & Saatchi after nine years to join offbeat agency SapientNitro. He believes bankers, not creatives, run the large holding networks and they sacrifice everything for growth and margin. That's why he has been urging his new employer not to get embroiled in pitches just for the sake of it.[QQ] Greenaway finds comfort in working for an agency that is run like a start-up. It operates under one P&L across Asia. This means each office may access resources and support from the network. In the old world, each country and discipline had a different bottom line, which he says, made people very defensive about their P&Ls. As a result, everyone was chasing money and a larger slice of the cake, which causes massive conflicts internally, he admits.[QQ] As the largest independent agency today, SapientNitro was formed in 2009 when digital agency Sapient picked up independent creative network Nitro for USdollars 50 million. The combined firm sits in a global-trend sweet spot, offering creativity and interactive design experiences across platforms. It was an unexpected choice for Greenaway: the agency has never been thought of as a creative heavy hitter, and following its fallout with Singapore Airlines, it struggled with its reputation. It picked up the airline in 2009 to relaunch its website. However, bugs plagued the new site, which went live in 2011, resulting in some serious customer backlash.[QQ] Greenaway admits he didn't know much about the agency before joining in 2013, but was attracted to its model. Its difference to the larger networks is a big part of its appeal. "I realised that it was a very unique company," he says, referring to the agency's technology prowess.[QQ] He describes SapientNitro as a digital communications business with a deep technology legacy - boasting 7,000 techies hired in India to develop code and build platforms for brand building.[QQ] In the ad world, the 30 second TV spot is still king, he says. "The creativity was squeezed out from anything you produced," he adds noting that marketers rely on subjective data. "Clients still spend billions of dollars on TVCs that are created on flawed research methodology."[QQ] Greenaway now has access to everything from how long people are on a page, to how they're engaged, what they purchased and how often they bought. This exposure keeps him on his toes. His days are spent learning to use highly complex programmes and acquiring multiple skillsets so he can add a layer of brand thinking and communication on top. SapientNitro itself is also changing, complementing technology with more creative thinking. Greenaway attributes it to companies realising the overlap between technology and marketing. Six years ago, the main clients were IT directors. Today, CIOs are hooking up with CMOs to create partnerships and as a result CMOs have considerable influence on the IT budget.[QQ] Former Saatchi & Saatchi regional CEO Pat Brett describes Greenaway's main strength as his knowledge of the region and willingness to push for better work.[QQ] Greenaway says he delivers his best work when briefs are closely linked to business objectives. He despises vague, generic briefs. "Give me a mission and an obstacle," he says. "It's a wonderful feeling to see a campaign achieve its goal."[QQ] [TB] CV 2013 ECD, SapientNitro, Asia-Pacific 2004 Regional creative director, Saatchi & Saatchi 2002 Group chairman, Ogilvy & Mather 1998: ECD, Ogilvy Advertising, Singapore 1993 ECD, OgilvyOne, Hong Kong 1991 ECD, OgilvyOne, Singapore [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Marketing CRM - Driving goodwill turns users into evangelists. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 18 [QQ] Companies like Uber are using social CRM to create enthusiasts for their products and services who will gladly spread the word. By Jill Petzinger.[QQ] Uber, the US-based, app-driven luxury car service company, has chosen to rely on customer relationship management (CRM) for its Asian launch, to create what can only be described as a group of 'uberholics' in Asia.[QQ] Eschewing traditional advertising, they use their app's built-in rating service and employ hyper-responsive community managers, who interact with users through SMS and email. Instant referral bonuses, discount deals and even special brunches for early adopters build goodwill among consumers, who in turn go out and evangelise for the brand.[QQ] Uber was one of the hottest Silicon Valley start-ups of 2010 and received a USdollars 258 million investment from Google in 2013. Now in 70 countries, last year their service expanded to Asia, including Taipei, Singapore, Seoul, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Bangalore, New Delhi and Manila. Unusually for a brand with little or no recognition in Asia, they have gone for a rather under-the-radar launch in each country, relying on social-CRM, word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, events, and platforms such as WeChat and Weibo to push news and promotions. This seems to have had the effect of making users feel like members of a special club.[QQ] Launching a personal driver service in Asian cities, where taxis are cheap and many executives have private drivers, may seem audacious, but Uber's head of Asia expansion Sam Gellman says it offers more than simply a way to get from A to B.[QQ] "Uber makes everything intuitive," says Gellman. "It's turning an experience that was once pretty stressful into something that's actually a relaxing part of your day. And because drivers are rated, they're very incentivised to deliver a good experience.[QQ] "The key is to have users who really want to tell your story, and then make it as easy as possible for them to do so. At the end of every trip, you're given the option of sharing it on Facebook and Twitter, to send an email, to send an SMS; we make all that functionality very easy."[QQ] Maintaining two-way communication to create valued consumers who promote the brand helps to build awareness in a scalable, manageable fashion. At the same time, it sets standards that must be upheld as demand grows.[QQ] "Their drivers are like the shopkeepers for them," says Jerry Smith, regional president at OgilvyOne Asia-Pacific. "Provided that's a good experience, then the word of mouth will be good. The moment their drivers don't represent what they offer, and it's not authentic, is when I think they will need to start using more aggressive marketing tactics around reputation management."[QQ] Smith says that while launching purely with CRM is not common, fully integrated launches with an emphasis on social channels are becoming more widespread. He feels Uber needs to be careful about how to keep engaging customers. "Since the product is the service, they need to be careful not to get too pushy with consumers. Certainly trigger-based marketing could work very well for them, where they could look at patterns and create moments when they know consumers would probably be looking for the services," he says.[QQ] "I think they're using quite a smart acquisition process and at the same time they're creating their scale without a massive investment, so this is actually a way that the medium works to their strategy."[QQ] While launching without any above-the-line activity may not work for large global brands, whose products require a big revenue stream right away, it can be very effective for smaller or niche brands - but they must be confident they have a superior product or service if they intend to rely on word of mouth.[QQ] A good example of such a niche brand is Australian skincare company, Aesop, which has been growing organically for 27 years and now has 60 signature stores globally. It has never advertised, spending its marketing budgets on arts and cultural event sponsorship and strategic product placement in, for example, Cathay Pacific First Class. Like Uber, it wants customers to try the product, confident that they will like it and spread the word.[QQ] Asit Gupta, CEO and cofounder of Advocacy, says that social CRM, and building relationships with customers on social platforms is no passing fad, it should be part of every marketing plan in every country. He believes that WOM marketing and social CRM works best for brands that solve a real problem or fulfil a need, rather than for undifferentiated products, where it is harder to maintain a longer-term conversation with consumers. "Committing to building a real relationship is new to most brands," says Gupta.[QQ] "As I see it, it has only advantages - but implementing it requires a structure change and skill upgrade. We need to think about community and conversation, not fans and content."[QQ] He cites Starbucks as a good example of a powerful brand that not only delivers a great product experience, but also interacts authentically with its customers through its My Starbucks programme, rewarding and inviting members to co-create.[QQ] As to whether WOM marketing works best for specific kinds of brands or consumer demographics, Benjamin Duvall, co-founder of WOM agency Wildfire, believes every brand has a unique story, and it's all about finding the 'ah-ha' message through social listening, insights and building content and experiences around that. "Every group relies upon peers for trusted advice," says Duvall. "The channel may be a Weibo (microblog) or a baby or gaming forum, so brands must be pragmatic about where there targets are, and where they're having conversations related to the brand - this might not be the big social networks."[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Brand Ambassador Seiko hopes Djokovic will be a smash hit [BB] By Benjamin Li. [NT] News [PP] 18 [QQ] Tennis stars are the darlings of watch brands, with Maria Sharapova endorsing Tag Heuer, Roger Federer fronting Rolex. Now Japanese watch brand Seiko believes it has found the right match in world number two-ranked player Novak Djokovic.[QQ] The company says Djokovic is "someone who shares our desire to be the best and who is determined to maintain his status as a leader. Like Seiko, Novak is dedicated to perfection (and) determined to be 'one step ahead of the rest'."[QQ] Seiko says that while a watch cannot help Djokovic win tennis matches, it can help him manage his time in other parts of his life. The brand has therefore created a series of watches to suit his different activities.[QQ] Selene Chin, managing director of Dog Digital Asia, says the appointment of Djokovic was a very shrewd move by Seiko. "Partnering with a global sports star who performs at the top of his game will always create positive brand associations, and Djokovic is not only an excellent sportsman, but a credible and likable character off the court."[QQ] Chin adds that Djokovic - who also endorses other brands such as Peugeot Mercedes and Uniqlo - is a very visible ambassador and an active member on social media platforms. With nearly four million Facebook fans and 2.77 million followers on Twitter, Djokovic has a following that dwarfs Seiko's (which only has 215,000 fans on Facebook and 27,600 followers on Twitter).[QQ] "Seiko potentially has a very large, active and engaged audience at their fingertips through Djokovic and I wouldn't be surprised if they have negotiated a certain number of endorsements to be published on these social channels as part of the partnership," says Chin.[QQ] Andy Yeung, senior account manager of sports public relations-focused agency Elite Step Asia, says Djokovic will help the watch company reach new markets when he plays in tournaments around the world. He suggests Seiko uses Djokovic's charity foundation to co-sponsor some community care projects to gain some softer and grass-roots penetration among local communities.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Adam Morgan on Insight... Which conversation do you want to be in? [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 18 [QQ] Last week, I interviewed Malcolm Wells, who specialises in creating 'symbols of re-evaluation', particularly for energy companies: orchestrated sequences of events (often world records of some kind) that capture the public imagination and successfully migrate understanding and perceptions of 'who' a company is and what they are trying to do, in a few big steps.[QQ] I went into the interview primarily interested in the 'how' - these are the kind of ideas that many of us talk about in brainstorming sessions, but very rarely hatch into anything real, and colourful because they are seen as too difficult to push through, internally or externally. So how does one drive this through?[QQ] Instead, he rightly focused on the strategic intent, and the importance of gaining alignment around that. He cited the work he had done for a large energy joint venture in Africa that demonstrated the value of a new fuel in three steps. At the heart of the key shift in the latter stages was a link with cheetah conservancy, ending with the first race between a man - Springbok rugby player Bryan Habana - and a cheetah. We made a strategic decision, said Wells, that we would rather be 5 per cent part of a cheetah conversation than 100 per cent of a fuel conversation - the world is much more interested in cheetahs than they are in new kinds of fuel.[QQ] It was a perceptive reminder of two things: first, how infrequently we ask: "Which conversation do we want to be a part of?", and second, that we need to be prepared to abandon the conversation we want to have, but that the world doesn't care about, and instead contribute productively and engagingly in a conversation the world is interested in and does care about.[QQ] Because 5 per cent of a relevant and newsworthy conversation is better than 100 per cent of one that the world wants to ignore.[QQ] Adam Morgan, founding partner, eatbigfish. Follow Adam on Twitter @ eatbigfish,   [*http://www.eatbigfish.com*](http://www.eatbigfish.com)[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Sector study Beauty - Chinese consumers no longer dazzled. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 20 [QQ] Foreign beauty brands are having to reposition their marketing messages and distribution methods in the face of stiff competition from local and Asian products, writes Jenny Chan.[QQ] With Revlon and Garnier pulling out of China for good, there seems to be a major shift in the mainland's beauty industry. Western brands, which previously enjoyed strong reputations for higher product quality, seem unable to compete in the low-cost segment. While Western multinationals still dominate the overall market, domestic brands are catching up in pricing and connecting with local consumers.[QQ] Local brands understand what Chinese women want and how to be relevant to their lifestyles. This is significant in midto low-tier cities, where it's a 'get local, or get out' deal breaker, says Matthew Crabbe, director of research for Asia-Pacific at Mintel. Chinese consumers in these cities no longer want to pay premium prices for foreign brands when they can buy local. Marketing messages designed for Europe or the US just don't reflect who they are, says Crabbe.[QQ] Western beauty giants must offer sophisticated products at lower prices to compete with local brands, says Oru Mohiuddin, senior beauty and personal-care research analyst at Euromonitor. They also expect brands to embrace their history. Using ingredients from traditional Chinese ***medicine*** in cosmetics is a point of differentiation for local brands such as Yue Sai, which was acquired in 2004 by L'Oreal, thanks to its success in the market.[QQ] The most common traditional ingredients are ginseng, paeonia, pomegranate and white tea, which are believed to be effective for anti-aging and whitening - priorities for Chinese women.[QQ] According to Euromonitor, Yue Sai ranked 54th in terms of brand share in China's beauty and personal care market, while Revlon ranks 100th. In its 17 years in China, Revlon has relied onHollywood names such as Emma Stone and Olivia Wilde to endorse its products instead of Chinese celebrities.[QQ] "Marketers from the West have got to realise that the 'hallelujah, we-send-they-buy' period is over," says Steven van der Kruit, global trends consultant to Firmenich.[QQ] While Garnier has made a stronger attempt to localise than Revlon, it has been reported in the Chinese media that the L'Oreal-owned brand was facing fierce compeition from local brands such as Chando and its declining contribution to group revenue led to L'Oreal's decision to pull it from the market.[QQ] L'Oreal may also be choosing a more local path with the acquisition of local facial mask brand, Magic Holdings reported WantChinaTimes.[QQ] Unilever's Pond's also seems to be changing tack. Its momentum in China started in 1988 with its flagship cold cream product. Unilever then tried to push it into the high-end skincare segment in 2008 with a heavy spate of advertising and a loss of branding focus. Local news reported in January that Pond's dropped its dedicated counters at major department stores for mere shelf presence at multibrand retailers. The decision has been attributed to reliance on outdated consumer research and a lack of marketing.[QQ] Avon too is struggling. The direct-selling cosmetics giant reported a 48 per cent drop in revenue in China in 4Q2013.[QQ] Of the foreign brands in China, those from Korea do particularly well. Thanks to the country's renown as the go-to place for plastic-surgery and the popularity of K-Pop culture and soap operas full of cosmetics and toiletries, Korean beauty brands are all the rage, says Van der Kruit. Even unconventional products such as facial masks made of snail mucin are seen as innovative, while the star products of Korean brands like Aupres, Mamonde and Laneige have multiple benefits, often combining cosmetics with skincare.[QQ] Success in China is worth the effort, however. Between 2007 and 2012, China contributed nearly 30 per cent to the global growth in the beauty industry and is expected to add another 20 per cent between now and 2017.[QQ] [TB] SHARE OF CHINA'S BEAUTY MARKET Companies 2012 Procter & Gamble 15.3 L'Oreal 11.2 Shiseido 5.4 Unilever 4.6 Amway 3.5 Colgate-Palmolive 3.5 Mary Kay 3.3 Beiersdorf 2.7 Johnson & Johnson 2.3 Estee Lauder 2.1 Source: Euromonitor [TE] EXPERT OPINION - NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY IN UNFORGIVING MARKET[QQ] The days when foreign brands could win in China based on their foreign cachet are long gone; they must keep up with the times in China to remain relevant. Connecting with local people is crucial as Chinese lifestyles diversify, while balancing brand origin and positioning is tricky.[QQ] L'Oreal built its brand in China based on it being French, fashionable and finessed. It achieved a higher-end position, but selling Garnier products in supermarkets both distracted consumers from this higher-end focus and was increasingly unsustainable in such a competitive environment.[QQ] Revlon focused on colour cosmetics, a crowded sector with low brand loyalty. Mintel's consumer survey data has found that Chinese women generally avoid wearing colour cosmetics every day due to concerns over side effects, preferring cosmetic products with skincare benefits.[QQ] China is an unforgiving market that is not one for making a quick buck. Brands must get to know their consumers, and must adapt to rapidly changing needs as China travels at about three times the speed of the rest of the world's economies.[QQ] This means constantly keeping an ear to the ground, reading shifts in consumer trends by staying in touch with Chinese consumers. This also means providing a superior user experience, whether functional, emotional, cultural or lifestyle-wise.[QQ] Dilute the message and China's fickle consumers will quickly switch to another brand that gets the message right. There can be no room for complacency.[QQ] Matthew Crabbe is APAC director of research at Mintel[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Brand health check - Tainted milk leaves a bad taste for NZ. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 23 [QQ] Contamination scandals are affecting not only Fonterra, but the New Zealand brand itself, which relies on its image of pure untrammeled beauty for tourism and trade.[QQ] Fonterra is in a unique position as not only the purveyor of consumer-facing brands but also a major supplier of raw ingredients. So while it's not in the direct line of public fury, it is subject to the anger of major trade customers.[QQ] In August, Danone found that batches of whey protein concentrate supplied by Fonterra were found to have been contaminated by clostridium bacteria.[QQ] The scandal cost baby formula ***manufacturer*** Dumex USdollars 275 million and led it to cancel its supply contract with Fonterra. The scandal followed the discovery of fertiliser dicyandiamide (DCD) in Fonterra's milk, while in January, Fonterra was forced to recall bottles of cream when an E. coli contamination was discovered.[QQ] What can Fonterra do to regain trust from both consumers and the businesses and markets it supplies?[QQ] FACT FILE[QQ] - January 2014 E. coli found in cream[QQ] - August 2013 Botulism found in whey protein[QQ] - September 2012 DCD contamination in milk[QQ] - September 2008 Melamine milk scare[QQ] DIAGNOSIS 1: ERIC LIN[QQ] The past incidents have certainly hurt the premium, high-quality reputation that both Fonterra and New Zealand have been carefully cultivating for years. That said, my sense is these are short-term setbacks for both brands. They have done such an effective job at positioning their brands (and fulfilling their promises) around quality and purity that a few incidents alone won't suddenly lead to their demise.[QQ] Both Fonterra and New Zealand, understand the importance of China for their brands and have been effective at addressing the issue head-on, giving consumers there at least a sense of assurance.[QQ] The current situation does create a window of opportunity for dairy brands from the US and Europe (and to an extent, even domestic Chinese brands), but New Zealand has such a strong country brand built around the notion of purity that it will still likely be the desired place of origin for dairy and other natural products. Still, consumers are pausing in the shopping aisle to consider other choices.[QQ] Competing brands looking to seize this opportunity have sped up communications that position themselves as a smart alternative.[QQ] To defend and keep up sustained market share growth over time, Fonterra must keep its overall communications and crisis management efforts proactive, transparent, and detailed.[QQ] Eric Lin, general manager, Shanghai, Siegel+Gale[QQ] DIAGNOSIS 2: MILO CHAO[QQ] It must be noted that, since the 2008 scandal and resulting carnage, affluent Chinese shoppers who have the means to afford imported milk formula, reject domestic dairy producers outright. They have no credibility and are considered a national disgrace by many.[QQ] China's state-run media's unfair condemnation of multinational brands is viewed as hypocritical coming from a government that struggles to provide clean air, water and food to its citizenry. But Fonterra's competition will, no doubt, increase in the coming years as European, North and South American players come on line and as China attempts to diversify and improve its supply. Domestic players are working hard to improve their quality and safety standards with the help of joint ventures and overseas investments.[QQ] The future will be challenging for Fonterra from a communications perspective as well. It can choose to continue to limit itself to press releases and conferences and building its shopper-facing persona through brands such as Anchor and Anmum, or it can leap into the fray and take a more visible leadership position.[QQ] In doing so, Fonterra can more easily correct fallacies, clarify confusion, and positively influence the direction of conversations to support embattled clients. Such a strategy will give Fonterra a voice as well as a face.[QQ] Milo Chao, chief strategy officer, TBWA China[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Brand launch Svedka lets product do the talking. [BB] By Jenny Chan. [NT] News [PP] 23 [QQ] For Svedka's new launch in India on 13 February, the Swedish vodka brand decided that the Sexy Robot ad campaign it has been using in the West would not work in the conservative Indian market. Jake Jacob, Asia VP of parent company Constellation Brands, said a study found the voluptuous avatar may not appeal to the Indian target audience, so it was decided that Svedka would be its own ambassador.[QQ] The decision was also influenced by the number of awards the brand has won since its inception in 1998, mostly recent gold medals in 2010 at the World Spirits Award and International Spirits Challenge.[QQ] While Svedka is also looking at other Asian countries such as South Korea, it is India that is the focus market outside of the US. Svedka aims to become the second-biggest vodka brand in India over the next five years. Its foray into the Indian market will start off with the brand's regular, citron and clementine flavours - a subset of its international line-up ranging from strawberry colada, orange cream pop to mango pineapple (in case Indian drinkers suffer from decision fatigue). These imports allow Svedka to test the waters before setting up ***manufacturing*** facilities.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Marketers forum - Big data - Broader picture enables greater focus. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 24 [QQ] With a wide range of data and analytics platforms on offer, how do marketers turn captured information into actionable insights and how important is it to their creative process?[QQ] DEAN DACKO - SVP, HEAD OF MARKETING, MALAYSIA AIRLINES[QQ] We decided early in my tenure that in order to succeed, Malaysia Airlines needed to have a strong digital capability managed by a capable internal team. At the foundation would be a platform that would capture all available data and enable the team to understand it and deploy communication campaigns.[QQ] With that in mind, we have just engaged Adobe to create the first phase of a Social CRM platform integrating data from Google and social media. The platform will enable our team to monitor all that activity and deploy the right message to audiences.[QQ] Our 16 country sites will be situated on a central platform that will gather information to co-ordinate all of our communications activities on a global and local basis.[QQ] JUDY GOH - EXECUTIVE, MARKETING, COMMS & CITIZENSHIP, IBM[QQ] The strategic imperative of IBM, including its marketing function, is to make markets by transforming industries and professions with big data and analytics.[QQ] At IBM, our strategy is 'market to the individual'.[QQ] Our marketing and system of engagement are becoming increasingly data-driven and digital. For example, we deployed IBM Unica Marketing Automation to accelerate our ability to connect with each customer at every touch point.[QQ] This transformed a 'spray and pray' marketing approach into one that is targeted to the individual client. We are also able to dynamically deliver offers based online data and analytics-based predictions of client behaviour. Reducing our follow-up time from 14 days to 12 hours.[QQ] ARGHA SEN - DIRECTOR - OMNICHANNEL, FUNG RETAILING GROUP[QQ] The ability to turn big data into something actionable with human instinct is critical. How to turn social media into a money machine?[QQ] Online retail players have always known data mattered, the brick-and-mortar store is also a giant data generator. How then do you act on that? Not by someone in the back office sending customers e-mails anymore, but leveraging that data in real-time at the point of sales.[QQ] There was a time when retailers never offered free WiFi inside the stores to avoid showrooming. But now WiFi allows retailers to track shoppers for personalisation and CRM purposes - not on the retailer's terms but on the customer's terms. What is big data after all, but a vast collection of small data?[QQ] DANNY MOK - CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, CSL LIMITED[QQ] In the telco business, it is extremely important that mobile operators use all available data to manage the customer lifecycle. In a post-paid dominated market such as Hong Kong, customers buy mobile phones bundled with service plan on a contract basis, usually 24 months. From the time the customer subscribes we try our best to provide precisely targeted offers to try and keep up customer satisfaction so they will sign on for another two years.[QQ] Examples of marketing initiatives include providing attractive deals on the iPhone 5s for customer who has used the iPhone 4 for two years and introducing new unlimited Facebook data pack for customers who are socially active online. This is how big data helps me daily.[QQ] STEPHEN JACOB - DIRECTOR, APAC MARKETING, OANDA[QQ] The business insights and analytics team at Oanda has been using big data technologies since 2011 to assist with decision-making. For example, by using Hadoop on Amazon Web Service, Oanda is able to analyse raw web traffic data from all of our global websites to better understand our clients' journey to registering for an fxTrade account.[QQ] This analysis not only helps our marketing teams identify which campaigns and advertising channels are the most effective, it also helps them to get a better picture of who our newly acquired clients are, after combining online with offline data.[QQ] We are also looking at using real-time analytics, machine learning, and studying online behaviour to help our sales and marketing teams.[QQ] CASE STUDY - HONDA FOCUSES ON THE JOY OF DRIVING WITH AN APP[QQ] Background: Striving to be more than a car ***manufacturer***, Honda has been launching apps and services that aim to improve the driving experience of their customers.[QQ] Previous iterations of this idea includes the Internavi Pocket, a navigation system for the smartphone that integrated with the cars, and a smartphone app which reduced traffic jams by getting cars to drive in sync with each other. Now, in an attempt to heighten and share the love of driving and road trips, Honda worked with Dentsu and boutique agency Deltro to create RoadMovies, an app designed to combine the joy of driving with the current obsession for video making.[QQ] Execution: With the app, users could shoot a collection of short video clips ranging from a second to three seconds which are then automagically stitched into a 24 second video. If users don't want to be distracted for even a second from their road trip to film videos, the app even comes with an auto-mode which will film the short clips based on distance or time travelled when used with a GPS device.[QQ] Perhaps what really upped the app's usability factor and made it go wildly popular, however, is the ability to add filters and background music tracks making the entire clip look surprisingly polished with a nostalgic retro touch. The video clips could then be shared all over social media.[QQ] Results: The app, which was launched on Android and iOS,has been downloaded more than three million times. Soon after it was launched in August last year, it became the top ranking app in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Macau and ranked in the top 100 of the free photo and video category in 29 countries.[QQ] In addition to achieving significant press, the app reached many potential Honda fans, giving them a new, personal way to relate to the brand.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Media search - SEM helps brands to minimise the damage. [BB] By Robert Clark. [NT] News [PP] 26 [QQ] New tools allow companies to position themselves ahead of controversies and to respond to them when they erupt in real time.[QQ] Search engine management is deeply embedded in the sales and marketing process. But it is also becoming a part of that critical corner of PR known as crisis management.[QQ] Brands and agencies are using SEO (search engine optimisation) and SEM (search engine management) to position themselves ahead of controversies before they break, and to respond to them when they do.[QQ] It used to be that companies had at least half a day to respond to a crisis, typically by holding a press conference to get their message across.[QQ] Now crises break in real time. Last year, an executive for US internet firm IAC made a racist comment on Twitter about AIDS in Africa as she boarded a flight to Cape Town, South Africa. By the time her plane had landed, she had lost her job.[QQ] Bite Asia-Pacific president David Ketchum says his agency uses social media listening tools to scrape sites such as Twitter and Facebook and give a readout on "those people most important to your brand reputation online".[QQ] These tools have limitations, though. For example, they don't measure influencers who appear on TV but don't have a strong social media presence. Additionally, the data is quantitative, so it still requires human intervention to interpret it.[QQ] When a crisis breaks, "the critical relationship is between search and social media", Ketchum says. But he believes this approach is still not very widespread. "Many companies are still using the old crisis management playbook," he says.[QQ] Gary Chan, Nokia's pan-Asia head of marketing, says SEM and SEO are usually "not a big part of the strategy" for the Finnish company. "A crisis plan for a company like Nokia will be developed with key communication touchpoints identified, depending on the nature of the crisis and the audiences," he adds.[QQ] The use of SEO for crisis management requires some organisation.[QQ] Antony Yiu, head of search and performance at media agency MEC Asia-Pacific, says communications teams need to set up contingency SEM campaigns before a PR crisis breaks. This means generating lists of "relevant keywords ahead of time to prepare for potential PR crisis. Develop SEO guidelines for PR teams to follow when drafting press releases."[QQ] The close monitoring of social media can yield benefits, even if the client is not directly involved.[QQ] Kelvin Lim, from ad agency Mediabrands, points to the 2012 controversy over the D&G store in Tsim Sha Tsui, where Hong Kong people, but not mainland visitors, were banned from filming.[QQ] Lim says through his team's social media listening efforts "we could see the volume... we knew it was getting a lot of public attention".[QQ] Even though D&G was not a client, it was a significant issue to competitors and all in the luxury market.[QQ] Yiu says use of SEM/SEO is not widely-used by small and medium-sized businesses, but it is prevalent among multinational corporations and in particular those needing to respond to "public outcries regarding tainted products and product recalls."[QQ] He says that search engine management is common in China in industries such as cosmetics, dairy products and pharmaceuticals - all of which have been hit in recent years by scandals over product safety and pricing.[QQ] Ketchum cites a client whose TV commercial offended some Chinese nationalists, even though the ad was not intended to be negative and was only run outside of China. Bite advised the client to make an open apology. The message did not satisfy everybody, but served as the company's last word on the issue, which eventually passed out of the news cycle.[QQ] Critics of corporate use of SEO-driven responses say it can be misleading, but none of those interviewed by Campaign believe it poses an ethical challenge.[QQ] Yiu says SEM ads and other SEO optimised content merely point to websites that provide information from the marketers' perspectives.[QQ] Mediabrands managing director Lilian Leong stressed it was important for brands to have integrity and not "sugarcoat things".[QQ] Ketchum cautions that while the search and social media tools are powerful for delivering intelligence on a situation, they can't advise on what to do. "Often we say to the client, 'why get involved'? It's important to get ahead of the curve and think 'what is the best response?'"[QQ] CASE STUDY - NEUTRALISING HARMFUL SEARCHES[QQ] When a KFC employee in Malaysia was filmed punching an irritated customer, the clip naturally went viral.[QQ] "When you order @KFC, don't forget to ask for the free punch," yukked one poster on Twitter.[QQ] But it also set in train a crisis response that was focused almost solely on search results. In the end, says agency Mediabrands, "negative sentiments were contained and neutralised as we were able to effectively use search to highlight KFC's pro-active response to the incident".[QQ] KFC acquired keywords related to likely search terms and the team devised fresh content to respond to their questions.[QQ] Mediabrands says online viewers were segmented into four groups. The first were 'strangers' - those not aware of the incident. They did not discover negative content, and so for them it was "business as usual", Mediabrands says.[QQ] Next were 'onlookers', who wanted more news about the incident, and who were diverted to the updates provided by KFC.[QQ] Then there were the 'activists', who thought KFC was not doing enough, and the 'propagators', who were spreading links and news about the incident. For both of these groups KFC acquired keywords that promoted sites highlighting KFC's responses.[QQ] Of course, for the campaign to work it was critical that KFC apologised and reached what it said was "an amicable settlement" with the affected customer.[QQ] Mediabrands says 5.5 million searches were 'neutralised' in the course of the campaign. In the wake of it, KFC sales were up 20 per cent and even the "staff are friendly" attribute at KFC stores improved by 71 per cent compared with the competitor.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Road test - World's fastest-selling mobile phone is pretty speedy too. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 26 [QQ] When I was invited to write a road test, I was excited because I haven't had any new 'toys' for a while now.[QQ] I'm in Shanghai at the moment and my iPhone recently decided that she doesn't want to play - so I was pleased to get a really cool phone to use: the Xiaomi MiPhone 3.[QQ] Let's just get all the specs out of the way first, then I'll tell you about the marketing.[QQ] The phone I've been given is powered by a 1.8GHz, quad-core Nvidia Tegra 4 processor which makes it unbelievably fast (compared with my iPhone).[QQ] It feels very thin in your hand - the spec sheet I found online says it's 8.1mm thick. The battery will keep you going for about 24 hours of use - more than double what my iPhone 5s can do.[QQ] The screen is a five-inch full-HD 1080p. The touch-screen works with gloved or wet hands, so if you live somewhere cold (and/or wet), it's going to be very convenient to use.[QQ] It's also the fastest-selling phone in history thanks to Xiaomi's decision to use the scarcity model in its marketing. It could only be bought online, and only on Tuesday afternoon.[QQ] This means they sell out really fast.[QQ] So even though they are affordable at about half the price of a similarly spec'd Android phone, they are kept desirable and rare. When this model was first released in October last year, all 100,000 phones sold in 86 seconds.[QQ] So how's this a good thing for advertisers? The availability of a cheaper, faster smartphone with great battery life and a HD screen in the market opens the door to all sorts of mobile advertising possibilities for more people. Its speed will make the loading of interactive ads and videos seamless.[QQ] Plus it's available in Singapore this month, so it's going regional.[QQ] Todd Martin is regional head of digital and social for Bates CHI & Partners[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Marcel Fenez on Media... Different strokes for mobile folks. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 26 [QQ] A recent PwC survey of consumer attitudes and behaviour related to mobile advertising in China, Brazil, UK and US, showed considerable variance between the markets, reinforcing the need to tailor tactics to each market. A few examples:[QQ] At a macro level, Brazil and China far outpace the US and UK in engaging in 'everyday' online mobile activities such as entertainment, making purchases or hotel/flight reservations or finance-related. The clear inference from this is that Brazilian and Chinese consumers spend more time interacting with their mobile devices and are likely to be more receptive to advertising.[QQ] The survey revealed that app downloading behaviour is highest among the 18-34 age cohort, with China downloading more apps than any other country. When added to the clear higher level of willingness in China and Brazil to share personal information for free apps or fewer ads, there is an opportunity to use free app-based mobile advertising to this group. 'Freebies' are clearly a good tactic to increase mobile ad engagement. Given that Brazilian and Chinese consumers are also much more likely to click on an ad if the content is personally relevant, this suggests an active interest in mobile ads and therefore more general receptivity and opportunity for increased frequency.[QQ] The survey also showed the best time of day to be targeted with mobile ads varies by country, with US and UK consumers not receptive to any specific time of day. Brazil is most receptive to viewing ads 'when I wake up' and China 'on my way to work'. One feature that was consistent related to location-based coupons where the most appealing scenario, the coffee shop, was the same in all four countries, suggesting that getting a coupon at the exact time of brand/service interaction is most effective because it represents instant gratification and convenience.[QQ] Marcel Fenez, global leader for entertainment and media, PricewaterhouseCoopers[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Headliner - Media Profile - Varghese takes a scientific approach. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 29 [QQ] Maxus Asia-Pacific's new chief executive is planning to strengthen the agency's regional roster and maintain digital technology at the core of its business, writes Emily Tan.[QQ] You can take the man out of engineering, but you can't take the engineer out of the man. Although Ajit Varghese turned his back on his degree in ***agricultural*** engineering immediately after graduation and opted for an MBA in marketing and general management, his desire to roll up his sleeves and work hands-on underscores his roots.[QQ] The decision to appoint Varghese to the post of Maxus Asia-Pacific chief executive is partly linked to his technical background and mostly due to his success in building up Maxus India (now the network's strongest office in Asia-Pacific) during his tenure, first as managing director of India, then as MD of South Asia.[QQ] The Indian outfit is also, as Varghese describes it, a 'digital native' agency - a direction the network is keen to head towards with the launch of technology R&D arm, Metalworks about a year ago.[QQ] Varghese takes over from Neil Stewart, who joined Maxus in 2009 (when the agency was still in its infancy) from Motorola, where he was Asia-Pacific marketing director. "With his marketing background, Neil brought to the table a start-up approach to all of our media planning skills by asking the right questions, such as: 'How does this help consumers?'"[QQ] "I'll probably focus more on a head-down approach to digital and the use of data, while keeping intact the agency's philosophy, culture and approach, which links marketing and media."[QQ] It was the start-up culture of Maxus that drew Varghese to the agency in 2006. "Its culture was entrepreneurial and adaptive...[QQ] and I also saw untapped potential and a chance to build something." As a young network, Maxus had the chance to challenge the status quo and find new ways of working, which it has done, adds Varghese.[QQ] The vital ingredient, he believes, is to get the culture and talent right so that the agency is geared towards processing the complex worlds of media, marketing and technology into simple, direct answers to client problems.[QQ] An example of the type of work from India that Varghese believes best exemplifies this approach was the 2012 campaign the agency created to launch Titan's HTSE collection. The luxury Indian watch brand was previously perceived by Indian youth as old and lacking in innovation, so the campaign needed to get consumers excited about the brand's latest solar-powered watch.[QQ] For this brief, the team at Maxus created a light-powered mobile app that would only work when exposed to light. Once triggered, the app allowed users to 'try' the watch on their wrist using augmented-reality.[QQ] The team also launched a light-powered app on Facebook and reached 2.5 million people. As a result, Titan hit its half-yearly targets in just two months. "This approach - integrating the real world with the digital world - is where the network needs to be," says Varghese.[QQ] "Technology is (bringing the) brand and consumer much closer. I believe the Metalworks' initiative was a step in the right direction and we can drive it further ahead in the coming years."[QQ] Metalworks, which started with a team of just two in Singapore, has since expanded into Bangalore and Hong Kong, with plans to grow it further across the region.[QQ] As a manager, Varghese describes himself as being against having a hierarchy in the workplace. "It's healthiest to have an open culture, where you can say 'no' when you want to and where juniors can talk directly with seniors. In past initiatives, I made a point of accepting everyone's point of view - it's everyone's company not just one person's, after all."[QQ] Like most new regional leaders, Varghese's first few months in the role will be aimed at meeting with the network's country heads and identifying the things that need to be worked on now for the long-term.[QQ] Once he has transitioned into his new role, Varghese's first order of business is to look into keeping up Maxus' rapid pace of growth, which has seen an increase of 30 per cent every year. This, naturally, will be harder to keep up as the network grows larger. "Over the next five years, my focus will be on the product - delivering the Maxus difference by making digital the core of our being. We need to lean into data and technology even more and make sure our brands have that edge."[QQ] One of Varghese's acknowledged goals is to win a higher number of big, regional or even global accounts. While the agency has had a good year of strong wins in local markets, particularly in China, India and Australia - where it picked up clients such as Wipro India and Breville Australia, and retained Bank of Communications China - to really move the needle, there is a call for landmark accounts to add to its regional roster, which includes JetStar and ADK.[QQ] "I'm not complaining, but we will be looking at a stronger regional approach. Not that we'll be chasing clients at random. We want to work with clients who match up with our culture of a young, agile agency that wants to make change happen."[QQ] [TB] CV 2014: CEO, Maxus Asia-Pacific 2011: MD, Maxus South Asia 2006: MD, Maxus India 1999: COO, Madison India 1996: Media planner, Initiative Universal Media, India 1995: Research executive, IMRB International, India [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Media Talk Crowdfunding - Funding's potential as a marketing tool. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 30 [QQ] Crowdfunding gets the user literally invested in a product. Can brands use this method to heighten levels of consumer engagement?[QQ] Ravi Kiran... Founder, VentureNursery, Friends of Ambition[QQ] - Is it just for start-ups or can established brands use it as a marketing technique?[QQ] - Brands can use it to engage audiences, get user validation and feedback on new products, reward customers and join projects and social experiments. Increasingly, big brands will need to learn from and behave a bit like start-ups, anyway.[QQ] - How effective is crowdfunding as an engagement strategy?[QQ] - Brands can take either the social-citizen or creativity approach. In one, brands sponsor, mentor and support customer-created projects. In the other, brands leverage the creativity and sociability of customers to do things that help the brand directly.[QQ] - What are the potential dangers and pitfalls?[QQ] - I don't see many, as long as the brand understands the natural risk involved in being honest, open, unselfish and dealing with thousands of customers on a scantily moderated platform.[QQ] - Should major brands be concerned by competition from crowdfunded developers?[QQ] - If they are worried about innovation, there's no hope for them, anyway. Major brands need to learn from anyone who's trying to break the mould.[QQ] - If crowdfunding sites disallow big brands from participating, how else can they take part?[QQ] - Crowdfunding has little place for control and arrogance. A platform may have gatekeeping norms and want to avoid being submerged by big brand noise, but if the brand means well, other platforms and the crowd will rescue it.[QQ] - Can a crowdfunded strategy build enough buzz to carry a product into the mass market?[QQ] - The Pebble Watch and Pirate3D are already good examples. As with most things, the secret is in strong ideas, genuine customer value and execution.[QQ] PHIL PHELAN... AUSTRALIA STRATEGY DIRECTOR, SAPIENTNITRO[QQ] - Is it just for start-ups or can established brands use it as a marketing technique?[QQ] - Crowdfunding's ability to give consumers a sense of ownership over a brand or product can absolutely be co-opted by marketers. It sits at the intersection of social, CRM and market research and will change the approach of leading marketers.[QQ] - How effective is crowdfunding as an engagement strategy?[QQ] - Not at all. Crowd-funding is in itself a test of the engaging power of your new idea - if it doesn't engage the crowd, it doesn't get funding.[QQ] - What are the potential dangers and pitfalls?[QQ] - The first is reputational. Crowdfunding sits in the anti-establishment camp. Chances are, as a marketer, you are establishment. The second is lost opportunity. People commit to what they know they want, not what they didn't know they needed.[QQ] - Should major brands be concerned by competition from crowdfunded developers?[QQ] - Yes. Crowd-funding is a technology and it will have the same disruptive, barrier-reducing, democratising effects as peer-to-peer and social.[QQ] - If crowdfunding sites disallow big brands from participating, how else can they take part?[QQ] - If there's one thing advertising has always been great at, it's appropriating cultural movements and packaging them for popular consumption. Crowd-funding is no different, it's a free unregulated market and, in theory, anyone can play.[QQ] - Can a crowdfunded strategy build enough buzz to carry a product into the mass market?[QQ] - The question assumes a mass market is a homogenous entity. It's simply not true; society is a group of crowds. Moving from 'niche' to 'big' requires an idea with multiple points of appeal.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Media Innovation - Partying with NFC and interactive screens. [BB] By Emily Tan. [NT] News [PP] 30 [QQ] Usability and customer experience are high on this year's list of trendy marketing lingo, but it's still rare to come across an ad platform that's both flashy and useful.[QQ] Motive Media, an agency that specialises in nightlife advertising platforms, paired up with SingTel at Singapore's biggest annual party event, ZoukOut, to make customer transactions on the night easy and cashless via interactive screens, Singtel's network and NFC (near-field communication) stickers. The first 2,000 SingTel users to sign up were given NFC stickers which they could stick on anything. The stickers could be topped up via their credit cards at interactive kiosks.[QQ] Customers could buy drinks all night without having to fumble for cash or join long queues, thanks to the SingTel bar's dedicated express lane.[QQ] MotiveMedia also provided a 'Social Canvas' for Singtel's booth. The four metre tall and seven metre wide projection served as the booth's backdrop and displayed live Facebook, Twitter and ***feeds***, along with SingTel ads.[QQ] Also at the booth were interactive screens where users could browse drink menus, event directories and guides.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Media debate viewability - Next step in measuring true impact. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 31 [QQ] How important is having a viewability metric for online display advertising? Is an industry standard emerging and how will this change the business in future?[QQ] BEN HUGHES - GLOBAL COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR & DEPUTY CEO, FT[QQ] The digital advertising environment is facing one of the biggest changes in recent years as the industry moves towards standardising viewable ad impressions.[QQ] The viewability metric is a big deal for online display advertising as it becomes a new currency based on audience impact, rather than gross ads served. This will ensure marketers can measure the real impact of their media advertising spend and bring more transparency to the industry.[QQ] Buying viewable impressions won't decrease a marketer's advertising spend, but it is likely to favour publishers with a more engaged audience. This is why sites with high viewability rates stand to benefit, while low viewability sites could lose out.[QQ] Viewability is a very positive move for online digital advertising. An industry standard hasn't emerged yet, but it's good these conversations are taking place and crucial that agreed standards and technology ensure a level playing field for marketers and publishers.[QQ] PETER BURTON - HEAD OF OPERATIONS, ASIA-PACIFIC, ACCUEN[QQ] Viewability is not yet baked into the major third party adservers and until this happens it is going to be hard to move the industry from the served impression to the viewable impression, ie from CPM to CPMV (cost per thousand viewable ads).[QQ] Viewability metrics are the next key adserving evolution.[QQ] As buyers, we need to know that our ads are in the right place and being seen. Brand safety tools help us avoid specified types of content.[QQ] Likewise we can track whether the ad was delivered above or below the fold. These are pointers but not a measure of viewability.[QQ] Things are changing. In the video marketplace TubeMogul is leading the way. It recently launched the Open Video Viewability standard, and has open-sourced the technology. OpenVV tracks the portion of a video ad that is in view with the time it was in view. TubeMogul have baked OpenVV into their system and are offering it to their partners, a welcome change. As a buyer of ads, I am looking forward to moving from a CPM to a CPMV metric to reduce wastage and increase buying efficiency. In the same way that the move from counting adserver hits to counting served impressions was resisted, the move to a standardised viewability metric is also being resisted. It will be imperfect, and it will need refining, but the industry needs it.[QQ] CINDY DENG - MANAGING DIRECTOR, ASIA-PACIFIC, TURN[QQ] Viewability has become a hot topic, but due to the way it's measured or not measured, viewability should just be one among many ways to measure the impact of an ad or the quality of inventory.[QQ] I believe that knowing the audience first, targeting and finding them online, is the best way for marketers to achieve return on investment. Viewability alone isn't a reasonable campaign objective.[QQ] I'd like to clear up some common myths. First, that the existing viewability standard makes sense. It doesn't. Screen sizes vary widely and ad sizes impact viewability. The existing standard penalises advertisers for buying larger ads and publishers for optimising content for user experience. There's also the belief that viewability is accurately measurable. Different data providers measure viewability in different ways. Until we have a single metric to apply across the industry, viewability will remain an interesting metric, but it can't be an industry currency.[QQ] Viewability isn't a silver bullet. It's one tool in a vast arsenal of technology that marketers have. Any conversation about viewability is really a conversation about quality and performance. Sure viewability helps certain marketers enhance the quality of their ad interaction, but it's only one piece of a puzzle that's bigger, more complex, and more exciting than ever.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Design Trend Printing 'invisible people'. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 31 [QQ] There are about 350 refugees in Korea, with greater numbers arriving at its shores seeking asylum each year. Despite living in the country, these refugees have largely been neglected due to society's widespread indifference.[QQ] To address this sad reality and shed light on their lives, Cheil Worldwide teamed up with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Seoul Museum of Art to hold an exhibition of 3D figurines to show Koreans the plight of these 'invisible people' at the museum in February.[QQ] The agency's employees interviewed refugees in Korea and abroad, took their photos and produced three-dimensional lifelike figurines of these people.[QQ] Around 30 figurines were then hidden throughout the museum in spots such as windowsills and the corners of shelves in the museum.[QQ] In a departure from a typical exhibition, visitors had to hunt down these figurines of people they have never noticed before or taken an interest in. Once found, visitors could scan the QR/NFC code inserted in each one to listen to the refugees' stories.[QQ] One figurine was of Zeinabou Moussa from Mali, who was forced to flee her country because of the war there. She says she dreams of studying hard and becoming a paediatrician.[QQ] "Having met and spoken with refugees in Korea and Niger, I was really struck by the fact that their number-one wish is to be heard, seen and recognised - not pity, not even financial support," says Lee Song-Ha, copywriter at Cheil. "Now I'd like to ask everybody: how many invisible people did you pass today?"[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Public Relations - M&A sentiment - Deal with acquisition anger through dialogue. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 32 [QQ] PR firms must reassure consumers to head off online resentment when Asian companies take over Western brands, writes Matthew Carlton.[QQ] "Boycott Smithfield - Americans don't want the Chinese involved with our food supply," growled an angry American on Facebook when he learnt the Virginia-based pork company was bought by China's Shuanghui for USdollars 4.72 billion last September.[QQ] It was a similar tale in January when Suntory, the Japanese drinks firm, took control of Beam Inc, producers of the Jim Beam and Maker's Mark bourbon brands.[QQ] "Sad to hear Jim Beam/Maker's Mark was sold to Japan. I'll have to find another bourbon. Buy made in America. Don't line foreign pockets," wrote a peeved ex-US serviceman on Twitter.[QQ] These comments aren't coming from a small minority of die-hard patriots - it's becoming increasingly common for Westerners to take to social media and express their outrage when domestic brands are acquired by Asian firms, with boycott petitions and websites quickly sprouting up after deals are made public. Such outrage has obvious implications for the Asian companies behind the takeovers, which in turn means their PR firms are often firefighting potentially brand-damaging sentiment around mergers and acquisitions.[QQ] "In the takeover of iconic businesses with deep emotional attachments, like Jim Beam, consumers first and foremost need reassurance that there won't be drastic alterations to their beloved brands," says FTI Consulting senior director Leo Wood.[QQ] He believes this reassurance in today's digital era goes beyond basic PR and must include comprehensive stakeholder engagement. This is something companies need to deliver through a variety of integrated platforms and channels to provide key messages to different audiences.[QQ] It is a view Newgate Communications managing partner Richard Barton shares: "Any cross-border investment requires a communications programme built around multiple stakeholders. The focus in the late 1990s was on the hard issues of finance and legal compliance. Today it is arguably even more about the soft issues of community engagement, employee relations and political engagement."[QQ] A wide-ranging engagement and communications strategy in today's digital era requires online specialists and community managers. Companies should deploy integrated advisory services to manage stakeholder expectations and generate support.[QQ] In addition to influencing, monitoring and responding to social media conversations, more sophisticated counsel focused on regulatory issues and the cultural implications associated with cross-border acquisitions is critical to managing reputation effectively.[QQ] These components, says Wood, "fall alongside the core, standard financial communications practices necessary to help articulate the investment proposition to the financial community".[QQ] However, there was not the same consumer backlash when Lenovo acquired US multinational IBM's PC division in 2005, nor in 2009 when Chinese automotive ***manufacturing*** company Geely bought Sweden's Volvo. Were consumers less fearful of Asian brands back then, less opinionated, or is it all down to the growth of social media giving discontented voices the platform they need?[QQ] Partly the latter, says Jye Smith, Asia-Pacific head of Mediaco at Weber Shandwick. "The level of outcry in 2005 would be significantly smaller given the change in internet populations around the world," he says. "I believe we're just as opinionated today as in 2005. However, the way we express those opinions has changed forever."[QQ] He believes that brand affinity is a major factor in the level of anger, citing Jim Beam's long-established heritage and American lifestyle image - something, it could be argued, that IBM's PC division had lost by the time the sale took place.[QQ] "Lenovo's IBM takeover was an impressive example of how to do it" says MHP Communications CEO Emma Smith. "Lenovo showed respect for the IBM brand and moved swiftly to ensure the company was international in composition and outlook. It's certainly true that social media has amplified public angst, so perhaps neither case would be quite so easy nowadays."[QQ] Many leading PR firms are now developing partnerships and using monitoring tools in-house to identify escalating situations, helping them to become better equipped to deal with any problems. With the internet and social technologies often the catalyst for rumour and misinformation to circulate quickly and become accepted as truth, "it is critical that online communications are managed thoughtfully and with great responsibility", says MHP's Smith. "Even Facebook and Weibo and more 'consumer' channels need to be authored with care."[QQ] The concern for PR agencies is that consumer resentment of foreign acquisitions of brands they hold dear can lead to bigger problems. Uncensored public opinion that appears on the web can rapidly snowball into mainstream media coverage and even attract political attention.[QQ] This is something the acquiring company must be mindful of, explains Wood, who advocates that PR firms make it clear to clients in such situations to expect adverse consumer reaction, but that generally it should not damage the brand. "Rarely does foreign ownership actually alter anything substantive about what a brand represents. That said, social media buzz and the citizen journalism movement can impact the performance of the brand, especially if investor confidence is shaken due to negative consumer sentiment, diminished brand loyalty and reduced consumption".[QQ] There are a number of ways in which the new parent company, in association with their PR agency, can look to reassure consumers, or in extreme cases, try and win them back. Being open with consumers is high on the list of 'must dos' from PR professionals in this situation, ensuring that consumers are aware of positive changes and don't need to fear that purchased companies will be swiftly relocated to Asia, with the subsequent loss of jobs in their home markets.[QQ] "An objective for professional communicators during any transaction is to show that the positive traits of the new owner - balance sheet, experience, distribution - will complement the takeover target," says Damien Ryan, owner of Ryan Financial.[QQ] This is an area KPMG International director of Communications Mark Walters believes Chinese businesses do well in. "Chinese businesses are increasingly savvy when it comes to retaining customers and brand value. For example, many Chinese businesses will retain overseas production and design while in many cases actually improving product quality and reliability."[QQ] With Asian takeovers of Western firms inevitable in the future, it seems the key to keeping the brand intact and consumer unrest at a manageable level is to be aware of the risks, continually monitor the situation as it unfolds - and then react accordingly.[QQ] According to Mediaco's Smith, this should centre on a 'considered and authentic approach to communications' with regular feedback sessions and open dialogue with consumers. "Both corporate and large lifestyle brands have benefited from creating a dialogue with their consumers on open platforms" he says.[QQ] "This, and addressing concerns, can certainly win back consumer sentiment."[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Agency Comment Set up real-time listening posts. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 32 [QQ] Across our range of clients, companies have already been evolving their communications functions to include both offline and online channels. As best practice, monitoring offline and online channels is critical during major announcements such as M&As and around major issues and crisis.[QQ] Setting up real-time listening posts enables us to track and analyse sentiment, arming us with essential insights that can inform how we message and engage various stakeholder groups in the days following an announcement. Our experience working with corporate communications and investor relations functions within our clients' organisations has shown us that both Western and Asian brands are definitely taking online sentiment very seriously. For example, last year Text100 conducted a crisis simulation exercise for an Asian multinational, specifically around a scenario where social media quickly escalated a product incident into a major crisis that affected multiple stakeholders, including consumers, regulatory bodies and special interest groups.[QQ] The speed and breadth at which misinformation and negative sentiment can spread multiplies over social media. We're talking about escalating from issue to crisis within half a day. Therefore, setting up real-time listening posts needs to become a hygiene factor, especially for something as sensitive and complex as an M&A deal.[QQ] Marc Ha, MD, Text100 Singapore & Malaysia[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Insight: Cindy Gallop on Influence... How you pay people says a lot about you. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 32 [QQ] I work as a consultant in brand and business innovation. (I characterise my consultancy approach as: "I like to blow shit up. I am the Michael Bay of business".)[QQ] My payment terms differ depending on length of engagement. For corporate speaking gigs, workshops and one-off events, I require full payment up front. For longer-term projects, it's 50 per cent up front and 50 per cent on completion. I make no exceptions. This is based on painful past experience, which has also made me realise how indicative the payment process is of whether a company has what it takes to own the future. How you pay your vendors often involves your employees spending huge amounts of time and effort that could be better spent on actually growing your business. I work with brilliant people who I've seen spend hours battling internal systems to get me paid on time. I therefore refuse to start work until the up-front payment is in my bank account.[QQ] How you pay your vendors reveals how you treat your employees financially. I know that if I'm being sent down a rabbit hole of forms, sign-offs and "that's the system", then so are your people when simply trying to get their expenses reimbursed. That's demoralising as hell.[QQ] How you pay your vendors reveals your ability as a business to operate nimbly, flexibly and in today's real-time responsive environment. How you pay your vendors determines whether great people want to work with you.[QQ] I bring my A game to my consulting work, I'm optimistic and energetic, yet I remember clearly a moment at the end of three exhausting days working while simultaneously battling the client's payment system when I felt utterly demotivated.[QQ] Look at your payment process. What do you think?[QQ] Cindy Gallop - founder & CEO, IfWeRanTheWorld[QQ] [*cindy@ifwerantheworld.com[QQ]*](mailto:cindy@ifwerantheworld.com[QQ]) --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] All about the experience. [BB] By Racheal Lee. [NT] News [PP] 34 [QQ] The face behind the brand Hilton Worldwide's new APAC chief marketer Mark Liversidge aims to make the hospitality group's name synonymous with travel.[QQ] Hospitality marketing is not known for its willingness to take risks. But as a newcomer to the industry, Mark Liversidge says that challenging convention is precisely what drives him. The regional chief marketer for Hilton Worldwide, who comes from a telecoms background, believes people in his profession, regardless of sector, have a duty to question things and overturn the ordinary. "Identify the opportunities that allow you to disrupt convention to refresh business strategies, tell new stories and focus on the future," he advises.[QQ] That's easy to say, but more difficult to put into practice, particularly for a conservative brand like Hilton. He points to a need to bring colour to the brand - but not overnight. Marketers, he says, should stimulate communication by encouraging consumers to think and engaging them in discussion, before implementing a disruptive strategy.[QQ] To do that effectively, he requires agency partners to have a deeper than usual understanding of the industry, the business and its quirks, before building a communication strategy to serve the brand. "To push the brand and its story forward, agencies need to understand our business and industry properties in different markets. They need to look at these areas, identify their potential and address the real needs of the business," he says. He also wants agencies to challenge him as a marketer.[QQ] Liversidge is open to change. After more than a decade in telecoms, he decided to veer into a totally new industry in September. The hotel category, he admits, is very conventional in marketing practices, which represents a huge opportunity to innovate. He believes his deep experience of the mobile channel in Asia will be an asset.[QQ] His goal is to make Hilton the generic term for hotels in Asia as travel increases - the Rolex or Johnnie Walker of hospitality. "This would mean that as we grow our footprint across Asia-Pacific, we do not become a price-led commoditised product, but an experience-led service driven by passionate customer advocacy."[QQ] Working alongside Hilton's vice-president of sales for Asia-Pacific, Dominic Sherry, Liversidge is responsible for marketing efforts across 18 countries in the region, including the giants of China, Japan and India. One of his tasks is to bring together all marketing functions in the region into one integrated team, focused on growing brand awareness and driving market leadership in share of revenue.[QQ] There are six Hilton brands in Asia, including Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts; Conrad Hotels & Resorts; Hilton Hotels & Resorts; DoubleTree by Hilton; Hilton Garden Inn; and Hampton. The group has 10 brands globally.[QQ] Liversidge is also the driving force for the region of the group's guest loyalty programme, Hilton HHonors, whereby members can earn and redeem points for room rewards, merchandise and vacation packages, and make charitable contributions. Members can also make reservations, manage their accounts and redeem special offers with the Hilton HHonors mobile app for iPhone.[QQ] The current role is pure marketing, whereas his previous positions had mixed responsibilities, such as sales and CRM, he says, adding that he does not believe in delivering a single strategy to serve customers of different cultures. "We need to pay attention to the different needs of customers from different cultures and geographies. My responsibility here is to build the brand story in Asia-Pacific by using local stories revolving around culture, which also aligns with the global marketing strategy."[QQ] The focus of the brand's innovation is in two areas: catering to different cultural requirements and embracing mobile technology to enhance customer experience. "To take advantage of the cultural needs, we've started rolling out Huanying, a service experience that meets the unique needs of Chinese travellers in the markets most frequented by (them), including serving congee made the right way, a selection of Chinese regional teas and slippers."[QQ] Mobile is critical to the future of hospitality in Asia and the Conrad brand has launched a concierge application that allows guests to customise their experience before arrival by selecting features such as amenities, bedding and in-room dining.[QQ] Of course, the role also means a good deal of international travel - something Liversidge regards as a pleasure. After graduating from Durham University with a degree in business, politics and history, his first job was on a graduate management programme for ICI Paints. From there, his 15-year career has taken him across Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Asia. "In the first three months in ICI, I was in the finance department and I knew that it wouldn't be my career path," he recalls. After an equally unfulfilling stint in HR, he joined the marketing team, where he worked on a product launch. The team needed to decide on the brand identity as well as the business strategy. "We worked on the product for 12 weeks and I really enjoyed the whole process. Marketing is an amazing place to be. You need to understand the world and make changes to the world. Marketing changes constantly and it's exciting."[QQ] Paint did not hold his interest, though. He went on to join BT & O2 in a marketing management capacity, and Orange as head of direct channels. He then moved to Australia to join Macquarie Telecom as GM of marketing and consumer management, his first senior role, working with the co-founders of the company. Most recently, he served as chief marketing officer at Hong Kong CSL, where he was charged with defining a multi-brand strategy across Asia. The main challenge, he says, was to increase market share with a small marketing budget for a large geography. "We had to make sure CSL had distinct branding, by doing market research, refreshing brand identity and moving away from conventional identity. We made it a lifestyle-oriented brand and partnered with other lifestyle brands such as sports and premium brands in our marketing efforts."[QQ] Liversidge's varied life experience is proving invaluable in his role at Hilton, where he aims to attract travellers from diverse backgrounds. But he acknowledges there is more to marketing than 'soft' skills like cultural awareness. "Since the graduate management programme, every boss has given me something that enriched my experience. Marketers must understand their business and ensure it's based on communication, and deliver back on every dollar spent. It's all about revenue and profitability; they need to spend on the right activities."[QQ] Besides defining the brand story for Hilton in Asia, Liversidge is looking to engage first-time travellers in fast-growing markets such as India, Indonesia and China. The Chinese traveller group, in particular, accounts for 110 million international tourists and 220 million domestic tourists per year.[QQ] "It is critical to look at the culture and commercial needs and concept of hospitality of these traveller groups before building the engagement strategy," he says. For example, people in China have tended to not regard hospitality as a life experience. This provides an opportunity to engage with potential customers by educating them about hospitality and the experience. "We want to use this opportunity to build Hilton Worldwide as a de facto brand to first-time travellers in China, India and Indonesia."[QQ] The challenge he now faces is how to enrich the reward programme, connecting the frequent travellers and first-time travellers to allow them to share their experiences and tell fellow members about other options available at the properties under the hospitality group, such as dining, weddings and events.[QQ] He says that despite the surge in mobile and social media use in the past five years, there are still many who primarily consume traditional media. But for the hospitality sector more than most, it all comes down to feeling. From communications to guest stays, "we work from the perspective of marketing to decide how to connect with people and give them a rich travel experience."[QQ] [TB] PROFESSIONAL CV 2013: Chief marketer, Asia-Pacific, Hilton Worldwide 2010: CMO, Hong Kong CSL 2009: Director, consumer marketing, Hong Kong CSL 2005: GM, marketing and customer management, Macquarie Telecom 2003: Head of direct channel, Orange 1998: Marketing management, BT & O2 1996: Graduate management programme, ICI Paints PERSONAL CV Education: University of Durham Family: Engaged Interests: Rugby, football, basketball, philanthropy [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Agency Report Card: Introduction. [BB] By David Blecken. [NT] News [PP] 38 [QQ] Agencies showed strong form and willingness to diversify despite a fall in new business revenue.[QQ] Welcome to Campaign Asia-Pacific's Agency Report Card for 2013. This marks the 11th year for us to assess the performance of Asia-Pacific's 46 leading creative and media agency networks.[QQ] Last year saw a change to the scoring system, from a numerical to a letter-based scale. This year, for further clarity, we have explained the nuances of the 'plus' and 'minus' points between the grades (see key). An initiative we undertook to improve the process this year was to give all agencies the option to participate in a dialogue with our editors via a conference call or in person. This enabled us to probe beyond the written submissions and allowed participants to highlight areas and achievements of particular interest. We would like to thank all who made time in their busy schedules to take us up on this opportunity.[QQ] For many networks, the year was resoundingly positive. Following much deliberation, Campaign raised the ranking of 13 creative and five media agencies. Just one network moved down. The decision to move an agency in either direction is something we take very seriously, being aware of the potential impact of this on external perception and staff morale.[QQ] The agencies that moved up, while often very different culturally and structurally, had a number of common characteristics. Not only did they show growth in terms of new business and overall scale; they also showed themselves to be laying the foundations for the future and developing their services in the best interests of their clients.[QQ] Agency revenue from new business in Asia-Pacific fell by 11 per cent year-on-year in 2013, according to R3. Creative wins dropped 2 per cent, while media wins declined by a quarter. Despite this somewhat subdued atmosphere, certain networks managed to shine in terms of winning new clients - namely Ogilvy and ZenithOptimedia, which finished top of R3's New Business League in their respective rankings.[QQ] Some others, such as McCann Worldgroup, stood out for their creative work, which has in turn fuelled growth. There were encouraging signs from Asian networks too, with agencies such as ADK and Hakuhodo showing a more international outlook, and Cheil Worldwide continuing to build its creative reputation.[QQ] In media, Campaign rewarded those that have made strong steps in diversifying their business beyond traditional planning and buying.[QQ] This year's report card includes a table of holding companies and an agency family tree, compiled in association with R3. Both are available for download at campaignasia.com.[QQ] As always, we welcome any feedback. Please direct your comments to David Blecken, deputy editor, at [*david.blecken@haymarket.asia.[QQ]*](mailto:david.blecken@haymarket.asia.[QQ]) [TB] Score Key A Unmatched A- Outstanding B+ Excellent B Very good B- Good C+ Above average C Satisfactory C- Passable D+ Needs work D Struggling D- Poor E Year to forget E- Survival in question [TE] Sponsor's note: Mobile sophistication key to Chinese consumers[QQ] Last year in China, we saw a total of 580 million smartphones produced (a 60 per cent increase on the previous year), according to iResearch. When Tencent launched its WeChat Fund Management service, it raised 800 million yuan in just one day. And its 'DiDi Taxi' app attracted 22 million users in just 16 months.[QQ] As 4G networks emerge, more and more companies are implementing strategies for integrating mobile into their broader marketing campaigns.[QQ] Real-time, in-depth understanding of customers, their needs and how to reach them are critical to optimise the customer experience across this channel, particularly as mobile plays a growing role in the customer's journey.[QQ] The Tencent Video mobile app receives over 100 million video views daily. This is still growing at 100 per cent quarter-on-quarter, and the Tencent News app has now become a mobile media platform with huge influence that welcomes over 100 million active users every day, with more than 400 million users in total. And with the soaring growth of WeChat, Tencent offers ideal platforms for brands to enhance their mobile strategies to achieve greater business success in China's fast-changing marketplace.[QQ] SY Lau is president, Online Media Group, Tencent and SEVP of Tencent Holdings[QQ] Methodology[QQ] Creative and media agencies were evaluated on four key criteria for the Agency Report Card:[QQ] 1. Business performance[QQ] This was assessed according to the value of accounts won and lost in the calendar year 2012, as calculated by the agencies and Campaign Asia-Pacific's New Business League, compiled in association with R3.[QQ] 2. Initiatives[QQ] A qualitative estimate was made of the initiatives submitted by agencies based on their impact on agency, people, clients and industry.[QQ] 3. Awards[QQ] Regional and global awards shows, along with the Agency of the Year awards, were included in the tally, with the major shows receiving a higher weighting. Best of show, gold, silver and bronze awards were also weighted accordingly.[QQ] 4. People[QQ] A qualitative estimate was made of the new hires submitted, combined with the perceived quality of the senior management of each agency network. This ranking recognised not only important new hires, but also proven stability.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Agency Report Card: Creative. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 40 [QQ] [TB] ADK Score 2012 D+ Needs work 2013 C- Passable Regional head: Shinichi Ueno Company ownership: ADK [TE] Things were much more positive for ADK in 2013 than they've been in recent years. Conscious of the pressing need to look beyond Japan, it entered new markets and restructured to make things more efficient.[QQ] In Japan, the board changed, with Shinichi Ueno moving up to president and CEO, and more than five senior members stepping down and not being replaced. The goal was to speed up decision making and make the company more nimble. There were new investments, too. It launched Daisuki, an animation joint venture. It also formed a digital partnership with Stipple, a US company that provides enhanced image search capabilities to drive greater ROI.[QQ] Taiwan was the most successful office, winning business from Nikon, Bomi, Uni-President and Marcobelli Tiles.[QQ] The benefits of the WPP partnership also continued to emerge this year. ADK announced a JV with Maxus to support Japanese clients out of Singapore for the region. And in China, it partnered with JWT's Always for a new company, A2, that helps Japanese brands find more integrated shopper marketing solutions.[QQ] The agency also opened an office in Myanmar in August. Key to a stronger international presence will be growing its understanding of regional markets and forming more of the right partnerships.[QQ] [TB] BATES CHI & PARTNERS Score 2012 D+ Needs work 2013 C- Passable Regional head: David Mayo Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] In its first year as a newly formed network, Bates CHI & Partners has shown fighting spirit. Its China operations went through a period of flux at the start of 2013, with Shanghai GM shifting its Buick account to Lowe and Publicis after 12 years. However, since then the agency has merged with fully owned local agency Methinks to form Bates CHI & Methinks and the newly integrated offering has picked up Deerway in China and started working with AXA Tian Ping.[QQ] With its newly formed global network status, Bates CHI won the global account for Asus, integrated work for IHG across AMEA, as well as global work for Intercontinental Hotels & Resorts. Overall, new business wins last year represented about 20 per cent of total revenue.[QQ] Bates CHI has also put into practice its promise of collaboration, forming joint ventures with JWT on the HSBC account in Hong Kong and with Mindshare to form Bates CHI & M/Six, which has already won the integrated account for Disney.[QQ] The biggest challenge has been finding (and retaining) the senior talent it needs. Several who were brought in to help establish the network - including former regional chief strategy officer Mark Sinnock, Singapore MD Louise Kuegler, COO Tony Dowling and ECD Jason Aspes - have left. Bates CHI has since signed on Arvind Srivastava from Ogilvy Malaysia as its new head of planning and strategy, but is still looking for an ECD.[QQ] In the past year, however, it hired Todd Martin as director of digital, social and creative technology and Leah Magdaluyo as head of the Philippines, which turned a profit for the first time in seven years. It also claims to have stabilised its middle management, which puts it in good stead for further growth.[QQ] [TB] BBDO Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Chris Thomas Company ownership: Omnicom subsidiary [TE] BBDO suffered a high profile blow this year when it pulled out of a long-running pitch for SingTel, which eventually moved its creative duties to Ogilvy & Mather (although BBDO retained some project work). One loss does not define a year, but the agency also lost Gillette globally and failed to finish within the top 10 in R3's New Business League.[QQ] The network once again won an impressive number of awards, although it lost out on points to McCann for the Spikes Network of the Year. BBDO's APAC entities contributed a quarter of the global network's Cannes wins and helped the network top the Gunn Report for the seventh straight year. The agency cites its best-ever year at the Asian Marketing Effectiveness & Strategy Awards - where it received twice the awards of the next closest network - as clear evidence it is delivering on its effectiveness promise, thanks to its focus on 'acts, not ads'.[QQ] BBDO claims to have gone through a complete revolution in the way it works: embedding technologists into the creative process and focusing not only on insights, but on finding the idea that 'incites'. The impact has not yet been noticeable, but the agency also includes participants from multiple markets in the idea-generation phase to ensure it creates multi-channel platforms that will resonate across cultures.[QQ] Contributions from across the map helped make up for the loss of SingTel and the global realignment of Gillette. Key wins included BCA in Indonesia, DBS and Starbucks in Hong Kong, Sansiri in Thailand, BDO in the Philippines, Venus in Korea and Coutts and Dior in China. There were senior staff departures there, though: Beijing MD Oliver Xu and South China ECD Vincent Pang both resigned.[QQ] In terms of new initiatives, BBDO rolled out its Hub+ production offering across Asia, keeping production dollars from flowing out the door. In addition, a portal called Cradle helped the network better manage its own systems and workflow.[QQ] [TB] BBH Score 2012 C+ Above average 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Charles Wigley Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] BBH continues to march steadily to its own drumbeat without pursuing trends or growth for their own sake. Despite being part of Publicis, it has a clear positioning in Asia and remains distinct from larger networks.[QQ] There were some changes, however. The lowest point was the loss of STB, which consolidated its account with JWT after four years. BBH did win some of the biggest pitches in China though. New business included Qoros, Harbin Beer, Ikea and Dutch Lady.[QQ] BBH remains a leading proponent of collaboration, but this year saw some adjustments and a broadening of proprietary services, too. The Mill, which opened to some fanfare in the Singapore office 2 years ago, ceased operations due to pricing issues. At the same time, BBH Live was launched - a lower-cost film content unit for the region that is seeing good traction.[QQ] Other notable initiatives included BBH Consultancy, a strategic unit, and BBH Design. The agency has a healthy regard for technology, and the hiring of Miguel Andres-Clavera as creative technology and digital innovation director in Singapore reflected this. It now needs to find an equivalent in China.[QQ] There was a positive change in India, too. Arvind Krishnan returned from London as MD, Russell Barrett stepped up to CCO and managing partner and Sanjay Sharma became head of planning, forming a strong team under CEO Subhash Kamath.[QQ] In Singapore, the creative team has stabilised under Scott McLelland. Noah Regan left after just six months as creative director, but overall, BBH's emphasis on culture and hiring people who fit in means churn is low - in China, the figure was under 10 per cent.[QQ] [TB] CHEIL WORLDWIDE Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Daiki Lim Company ownership: Samsung Group affiliate [TE] Cheil's growth may not quite mirror that of its parent Samsung, and it is still too heavily reliant on that brand, but its progress as a credible creative agency is notable. Last year, it took home 21 Cannes Lions and 14 awards from Spikes Asia - a feat that would have been unthinkable until recently.[QQ] Creative acclaim contributed to new business from the likes of Bayer, Amore Pacific and SingTel. And for a Korean agency, Cheil is relatively open to non-Korean talent. Bruce Haines stepped into retirement from his chief strategy officer role, but Leigh Dennis joined in Korea as global VP of brand experience. In Southeast Asia, Howell Wong's stint after Nokia was short-lived, but Chul Lim replaced him, bringing expertise from head office. Diana Cawley also joined as global retail head, moving to Korea from ARC in the UK.[QQ] In China, Bravo and Open Tide are both performing well, and Bernard Lim joined as MD of Shanghai from Grey. New wins there included Citic Hefei and the California Almond Board. Big changes also happened in India, with Anupama Ramaswamy and Simran Sahni coming in as Joint ECDs from JWT. Ranjan Nautiyal also joined as head of digital from Ogilvy. And the agency won the Halonix lighting business, proving it can combine top talent with more diversified wins.[QQ] Cheil also took time to invest in new initiatives: the Good Company Solutions Centre was set up for CSR-led marketing, and it combined with MediaMath to launch a global DSP solution.[QQ] [TB] DDB Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional head: John Zeigler Company ownership: Omnicom subsidiary [TE] DDB has one of the longest serving network heads in the region, and that has helped it significantly in achieving its strong positioning. The focus over the past year has been on reorganising its business model to offer solutions to business problems, rather than pure advertising or communications. The agency claims that strategic advice now accounts for up to 15 per cent of its profitability in the region. It saw organic and new-business growth of around 10 per cent and finished the year third in R3's new-business rankings, having retained its major clients.[QQ] The real value of its new approach is not yet fully clear, but clients have shown enthusiasm. In China, DDB extended business with Fonterra and Pepsi. In Australia, it drew consolidation from Telstra, with which it co-created a product development strategy. Meanwhile, in Singapore, investment in its UX practice also led to new work from StarHub.[QQ] Technology has been a priority and the past year has seen Singapore develop into a tech hub for the network. New initiatives in this area include Radar, which claims to offer deep analysis of customer sentiment across social platforms. The agency also promoted David Tang and Jeff Cheong to expanded roles, with a view to sharing expertise more effectively to address the requirements of all markets.[QQ] The agency had a healthy retention rate, with average turnover below eight per cent, although China has been a challenge. There, Tribal DDB MD Leo Chu and chief strategy officer Milo Chau left for Wieden+Kennedy and TBWA respectively. It is reducing its reliance on international talent to become what it terms "the biggest locally focused agency".[QQ] Creatively, it was a good year. DDB took home 25 Cannes Lions, including its first Grand Prix (for its 'Txtbks' work for Smart) and 88 Spikes. The establishment of China as a creative hub in 2012 has not worked out as planned, however, and this has led to a new model that encourages global collaboration between offices, with all creative teams given access to briefs from anywhere in the world.[QQ] [TB] DENTSU Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B- Good Regional head: Tadashi Ishii Company ownership: Dentsu Network [TE] With the Dentsu Aegis merger official from March, president and CEO Tadashi Ishii used 2013 to consolidate a global presence, while continuing to diversify beyond advertising. Five Aegis leaders joined the Dentsu Aegis Board, with Jerry Buhlmann becoming the company's second non-Japanese executive director after Tim Andree.[QQ] There were also major changes on the talent front, with Rosalynn Tay joining as Singapore CEO, and Ted Lim coming on board as regional CCO. In the drive for more creative talent, four new ECD positions were announced in November in Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. In China, the group acquired even more digital talent with WonderAD and Trio Interactive joining the fold. And in India, the long-established independent digital leader, Webchutney, was convinced to become part of the group. Another move in Thailand, the acquisition of Brandscape, boosted brand consulting credentials.[QQ] The group also entered Myanmar in March.[QQ] Closer to home, there was growth for the first time in five years. Media and creative revenue grew from most key sectors, highlighted by automotive, which finally started to reinvest. The agency performed well at Cannes, and despite its conservative exterior, it still continues to be one of the leading lights in the Gunn Report each year.[QQ] [TB] DRAFTFCB Score 2012 D Struggling 2013 D+ Needs work Regional heads: Carter Murray, Sebastien Desclee Company ownership: IPG subsidiary [TE] Historically a solid market for Draftfcb, China slumped last year. This ultimately led to a change in management there, with Edward Bell (also from Ogilvy) replacing Pully Chau as CEO. Bell's planning background signals a new direction in China. A notable cost-cutting move was the closure of the Hong Kong office and departure of MD and ECD Iris Lo, with Beiersdorf and Mondelez duties shifting to Shanghai and Taiwan respectively.[QQ] The agency's leadership structure is not ideal for Asia: the region is now handled by new global CEO Carter Murray and Sebastien Desclee, neither of whom is based here.[QQ] Under former regional COO Jonathan Allard, a principal aim last year was to strengthen a weak creative profile and work from New Zealand helped achieve that. The office took home three gold Cannes Lions and a Grand Prix and five gold awards from Spikes Asia. Draftfcb also invested in creative talent, hiring Alvin Lim from Ogilvy as group CD in China. However, the network is still patchy, and the real test of an upsurge in creativity will be whether it can spread last year's form to other markets in 2014.[QQ] New business was down on an exceptionally strong 2012, but additions still included Paper Plus and ANZ Banking Group in New Zealand and Citic Group and Mengniu in China. The network avoided any major losses and met budget targets in all markets, with the exception of Greater China.[QQ] With India and New Zealand strong, the focus now is on building Southeast Asia. One development in Thailand last year was an affiliation with Interactive Communications to service the Beiersdorf account, while Malaysia and the Philippines both saw new creative and management appointments. Operations there and in Indonesia are stable, but more dynamism would help Draftfcb in its aim of becoming a top-tier regional player.[QQ] [TB] GREY GROUP Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C Satisfactory Regional head: Nirvik Singh Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] Grey Group is a quiet ***animal*** in Asia, but a highlight in 2013 was the global win of P&G's Gillette business from BBDO - a pitch in which the region played a key role.[QQ] China also proved a point of strength. Grey won Greater China Agency of the Year honours after doubling in size and revenue within one year on the back of appointments from the likes of Mengniu, HSBC, Xiaomi and Intel. Initiatives to boost the digital fluency of staff and a new planning approach called Shift played into the strong performance.[QQ] Elsewhere, significant wins included Holden in Australia, Henkel in China and USAID in the Philippines. However, the network finished the year in 10th position on R3's New Business League, compared with sixth at the end of 2012.[QQ] On the digital front, Grey launched its interactive offering, Yolk(at)Grey, in the key Southeast Asia markets of the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. The unit's capabilities include analytics, strategic planning and social-media outreach. Other initiatives included a head of innovation position in Australia, social-networking and healthcare-marketing offerings in Korea, and CRM strategies and consulting in Singapore.[QQ] Creatively, Grey won six Cannes Lions, including a Gold Press Lion for Grey Mumbai's work for Duracell. Towards the end of the year, the agency saw some leadership turnover, as 16-year veteran Bernard Wong departed to helm Cheil Shanghai, while in Hong Kong, Desmond Chan and Keith Ho took over the reins when CEO Danny Mok left after eight years to become CMO at CSL.[QQ] [TB] HAKUHODO Score 2012 C- Passable 2013 C Satisfactory Regional head: Junji Narita Company ownership: Hakuhodo DY Holdings [TE] Hakuhodo is slowly starting to come out of its shell and is making more convincing moves beyond Japan. It made some major investments in new entities through the year, enhanced its regional base in Singapore, rolled out a major new insights study, and ended the year with its Japan office ranked as the number one digital agency in the world in the Gunn Report. Leading from Tokyo, the agency dominated AdFest, winning Digital Agency of the Year, and collecting 22 Lotuses. Work for Google and others was also recognised at Cannes.[QQ] It was a year for new ventures. Six members of its hottest digital talent in the Japan office broke off into a Hakuhodo venture called SIX Inc, which aims to develop creative solutions that transcend the norms of media. Another agency spinoff, The Day, offered more upstream consulting services to improve business management practices, developing some fresh thinking for Mercedes and other clients. And in Singapore, Yoshihiro Yoshida was put in charge of Hakuhodo Consulting, a regional offering to put to use findings from proprietary research into consumer behaviour.[QQ] Investment in research and insights continued, and in China the agency launched Hakuhodo Intelligent Partners, to deliver more upstream client support, and the Institute of Life and Living.[QQ] It also continued to experiment beyond the world of advertising. One initiative was PABY (Parent and Baby Camera), a state-of-the-art app to give Japanese families better connectedness. The internally developed Kokoku+ app also linked TV to mobile in a unique way. And it developed with Yahoo a 3D-printing solution to help visually impaired children.[QQ] It was a good year outside Japan in terms of business, although the bulk of clients still appear to be Japanese. Canon Camera and Printers came on board out of Singapore to join the likes of Isetan and Toshiba. And Romy Mishina joined in Singapore as the office's first female managing director.[QQ] [TB] HAVAS WORLDWIDE Score 2012 D Struggling 2013 D- Poor Regional head: Juan Rocamora Company ownership: Havas subsidiary [TE] A year-and-a-half on from its rebranding, Havas Worldwide remains an enigma. It is still in the hands of Juan Rocamora, who sits in Paris - not indicative of a strong commitment to Asia-Pacific.[QQ] If anything, the network's defining features are its aura of instability and lack of cohesion. Naomi Troni's appointment as Southeast Asia CEO in 2012 was questionable, and her departure a month ago for London - almost as abrupt as Renuka Jaypal before her - did not come as a great surprise. Host's Dan Gibson recently came on board as group MD for Singapore, and it is understood he will take over Troni's duties.[QQ] In China, James Chen, VP of Havas Worldwide Beijing, departed for DDB Guoan Beijing. Sushant Panda, CEO and managing partner for India, also recently resigned. Things are not much better at the top: global CEO David Jones left suddenly in January to launch an independent tech venture. Australia is its main saving grace, where it continues to produce good work under ECD Steve Coll.[QQ] There was some good news from China: there, the agency picked up new business from Beijing Auto, adding to its portfolio of brands including Kangshifu, Reckitt Benckiser, P&G (for which it handles field marketing) and Yili. The Singapore office managed to retain NTUC Fairprice in a hotly contested local review.[QQ] That aside, China saw the launch of some new business units. CEO Edward Su and the team launched Havas Life Healthcare in a joint venture with Beijing-based MedMed. The China team also launched Socialistic, led by former Havas stalwart Brendan Tansey. New campaigns for core clients Citroen and Hershey showed some versatility. A new healthcare unit came into play in Singapore, too, again in cooperation with local startups.[QQ] Only time will tell whether Havas takes on a new form under global CEO Yannick Bollore. One of his first priorities, if he is serious about Asia, should be to invest in some strong regional management.[QQ] [TB] JWT Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Tom Doctoroff Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] JWT's year started with a global crisis out of India: a leaked (conceptual) ad for Ford depicting bound and gagged women ultimately led to the resignation of chief creative officer Bobby Pawar and left the agency with lots of explaining to do.[QQ] The event was embarrassing, but not representative of JWT's year. Once the air had cleared, the agency focused on its vision of moving up the digital curve, and by the end of the year, it had doubled digital revenue. JWT expanded its digital assets by acquiring a series of well-respected, digitally-led properties, including Post Visual in Korea. XM Asia purchased Thomas Idea in Thailand and Designer City in Hong Kong.[QQ] ROI on the agency's digital efforts came in the form of Microsoft's digital business in Asia, as well new or expanded digital work for Estee Lauder, Mattell and Unicharm. Conversely, the enhanced digital toolset is also starting to function as a wedge into some client relationships, leading to more traditional media work from clients that see JWT as primarily a digital agency. Outside the digital field, it expanded Always with a service for the automotive industry in China and new offices in Taiwan and Singapore. It also launched A2, an activation JV with ADK to serve Japanese brands in China.[QQ] Doctoroff moved quickly after taking the reins in January 2013, forming an executive committee to make sure the network's leadership would remain on the same page and promoting JWT Bangkok's CEO Bob Hekkelman to Southeast Asia CEO, overseeing operations in Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar, where JWT signed an affiliation with Mango Marketing.[QQ] JWT scored important new-business wins from Singapore Tourism Board, Changi Airport and China Unicom, among others. Thanks to a joint pitch with Bates CHI & Partners, JWT also retained HSBC's brand and retail-banking work regionally.[QQ] [TB] LEO BURNETT Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Jarek Ziebinski Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] After four straight years of double-digit growth, Leo Burnett cited maintaining healthy momentum as one of its key objectives. And with five per cent "profitable growth", good retention of key clients, some significant new-business wins and some prominent creative triumphs, the agency demonstrated some positive inertia.[QQ] The network finished the year sixth on the New Business League table, boasting Pfizer, BMW Mini, Twinnings, Cargill, China Mobile and COFCO among its high-profile wins.[QQ] Bright spots included the Philippines, which grew 20 per cent, and Vietnam, where the agency reported 22 per cent growth in an economy where GDP rose just 5 per cent, as well as 180 per cent growth in digital revenue and 330 per cent growth in new business. Australia also registered double-digit growth, and even Japan eked out a three per cent expansion in a stagnant economy. In Hong Kong, Leo Burnett won the Grand Kam Fan award, but lost its MD, Lilian Leong, who ended up at UM. The agency seemed to struggle in Taiwan, where it ended relationships with Carrefour and Yahoo. And in Korea, Publicis Groupe combined Leo Burnett with Welcomm Publicis in August.[QQ] The network went home happy from the Agency of the Year Awards (six Golds), from Spikes (37 awards), and from Cannes (17 awards). Notably, the agency's 'Small world machines' effort for Coca-Cola, which connected Indian and Pakistani shoppers over a video link, earned three Gold Lions in Direct and Media.[QQ] With a number of initiatives surrounding innovation, including the 2013 launches of the Leo Burnett Institute of Behaviour and the HumanKind Playbook, plus training such as its digital boot camps and an intensive session for its top 50 'rainmakers', Leo Burnett looks determined to keep building on its strengths.[QQ] [TB] LOWE & PARTNERS Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Rupen Desai Company ownership: IPG subsidiary [TE] Lowe describes 2013 as the third year of its journey to build its independent offices into a cohesive network. It gained momentum: revenue rose 13 per cent thanks to new business wins. While it expanded its relationship with Unilever, it has also grown its portfolio to include new clients such as Heineken, Suntory Garuda and Buick Encore.[QQ] China has been a challenge since the termination of a JV partnership 10 years ago, but Lowe now has new leadership in place there and is expanding its client base beyond Unilever. It also retained Alipay and Remy Martin. However, the office still has room for growth to match Lowe's strength in India.[QQ] The agency has also diversified its services, crediting nearly half its growth last year to wins in activation, shopper marketing and digital. In some offices, those areas represent about a third of revenue. Open and Partners, a shopper activation arm, grew its revenue base by 35 per cent thanks to new clients such as Tiger Beer, Burger King and AirAsia. Lowe also advanced its digital proposition by acquiring Profero.[QQ] In an industry still dominated by Western expats, Lowe can take pride in a regional leadership profile that is 90 per cent Asian. Three of the year's top appointments were of local female leaders including Mazuin Zin in Malaysia and China chairman and CEO Kitty Lun. The agency aims to double the number of women in leadership positions within the next two to three years.[QQ] Overall, Lowe's talent management efforts have resulted in a drop of four per cent in its regional staff turnover, with Vietnam leading the region with a 30 per cent drop. The agency credits the appointment of new talent heads, its local leadership and its efforts at building a great place to work.[QQ] [TB] M&C SAATCHI Score 2012 D Struggling 2013 D+ Needs work Regional heads: Chris Jaques, Jaimes Leggett Company ownership: M&C Saatchi [TE] M&C Saatchi is nothing if not a survivor. In 2013, albeit still working off a low base, it claims that revenues rose 34 per cent, and profit by a startling 200 per cent. It attributes this to strong retention and organic growth, as well as new business and restructuring.[QQ] The decision to cut its losses and focus on Shanghai and Singapore as hubs was prudent. It closed its tired China and Hong Kong offices and started afresh in China in a JV with local independent Aeiou. The restructure yielded a profit by the end of the year. It will only be possible to truly rate the office's performance this year, but Singapore is now showing positive signs. In its first full year, it too turned a profit and won business from the likes of Bank of Singapore, Jaguar, the Singapore Tourism Board's MICE division, and the ministries of health and education.[QQ] Across the causeway, Malaysia remains the strongest office in the network, last year raising profit by nearly 55 per cent and becoming the third largest operation for M&C Saatchi globally. That was thanks to the addition of dedicated digital and design services. Japan remains in the game too, winning accounts from Sony and Honda, among others.[QQ] Creatively, M&C Saatchi is unquantifiable as it declines to enter awards shows (excepting in Australasia). Judging by its 2013 results, however, it is on course for a turnaround. A priority for 2014, besides continuing its momentum in China, will be India. It has promised a "major new launch" there soon.[QQ] [TB] MCCANN WORLDGROUP Score 2012 C- Passable 2013 B Very good Regional head: Charles Cadell Company ownership: IPG subsidiary [TE] Few could have predicted quite how big a year 2013 would be for McCann Worldgroup. Starting out with the aim of raising its creative reputation, the agency sprang to dominate awards shows. 'Dumb ways to die' for Metro Trains became the most awarded campaign in the history of Cannes, winning five Grands Prix and 18 Gold Lions, and propelled McCann to become the Spikes Asia Network of the Year. It was also the second-most awarded agency at the Asian Marketing Effectiveness Awards.[QQ] The campaign scaled such heights that it risked obscuring everything else that McCann achieved. Perhaps most importantly, it imbued the agency with a new sense of pride, optimism and creative energy, which has in turn helped fuel growth.[QQ] New business performance was impressive. McCann finished second in R3's New Business League with estimated win revenue of more than USdollars 65 million. While it lost Wellcome in Hong Kong, new accounts came from the likes of Cadillac, Princess Cruises, Petronas, China Telecom and Line.[QQ] In terms of processes, the agency invested in digital training and product development, which saw revenues increase in that area. Notably, things appear to have stabilised from a talent perspective after the tumult of recent years, particularly in China, and also Hong Kong. There, Dave McCaughan's relocation from Japan as MD promises to enable CCO Spencer Wong to return to doing what he does best. The agency has yet to announce a successor for former Cathay Pacific team MD Vince Viola, however. He continues to manage the account, splitting his time between Australia and Hong Kong. At McCann Health, Amar Urhekar's stellar leadership was recognised with a promotion in the Americas, leaving new EVP Mark Worman with big shoes to fill.[QQ] McCann starts 2014 on a highly positive note. The priority and challenge will be to keep last year's pace going across the network.[QQ] [TB] OGILVY Score 2012 B+ Excellent 2013 B+ Excellent Regional head: Paul Heath Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] Since coming on board as CEO in 2009, Paul Heath has been intent on positioning Ogilvy for the future, and that is one of the main drivers of the agency's consistently strong performance. Putting digital capabilities at the centre of a network so large is no easy task, but it is something it has achieved admirably. It now claims 2,500 staff members (just over 30 per cent) who are purely 'digital', but has also invested heavily in group-wide training to make digital part of daily operations rather than a discipline.[QQ] A major acquisition to this end was of PennyWise Solutions, a leading digital technology and production company in India. The move resulted in a best-practice solution that covers 19 markets. RedWorks expanded digital production capabilities, too, and the addition of Verticurl brought in new strength in automation and CRM. Service growth contributed to organic client growth: e-CRM business rose 60 per cent, mobile 25 per cent, and data 6 per cent.[QQ] Ogilvy also showed strong new-business growth. It finished top of R3's New Business League for the third consecutive year. New business came from Huawei, Qualcomm, Mondelez, Nikon and Suning.[QQ] While Ogilvy had a good year creatively, it could still benefit from a stronger creative voice. It did not take a Cannes Grand Prix back to Asia, but the region did contribute to it being crowned Creative Network of the Year. It also performed well at Spikes Asia, winning a total of nine Gold awards, while Asia contributed close to half of Ogilvy's global Effie wins. Creative investments included Reed Collins, who relocated to Hong Kong from The Campaign Palace as the office's first chief creative officer; and former Vodafone creative lead Ajab Samrai as chief creative officer for Japan. Retention improved in most markets, with churn below industry average.[QQ] [TB] PUBLICIS Score 2012 C- Passable 2013 C- Passable Regional head: Dean Bramham, Jeffrey Yu Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] Publicis has lost direction in recent years, and it is still not clear what it stands for as an agency. But in 2013 it did move towards a more cohesive structure under a single P&L.[QQ] It clocked up a number of wins, including WeChat and Subway in South Asia; Sanofi, Buick Lacrosse, Tempo and Abbot in China; Coca-Cola in Thailand; Audi in Singapore; Asia Brewery and Pfizer in the Philippines; and Pizza Hut in Indonesia. Yet despite those wins and others, the network did not finish in the top 10 in R3's New Business League.[QQ] The company cites boosting its creative reputation as a priority, but so far evidence of success is quite scant. The agency won a smattering of awards, including one gold, one silver and one bronze at Cannes, and a number of Spikes. Through the year, the agency did move to beef up its creative ranks, adding chief creative officers in Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as a new regional chief creative in Singapore.[QQ] Dean Bramham, regional CEO for Southeast Asia, stepped into double-duty when Sam Cassels departed as CEO of Publicis Singapore in March - a move said to be related to the loss of BMW Asia. In December, the agency hired Lou Dela Pena from TBWA to take over the Singapore CEO role. In Korea, Welcomm Publicis went through restructuring and combined with Publicis Groupe sister agency Leo Burnett, with sources citing greater efficiencies.[QQ] The network went on something of a shopping spree in Mumbai and Delhi, acquiring a digital agency, a consulting/research company and an all-round agency with expertise in shopper marketing. Employees in the South Asia region zoomed from 300 to 550.[QQ] [TB] SAATCHI & SAATCHI Score 2012 C- Passable 2013 C Satisfactory Regional head: Chris Foster Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] Saatchi & Saatchi continued to show positive signs under Chris Foster. The agency posted double-digit growth for a second year and started to regain its creative profile, despite the departure of respected regional ECD Andy Greenaway. It took home 10 Lions from Cannes and seven awards from Spikes Asia. The Philippines in particular has shown more pace under ECD Andrew Petch.[QQ] Instead of bearing the hefty price tag of a new regional creative head, the agency formed a 'creative quorum' of five ECDs. It hired the internationally experienced Golf Nuntawat as ECD in Thailand, but would benefit from further investment in strong creative leaders. The year saw further structural change to make services more readily available. It combined its regional, Singapore and Saatchi Lab P&Ls into a single hub for regional clients in Singapore. It also acquired Arachnid, a strong Malaysian digital agency. In China, it localised leadership, with Michael Lee replacing Justin Billingsley as CEO.[QQ] Saatchis did not suffer any major losses and continued to concentrate on growing existing business with clients such as Toyota rather than pitching. Conditions were challenging in China, but Australia stood out: the office has doubled in size over the past two years. The priorities for 2014 will be to gather steam in China and improve operations in India, which remains a weak point.[QQ] [TB] TBWA Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Keith Smith Company ownership: Omnicom subsidiary [TE] TBWA has yet to fully recapture the creative form it once held, and needs to establish a stronger positioning. But it still commands respect and showed decent performance combined with development of its services. Posting record profits, it grew significantly in India, China, Vietnam and Australia, and won back major business in Korea.[QQ] GE's global consolidation with BBDO was a blow, but a strong run of new business in Australia from the likes of David Jones and Lion Nathan helped offset it. In Korea, it regained a chunk of business from SK Telecom, which moved in-house several years ago. And in Japan, where it is particularly strong, long-term client Nissan tapped TBWA Hakuhodo for the global relaunch of Datsun.[QQ] TBWA has solid long-term leadership in key markets and there were positive stuctural developments. In China, Korea and Singapore it launched Being, a consultancy that has enabled it to work with clients not seeking conventional advertising solutions. It strengthened its digital positioning with the acquisition of Magnon in India, and in Malaysia launched Capital Markets, which specialises in financial branding. The agency has benefited from Infiniti's relocation to Hong Kong, with the Luxury Arts Studio there tripling in size since the end of 2012.[QQ] In terms of creative awards, things were quiet. Australia stood out, and the 'Car creation' work for NMRA was especially well received. Highlights included a Gold Effectiveness Lion from Cannes, a Media Grand Prix and two Golds at Spikes Asia. The establishment of a global council of six creative heads, two of whom are from Asia, looks to be a step towards regaining past status.[QQ] [TB] WIEDEN+KENNEDY Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C Satisfactory Regional head: Jason White Company ownership: Wieden+Kennedy [TE] Wieden+Kennedy (W+K) in Asia is not yet on the same level of its home offices, but in 2013 it vanquished US and European competitors in a global pitch for the relaunch of the Jeep Grand Cherokee.[QQ] That was the highlight, along with winning a Southeast Asia pitch for Mondelez. The addition will support the opening of a satellite office in Singapore.[QQ] For Nike, W+K won two bronze Cannes Lions for last year's Olympics-related 'Greatness' campaign. However, it is worth noting that Nike is struggling in China, which underscores the agency's somewhat precarious dependence on MNC clients. COFCO, WeChat and Hunan TV tapped W+K for projects, but the agency failed to achieve its aim of cementing major new local clients in China. It also split from Levi's globally in October.[QQ] On the talent front, the agency added a regional head of interactive and boosted the seniority level in its digital strategy and interactive-production roles. In addition, W+K attracted Leo Chu, former head of Tribal DDB and AKQA, as well as project manager Freeman Chiu from Tribal DDB.[QQ] Other initiatives included an executive coaching programme and 'Dan's House'[QQ] - an exchange programme that sends staffers to the mother ship in Portland, Oregon. True to its creative roots, the agency also continues to promote cross-fertilisation by hosting gallery exhibitions and 20 to 30 entrepreneurs on any given day, including set designers, 3D specialists and e-commerce experts.[QQ] [TB] Y&R Score 2012 C- Passable 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Matthew Godfrey Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] Four years of hard work to reinvigorate Y&R by president Matthew Godfrey are paying off. If 2012 was the year the agency focused on its core brand, 2013 was the year it lavished attention on its digital arm VML, launching a number of Asia-Pacific offices and increasing digital revenue to 25 per cent from half that in 2011. The acquisition of IM2.0 in October last year doubled its scale in China.[QQ] Godfrey didn't neglect Y&R itself, however. There was a new, majority-owned, office in Yangon and an affiliate agreement with Hancomm in Korea that the agency believes will help it gain accounts from the chaebols. The agency also rebuilt its office in New Zealand by appointing new senior management, including Auckland GM Abbe Hale, head of planning Jono Key and GM of media Nicky Greville.[QQ] Y&R's more integrated network and growing strength of VML has helped the agency grow its top line due to new business wins by 20 per cent. Over the year, the network has won BMW Thailand and Asia and PML Singapore, Dell Asia and Huawei Devices China. It also claims to have retained all of its top clients and increased its new business success rate to 40 per cent in 2013 from 30 per cent in 2012.[QQ] The agency attributes much of the credit for this increased rate of success to Generation Asia, an in-depth attitudinal study in 10 Asian markets conducted annually by VML. Insights gleaned from this study have seen the agency make a 60 per cent jump in new business success. As a third of VML's revenue is derived from data and analytics, the study also helps demonstrate its capabilities.[QQ] In terms of talent, Y&R introduced Talent Matrix Mapping which identifies high-potential individuals in the organisation. This has helped reduce churn rates, particularly in China. Its ZedPod initiative, which involves hiring five new graduates and making them a 'business pod', has taken off, with 26 per cent of the new recruits opting for full employment with the company and many of the rest choosing to leave to start their own enterprises.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Agency Report Card: Media. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 48 [QQ] [TB] CARAT Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B+ Excellent Regional head: Sean O'Brien Company ownership: Aegis Media subsidiary [TE] Carat performed strongly in 2013 with its continued focus on delivering business value. It won more than 300 accounts, grew by 38.5 per cent according to Recma, and improved its margins by 93 per cent. The company points to 135 per cent growth in digital, which now accounts for 45 per cent of revenue, as well as a first-place ranking in Recma's qualitative rankings.[QQ] Carat bet big on its Consumer Connection Study, an ongoing survey of 160,000 respondents that relates brand preference to media habits. The company claims the research leads the way in its ability to predict how changes in media mix will affect business metrics. It also rolled out programmatic trading desk Amnet in Asia.[QQ] On the personnel front, Carat added strategic strength to its stable leadership team by hiring Arvind Sethumadhavan as chief innovation officer, Kate Williams as international client president, and Tracey Hamilton as VP of strategy. Adil Zaim, in his second year as CEO of Carat China, won Campaign's Greater China Agency Head of the Year.[QQ] South Korea and Indonesia are solid markets for Carat, but it has its sights set on improving its performance in the Philippines and Vietnam. Although Carat left the L'Oreal China pitch empty handed, it ended the year on a high note, taking Mondelez from Mindshare across a wide swathe of the region - Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (the network already held the snack food giant's media duties in China, Australia and New Zealand).[QQ] [TB] HAVAS MEDIA Score 2012 C Satisfactory 2013 C+ Above average Regional head: Vishnu Mohan Company ownership: Havas subsidiary [TE] It might be a while before larger networks see Havas Media as a real threat, but it continues to grow solidly. The year began with a rebrand of its key entities, MPG and Media Contacts. The group also launched a network in the region, Arena, on the back of its global win of LG Electronics, and opened fully-owned operations in Australia.[QQ] Notable wins included Emirates, Indofood Indonesia, Uni-President China and Vietnam Airlines, leading to new business revenue growth of 18 per cent. Part of that is down to its 'Collab concept' initiative. It invites clients and non-clients to submit the toughest briefs they have to a team of four, who come back in three hours with a business solution. Havas says it has opened the door to business it would not have been able to pitch for.[QQ] The agency diversified its offering with the expansion of Mobext and the launch of the Atom Fund, which brings in new mobile clients by offering to partially fund new mobile campaigns. It also debuted Lens, a free auditing service that measured advertiser mobile strategy, which has attracted responses from 40 blue chip brands.[QQ] Havas successfully retained some key business, including Danone Indonesia and Hugo Boss North Asia. However, it lost Reckitt Benkiser in Indonesia and the Philippines, and Abbott in Singapore.[QQ] Senior staff retention improved five per cent on the previous year. A nice touch is its remuneration system for senior staff which places no cap on rewards for achievements. A priority in 2014 will be building up operations in Australia and Indochina.[QQ] [TB] INITIATIVE Score 2012 D- Poor 2013 D+ Needs work Regional head: Prashant Kumar Company ownership: IPG subsidiary [TE] Initiative still has some way to go as a network in Asia, but it did pick up some good new business, starting with Sony India and Sony Music Australia and ending the year by winning media planning and buying for Reckitt Benckiser in Malaysia, Bangladesh, India and Singapore. The network also took on global duties for Amazon. In total, the agency claims to have won 47 new business wins. It finished sixth on R3's New Business League with a revenue increase of about USdollars 15 million.[QQ] The agency, which until recently has been largely regarded as sister agency UM's conflict network, credits its surge to an internal cultural revamp helmed by new global chief executive Jim Elms around the slogan 'Fast, brave, decisive and simple'. According to the agency, this entailed an exhaustive audit to make sure every tool in place was needed to achieve these goals. In the end, all company tools were scrapped except for two, decision software Matrix and consumer and insights practice, Real Lives.[QQ] In 2013, Initiative also landed two Gold Lions at Cannes for Initiative Thailand's 'Million reasons to believe' campaign for Coca-Cola - a strong step towards building up its low brand profile.[QQ] Initiative's internal revamp also included getting new management into place, including Nopakun Sujaritchant as CEO of Thailand, Annick Perrin as MD of Sydney and Anamika Mehta as CEO of India. In a positive human resources move, recognising the industry's high levels of stress, Initiative launched the 'Happiness programme', which introduced community involvement and company outings to foster better relationships between co-workers. Overall, the agency claims a turnover rate below the industry average, with its top management averaging 15 years' tenure at the company.[QQ] [TB] MAXUS Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B Good Regional head: Neil Stewart, Ajit Varghese Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] GroupM's youngest and smallest network embarked on a new chapter this year under Ajit Varghese, who was previously in charge of its strongest market, India. Succession planning was smooth in anticipation of Neil Stewart's and digital lead Nico Abbruzzese's moves to global roles, with Martin Shaw stepping into the role of digital head.[QQ] The agency turned in a solid performance last year and achieved its financial targets thanks to strong organic and local growth. Topping its list of achievements is expanding its relationship with JetStar to span the airline's regional USdollars 40 million account, and signing a deal with Japanese agency ADK to handle all planning and buying for its clients in the region, outside of Japan. The network also picked up work for Union Pay for markets outside of China.[QQ] The agency also succeeded in retaining the L'Oreal account in India and extending the contract to include other markets, and GSK in Australia. It did however lose both IndoFood in Indonesia and Uni-President in China to Havas, but picked up several digital-led accounts, including Nestle India and Haier China.[QQ] Maxus' focus on China, India and Australia has paid off in all three markets, with wins of Tata Tea and Wipro in India and Breville in Australia and significant growth of existing accounts. In China, the agency retained Bank of Communications and Ping An and will continue to focus on growing its local client base in the market. But Maxus could improve on landing more major regional accounts.[QQ] Over the year, the agency has invested heavily in its digital and technological capabilities and now boasts a team of more than 150 digitally skilled people region-wide. Maxus has also been building up its creative-tech arm, Metalworks from a team of two when it launched in October 2012 to 10-12 people in Singapore, Hong Kong and India. This year (2014) sees the roll-out of the offering into more markets in the region.[QQ] The group has a relatively low turnover rate, which it credits to its high engagement levels and ongoing young talent development programmes.[QQ] [TB] MEC Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B- Good Regional head: Stephen Li Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] MEC takes pride in its strong local-market strategy in Asia, and much of its new business growth (USdollars 14 million in revenue, according to R3) was led by local markets such as Weetabix in China and Blackmores and Channel 7 in Australia. The network also picked up strong regional wins last year, namely General Electric across Asia-Pacific and Sony in Southeast Asia.[QQ] MEC ranked seventh in R3's New Business League overall, but top in Singapore and Taiwan, and was the fastest growing media agency in Asia year-on-year, according to Recma. It also successfully retained key business totaling more than dollars 200 million in billings. This included Chanel in China, Malaysia and South Korea, Remy in China, Mitsubishi in Australia and STB. The agency's largest client losses were Dupont in India and part of the Citi Singapore account.[QQ] Part of its strategy for growth is its investment in product development such as a client-facing data and analytics hub in China led by former Accenture manager, Baosheng Gao.[QQ] Talent-wise, attrition fell by 8 per cent thanks to the hiring of a dedicated head of people and culture. MEC also made key leadership hires, including Tim Flattery as head of business development in Australia, Carey Loh as Shanghai MD and Roopam Garg as North India head. Another key hire was head of trading Michael Beecroft, whom it credits with helping clients better understand the value of the media they're investing in.[QQ] [TB] MEDIACOM Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Mark Heap Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] The biggest events in MediaCom's year were the departure of Alex Crowther and appointment of Mark Heap as his replacement. The transition did not derail steady growth, and the agency built its business significantly, thanks in part to the implementation of an automated workflow system, as well as business wins including Fonterra, BAT, Swatch Korea and Inoherb China. It did however lose AB InBev to Starcom in China.[QQ] Increased investment in accountable media planning helped. Based on its work with P&G, the agency revamped its planning process to better understand how media exposure directly translates to profits for clients. MediaCom also invested in the reorganisation of its existing services around earned media. The unit, MBA (MediaCom Beyond Advertising), is led by Lizzie Nolan and involves about 80 people across the region.[QQ] Overall, the agency has managed to retain most of its clients with the biggest losses coming from the Australian office, which saw a busy year, defending more than 10 per cent of its billings and retaining all except for the buying half of the New South Wales government account and Danone & Murray.[QQ] In terms of talent, Crowther's move was handled smoothly. The agency managed to increase retention by 10 per cent year-on-year through better performance management and the introduction of engagement programmes such as the Unimaginable Project where employees have chance to share their three 'unimaginable personal goals'.[QQ] [TB] MINDSHARE Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Ashutosh Srivastava Company ownership: WPP subsidiary [TE] Mindshare has crossed a tipping point, with more than 50 per cent of its business now coming from activities outside of traditional media, such as consulting, analytics and activation. But according to the network's leaders, much more than the revenue mix has changed: Mindshare has become an adaptive agency. The launch-it-and-leave-it campaigns of yesteryear no longer fly, and the agency is brimming with planners with the expertise and tools to adapt campaigns on the fly based on consumer response.[QQ] The company calculates that its employees have received 88,000 hours of digital training over 12 months and all staff are required to go through a 40-hour digital training course as soon as they come on board.[QQ] Distributing digital expertise into two teams - a paid-media team and an owned-earned team - has gained recognition from clients including L'Oreal. The brand moved part of its digital media business from ZenithOptimedia to Mindshare, which also holds its traditional media account.[QQ] The network also pursued its adaptive theme with the launch of a new operating system, the Original Thinking Framework, and six adaptive tools, including a connections planner that optimises paid and owned media to drive earned media. This helped Mindshare win business from Unilever, GSK, NAB, Dyson and Amway, among others - although Mondelez did move a large chunk of business to Carat.[QQ] During 2013, Mindshare appointed new CEOs in China, Australia, Hong Kong and Thailand, filling all four posts with internal talent - and three of them with women under the age of 40.[QQ] [TB] OMD Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional head: Steve Blakeman Company ownership: Omnicom Subsidiary [TE] OMD enjoyed a strong year of new business, finishing second on R3's New Business League. New clients included China Telecom, Carlsberg and Guangdong Development Bank. China was in especially good form. There, OMD signed on Yili, Guangdong Development Bank, Maserati and Toyota Yaris.[QQ] A contributing factor was the launch of an automated workflow process, Vision, which aims to break down consumer motivations. The agency also rolled out its 'sandbox' process, which involves the client in the process of solving business problems using Vision, a method which has won the agency several new clients. OMD also did well on the awards front, with its Australia office named Media Agency of the Year at Cannes.[QQ] The biggest account loss of the year was Fonterra after six years. OMD also said goodbye to Sony globally, but retained the business in China. Other losses included Hershey's in Asia and SCA China, both of which the agency claims were not major accounts.[QQ] Talent-wise, OMD increased its ranks by 25 per cent, mostly in China around the areas of digital, social and mobile. It did see some upheaval there, however, with the departure of SiewPing Lim. She was replaced by Arlene Ang, who has a digital background and signals a potential new direction. Overall, staff retention was good, and the Australia office has ranked in the nation's top 50 places to work in for the past five years in Australia's Business Review Weekly. OMD also hired a talent director for Asia, Samantha Webb.[QQ] [TB] PHD Score 2012 B- Good 2013 B- Good Regional head: Susana Tsui Company ownership: Omnicom subsidiary [TE] It was a year of transition for PHD as Cheuk Chiang, who has taken the agency to a position of considerable strength in a short space of time, stepped up as regional Omnicom Media Group (OMG) chief executive. The appointment of Susana Tsui from OgilvyOne as his successor in May was in line with PHD's focus on developing non-traditional channels. It is, however, a much more demanding role for Tsui and after six months, her impact is yet to be felt.[QQ] The network is still relatively small, but it continues to grow. It retained its key clients and billings increased nearly 20 per cent on 2012. That was thanks to new business from HTC, Ferrero, Newell Rubbermaid, SC Johnson and Johnny Walker Blue, the latter a global account win led from Singapore. China saw organic growth of close to 25 per cent and wins of Electrolux, Converse and local brands such as Ping An Insurance.[QQ] China is one of the network's strongest markets, along with Australia and Singapore. But the departure of CEO Mark Heap for MediaCom was a setback, and the direction Aaron Wild now takes as his replacement will be critical in its goal of moving away from being a 'Unilever agency' to one that also has strong local foundations. On the other hand, there was expansion in India, where its goals are similar, with the launch of offices in Delhi and Mumbai. Staff retention overall was good, up five per cent on the previous year.[QQ] In terms of initiatives, the much-hyped Source planning tool appears to be paying off, adding consistency to the planning process and serving as a platform for consolidating paid, owned and earned media, and making sense of data across markets. The launch of PHD's Global Planning Unit in Singapore is also a positive step towards developing global strategies for its clients in the region.[QQ] A priority for PHD is the continued development of revenue streams outside of trading. It has an advantage in that it has no legacy as a 'TV' agency, and partnerships with companies like Buddy Media have strengthened capabilities in social media and data. Looking ahead, we can expect much more in the way of partnerships and acquisitions as a means for PHD to build both scale and strengthen its status as a consultancy.[QQ] [TB] STARCOM Score 2012 C+ Above average 2013 B- Good Regional heads: Jeffrey Seah, Bertilla Teo, Mallikarjun Das, John Sintras Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] Starcom's focus in 2013 was on becoming a 'human experience' company. That translates into leading in the areas of content, digital platforms and analytics. Those disciplines now account for 35 per cent of revenue in Asia and contributed to solid growth.[QQ] The unorthodox leadership structure - with four CEOs overseeing different sub-regions - seems to be working. While Starcom finished the year 10th on R3's New Business League, it remains the second-ranked media agency network in Asia according to Recma, and pulled in some major new business. Highlights were the win of AB InBev in China and Garuda, wins that were largely attributable to strong digital capabilities. Still in China, P&G saw merit in consolidating its digital analytics business, due largely to its newly implemented Paid Owned Earned Modelling (POEM) framework.[QQ] In addition to POEM, new initiatives included Audience on Demand (AOD), an audience-buying programme; a multiscreen audience reach optimiser that claims to maximise performance for a given budget; and the launch of a 'centre of excellence' for analytics in India that has strengthened data-related services across the region.[QQ] The most significant account loss was Honda Malaysia, which consolidated with Dentsu without a pitch. But Starcom did well to extend business with Far East Organisation, Samsung and Mead Johnson.[QQ] In line with Starcom's move away from traditional media buying activities, it is looking outside the industry for its staff. In Indonesia, 35 per cent of new talent came from a non-media agency background, while in Malaysia the figure is 60 per cent.[QQ] [TB] UNIVERSAL MCCANN Score 2012 D+ Needs work 2013 C- Passable Regional head: Prashant Kumar Company ownership: IPG subsidiary [TE] Universal McCann (UM) seemed to rise from its slumbers last year, winning 94 new clients. The agency continued its drive toward a 'hybrid' model, integrating online and offline planning. As such, UM claims that 90 per cent of its teams now work on fully integrated online-offline plans. Training programmes and alterations to KPIs have helped accelerate the change.[QQ] Many of the company's significant moves in 2013 had to do with bolstering the digital side of the hybrid equation. These included hiring 20 digital directors; acquiring Australian mobile agency Mnet and Indian digital agency Interactive Avenues; and launching programmatic buying in Southeast Asia.[QQ] In the online video realm, UM introduced VRPs (video rating points) to aid the measurement of exposure across all types of screen. Meanwhile social-media unit Rally, which offers social listening, content and crisis response among other services, took on work with major clients, including Coca-Cola, J&J and Microsoft.[QQ] Overall, revenue increased 12 per cent, and UM finished the year in fourth position on R3's New Business League - up from seventh in 2012. Significant wins included Haier and Tetrapak in China, the Australian government and Indian Oil, while losses included Burberry across the region and Origin Energy in Australia.[QQ] On the talent front, UM added Will Anstee as client managing partner, Doris Kuok from Starcom as Cathay Pacific managing partner, Lilian Leong from Leo Burnett to replace Chris Skinner as Mediabrands Hong Kong MD and Anthony Plant from Saatchi & Saatchi as Japan chief executive.[QQ] [TB] ZENITHOPTIMEDIA Score 2012 B Very good 2013 B Very good Regional Head: Gerry Boyle Company ownership: Publicis subsidiary [TE] As was the case with several of its peers, ZenithOptimedia experienced a change in leadership in 2013 with the departure of long-serving regional CEO Phil Talbot. The agency is now in the hands of former UK chairman Gerry Boyle.[QQ] Talbot's departure was a surprise, but the agency showed strong form throughout the year, finishing at the top of R3's New Business League. It claims its 'Live ROI' approach has helped it land clients such as Clarins, New South Wales government and Fiat China and its performance marketing arm, Performics, win over the Marriott Group and Singapore Airlines. ZO also managed to expand its relationships with Maybank and Merck, growing the latter from Australia to span the region.[QQ] 'Live ROI' was a global proposition the agency launched in 2012 and put into place last year with tools such as social media monitoring technology, real-time client-dashboards, and training. The approach is also credited with helping retain several major clients following competitive pitches including Nestle India and Reckitt Benckiser in Australia, China, Taiwan and Vietnam, only losing the client account in India.[QQ] The agency has started to grow revenue beyond planning and buying, but could do more in this respect. It launched Performics in Taiwan and the Philippines and expanded Newcast in Singapore. The team numbers eight, but investment is planned in the coming year. It also managed to slash regional turnover rates by hiring talent directors for many of its markets, and a head of talent for Southeast Asia. It invested in training and participated in 'Live my life', a Publicis-wide initiative where staff can pitch for a chance to work abroad on assignment.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Agency Report Card: Agency Holding Companies. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 52 [QQ] With the Dentsu-Aegis merger completed in March, Dentsu grows a further 18 per cent. WPP shows moderate increase as Omnicom remains stable.[QQ] [TB] ASIA-PACIFIC RANKING BY REVENUE Rank Rank Holding Group 2013 2013 Revenue Key agencies 2013 2012 Growth (USdollars m) 1 1 Dentsu 18% dollars 4,830 Dentsu, Carat 2 2 WPP 6.4% dollars 2,806 Ogilvy & Mather, Mindshare 3 3 Hakuhodo 5.7% dollars 2,090 Hakuhodo, Hakuhodo Kettle 4 4 Omnicom 0.7% dollars 1,559 BBDO, DDB, OMD, PHD 5 5 Publicis Groupe 11% dollars 1,106 Publicis, Starcom MediaVest 6 6 Interpublic 5% dollars 817 McCann Worldgroup, UM 7 8 ADK -2.5% dollars 642 ADK International 8 9 Cheli 14.9% dollars 542 Cheil Worldwide, Bravo Asia 9 10 STW 11.50% dollars 306 Singleton O&M, JWT Australia 10 12 Enero -26% dollars 232 Naked Communications, BMF 11 13 Havas 0.6% dollars 158 Havas Worldwide, Havas Media 12 14 M&C Saatchi -3% dollars 85 M&C Saatchi, Clear 13 15 SapientNitro 10% dollars 81 SapientNitro 14 / BlueFocus 23.0% dollars 73 Blue Digital, Dentsu BlueFocus 15 / Edelman 15% dollars 66 Edelman 16 11 Project: WorldWide 10% dollars 51 George P Johnson 17 16 Wieden+Kennedy 10% dollars 44 Wieden+Kennedy 18 17 ICLP 10% dollars 20 ICLP 19 18 Next Fifteen -3% dollars 20 Bite, Text100 20 / Engine 20% dollars 15 Engine All revenue is from company reports, estimated by R3 for full year 2013 Conversions to USdollars are as of 13 December, 2013 [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Jerry Buhlmann. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 54 [QQ] The Atifa Silk Interview - The Dentsu Aegis Network CEO shares his insights on the cultural and geographic challenges of cross-border growth and how bigger can be better[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann is the chief executive of the combined Dentsu Aegis Network - only the second non-Japanese CEO at the Japanese advertising giant - and he wants to build the first truly global communications network for a post-digital world.[QQ] One year after Dentsu officially acquired Aegis Group for USdollars 4.9 billion (and paid a 48 per cent premium to buy the London-based global media and digital communications network in mid-2012), Buhlmann's work is just beginning. His challenge is to bolster Dentsu's global growth aspirations and manage all of its business outside of its home market. Buhlmann, who was recently in Hong Kong for Campaign's Media360Asia summit (see page 58) addressing the value mega mergers and acquisitions bring to a client's business, believes the new entity is on the path to growth.[QQ] While dominating its home country for half a century Dentsu's challenge in growing outside its home base has been both cultural and geographic. The goal is to earn at least 55 per cent of its revenue from markets outside Japan by 2017.[QQ] Buhlmann, who started his career at Young & Rubicam before moving to WCRS, founded BBJ (later renamed Vizeum) in the UK and built the agency before it was acquired by Aegis Media in 1999. In 2010, he oversaw the largest acquisition in Aegis Group history when Mitchell and Partners became part of Aegis Media, and in 2011 he led the transformational disposal of Synovate, the market research company to Ipsos.[QQ] He says the integration of Dentsu Aegis is well underway, and the business will continue to invest in areas such as technology, data, e-commerce in China, as well as establishing a single holding company vision that talks of reinvention and innovation.[QQ] Atifa Silk: Why was the Dentsu Aegis deal the right thing for the industry?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: When Dentsu first approached us, you could see that this deal would be good for our staff and good for our clients and clearly, if the price was right, it would be good for shareholders. The whole issue around the stakeholder constituency is important. If you look at the networks Aegis could have merged with, this was probably the best partner - a partner that would bring something additional to what we already had. If another agency group tried to merge with us, there would have been cost control and cost cutting and other elements that can destabilise a business.[QQ] Atifa Silk: Is bigger better? What competitive advantages does scale bring?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: Scale of organisation does have some advantage. We are dealing with change, which is driven by globalisation and convergence, and what clients want are the benefits of those across a hundred markets. The growth of digital, social, mobile, data and transaction as well as the wider media revolution, means that if you have more resources and capabilities it can help your business. The strategy of making small and medium-sized acquisitions to bring in additional resources to support the ones you already have works well.[QQ] The whole point about 'groups' is that you can begin to satisfy that requirement for that complexity of skills - 30 different specialisations in a hundred plus markets. And that's really what global clients need because they want efficiency and effectiveness, and they need it in their agency businesses too.[QQ] Atifa Silk: Making cross-border mergers or acquisitions work profitably is tough. What have you done differently?[QQ] Most of the acquisitions we did prior to the Dentsu deal were not cross-border. We did focus on small and medium-size within market, so if we need digital resource in the United States, we would buy US businesses; in France, French businesses, and in China, Chinese businesses. So in fact what we did is focus on the big economies and we set out to create assets, which is very importantly. We tended not to go for multi-market acquisitions; we were interested in businesses that were in their own market.[QQ] Atifa Silk: How are these businesses identified and structured?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: We have a significantly differentiated business model, which allows us to operate all our businesses in each country as one P&L. That means the networks are not driving global P&Ls across market, which would mean them competing with each other. They are operating as one team within market, and often within the same building. When we make acquisitions, we're very clear that it's about the people; we're not buying the business, we're buying the people. Do the people buy into our vision; and if the answer is yes, then they'll probably be a good acquisition and you'll arrive at the right price in the end anyway. That focus on making sure we acquire businesses where people share our vision has been really important.[QQ] Atifa Silk: How have you structured deals to ensure talent stays?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: If you look at the way deals are structured, people businesses are usually based on earn-out, so you have some percentage up front, and then for the next three or four years, they get a share of the profits as part of their earn-out. At the end of the earn-out, they can walk away.[QQ] The industry average is that only 30 per cent stay after earn-out. At Dentsu Aegis, the percentage is 70 per cent, so we're very focused on the people: do those people buy into our vision, are they going to stay at the end of the earn-out, and if we think they will, and we create the path for them to do so, then there will be a good acquisition. And the returns we have had have been extremely good on the basis of focusing on the issue.[QQ] It's important to make that work over a period of years, especially if you look at our business; Aegis made over 100 acquisitions in five years roughly. We now have a cadre of people who were owner-mangers of their own business, and are now part of the corporate management. They're very different culturally to businesses where people have just come up through the corporate ladder. So you create that culture of a performance business. I believe that's one of the key opportunities for us, and one of the ways that we'll go forward with Dentsu Aegis. It is to be a performance business with a shared vision that is working to deliver that vision, and having quality managers who may have sold their business, but are happy to buy into the vision going forward. This is a big cultural step forward.[QQ] Atifa Silk: You made the decision to stay at Dentsu-Aegis. Why?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: It's exactly the same criteria. If you go back to 1999, when I sold my business to Aegis, at that time, I bought into the vision of what Aegis was doing then. And if you buy into the vision and you can be motivated about what the new vision is and the new task, then why wouldn't you stay? I was very motivated about the new vision and the people I was working with at Dentsu and how they wanted to create something different and better in the market. My goal is to drive the rest of the organisation to behave in the same way.[QQ] Atifa Silk: What is the challenge you face in creating one holding group vision that is meaningful for clients and can play at a global level and provide joined-up solutions for clients?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: Aegis, almost uniquely for a holding company, prior to acquisition had a vision: reinventing the way brands are built. That Aegis vision applied across all of the networks - Carat, Vizeum, Isobar, iProspect, Posterscope. Dentsu, similarly, has a vision across all its businesses, which is good innovation. So both companies come into this with a vision for their holding company. If you like, they each have an overall vision. None of our competitors have that. They don't have a vision for the whole company.[QQ] We're now looking at those two visions and going to arrive at a common vision that brings the two together. But if you think about it, the values that underpin them are exactly the same. If you take Dentsu's five values and you put them against Aegis' they are very similar. So I believe we are actually in a very positive place to create a single vision. We now need to articulate what the vision is - which is about reinvention, innovation and creating a post-digital business - and communicate that to the organisation. It's a work in progress and we will get there soon. But we come from a starting point of both understanding and accepting and agreeing to having a vision for the holding company, which we think in itself is differentiated.[QQ] Atifa Silk: While Dentsu Aegis is the market leader in APAC, it sits behind competitors in key markets such as Australia and China. How do you plan to close the gap with WPP and Publicis Omnicom in these markets?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: Our plan isn't to attack the gap. We don't look at a particular size and say we need to be that size. What we want is growth. We've got the assets and an organisation that's ready to move. We have agility. If we grow successful, there's enough for the shareholders and staff and for us to continue investing in the business. If we focus on making sure our vision and our product is highly competitive, then growth will come; and we're not specifically targeting any gaps.[QQ] But, those other conglomerates you just mentioned have their own challenges. The Publicis-Omnicom merger isn't disruptive; it's not disrupting, it's not creating a new business model. All it is doing is putting two big liners together and roping them together. It doesn't actually make them any faster. And frankly they have their own challenges, which is their issue. But they've got hundreds of thousands of people, dozens of networks and brands, with lots and lots of cultures, and they've got to bring those together and try and create an organisation with a new culture, because otherwise they won't do better than the sum of the parts. That's going to take them a lot of time. But as I said that's their issue, and that's fine. They wish to do that.[QQ] We'll be very busy, moving as fast as we can, building one organisation and generating growth, and that's where our focus is.[QQ] Atifa Silk: Where does this leave WPP?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: In one sense you could argue that the Publicis-Omnicom merger supports what WPP had, because they have a big conglomerate group that has lots of agencies, vertical P&Ls, and is challenged on building a common organisation and a common vision for that business. Looking at these two, you could say they're big groups or conglomerates and they'll find it difficult to grow. How do they grow at 5 per cent, because they're a big part of the market; therefore it's going to be very hard for them to outperform the market. So their challenge is growth and how do they leverage their assets.[QQ] We need to be focused on being different and better, and if we do that we'll find plenty of opportunity to grow a forward-looking, digitally enabled business. Our focus is growth and delivering success for our clients, rather than targeting any particular size. And honestly we're quite happy we're the size we are because we can get growth; it's much, much harder to get growth if you're that much bigger.[QQ] If I look at the numbers that are being reported for the last quarter, I'm very happy with our growth position versus those growth numbers that have been published from our competitors because they're all growing at 1 to 2 per cent, and that's not particularly exciting.[QQ] Atifa Silk: What areas will you be investing in (within APAC) in the next two years?[QQ] Jerry Buhlmann: The investment opportunity is about making sure that we're hugely capable in areas in relation to mobile, social, data, programmatic and ecommerce in China. Smartphone sales are up 90 per cent year-on-year in China and they're just going to get bigger with the growing middle class and a huge growth in disposable income that is going to be focused on brands and advertising. There is no cause for negativity. There is a bit of ebb and flow, but the general direction is long-term sustainable growth and acceleration towards some of the higher growth, and more interesting areas in our business.[QQ] We'll benefit from being part of a big Japanese corporate and that long term investment opportunity and use it both internally and externally to build the group.[QQ] [TB] Jerry Buhlmann's CV 2013: CEO Dentsu Aegis Network and executive officer, Dentsu 2010: CEO, Aegis Group Plc 2008: CEO, Aegis Media and Aegis Group board director 2003: CEO, Aegis Media EMEA 2000: CEO, Carat International 1989: Founder, BBJ [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Engines of growth. [BB] By David Blecken. [NT] News [PP] 58 [QQ] Excessive pitching, commoditisation and consolidation were some of the many topics at this year's summit.[QQ] The word that best sums up the media industry over the past year is 'cautious'. That sentiment seemed still very much in evidence at Media360Asia, which began with a spirited exchange between WPP chief executive Sir Martin Sorrell, via video from New York, and CNN presenter Richard Quest.[QQ] Sorrell himself was cautiously optimistic - a step up from last year's mood. He said he expected more GDP growth, but noted that clients are still "extremely cautious". "They don't want to take risks," he said. "The way that people are making up the numbers is not with topline growth; it's by cutting costs." He added that global growth was still below trend in all markets, and that the fast-growth markets have slowed. But he said those markets still represent a huge opportunity to companies that take a long-term view.[QQ] Sorrell also aired his views on the pending Publicis-Omnicom merger, which have changed little since the deal first came to light. He dismissed as a fallacy the recently repeated claim from Paris that the deal is "a merger of equals". "We know there is no such thing," he said. "History is littered with examples of supposed mergers of equals failing."[QQ] He pointed to possible regulatory hurdles in China, but said there were bigger issues around who is going to run the business, and from where, citing "concerns in France about national champions being subjugated" by their American counterparts.The discussion then turned to the role of media agencies in an ever-changing media environment. To Quest's suggestion that they might be losing their relevance, Sorrell asserted that they are more relevant than ever. He went so far as to say he believes "in many respects the medium is more important than the message".[QQ] "I get into hot water when I say it, but I think (today) you cultivate the message to fit the medium. If I look at our business, media has become a primary driver, an engine of growth."[QQ] Quest then asked Sorrell what spurred him to write an article in The Telegraph arguing the case for advertising, which he called "a true UK success story". The piece was in response to statements from the shadow minister for culture, who argued for legislation against excessive marketing. "The primary reason is that our industry makes a massive contribution to GDP," Sorrell said. It employs vast numbers of people ... exceptional people. When we get a kicking from politicians I think someone should sing out on behalf of the industry and come back to the fundamental point.[QQ] "You have to invest in brands to make them grow. That is not happening at the moment. Clients believe they can achieve their objectives by cutting costs. That isn't a long-term recipe for success. Our industry is one that creates growth, employment, and all that goes with it."[QQ] That set the tone for the day. The sessions that followed examined a broad range of topics, ranging from the consolidation of the industry to the rise of 'math men', out-of-control pitching and the role of procurement, commoditisation and the lessons media professionals can take from hackers - who are, contrary to popular belief, not always bad.[QQ] First up, Dentsu Aegis Network CEO Jerry Buhlmann outlined the drivers of recent industry consolidation. A Q&A session moderated by Campaign Asia-Pacific brand director Atifa Silk, followed. Here, Buhlmann denied the Publicis-Omnicom deal was disruptive. Given the instability of client business, having a share of 30 per cent "doesn't guarantee you control of anything."[QQ] Serafina Wong, executive director of global advertising at UBS, said - somewhat surprisingly - that she did not believe it was necessary for agency groups to consult their clients before restructuring. But all agreed that any consolidation move must act in the best interests of clients - something that is still unclear with regard to the Publicis-Omnicom move.[QQ] One of the highlights of the afternoon was a session around the topic of pitching. The moderator, R3 principal Greg Paull, noted that there had been more than 4,000 pitches in Asia-Pacific in 2013. As a pitch consultant, Paull argued that many pitches are unnecessary and that what is needed instead is for clients to voice their frustration. Jessica Spence, marketing director for Carlsberg Asia, said one of the biggest mistakes agencies make during pitches is to over-promise.[QQ] Jonathan Rudd, regional associate director of marketing agencies procurement at Johnson & Johnson, said a lot of agencies still failed to outline KPIs to support their pitches, despite explicit instruction to do so.[QQ] The most exuberant delivery of the day came from Bonin Bough, VP for global media and consumer engagement at Mondelez. Bough argued in support of "hacking", by which he really meant being prepared to challenge accepted norms - a refreshing message from a marketer. His own lack of knowledge around TV buying in the early days of his career led him to focus on 'new media' channels, in particular mobile, which is paying dividends for the company now. "Get excited about change," he urged.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Pressure to please. [BB] By Jason Wincuinas. [NT] News [PP] 60 [QQ] Digital technology will drive growth after consolidation.[QQ] While dissecting the consolidation forces that have left us with three colossal holding companies in the marketing and advertising world, Dentsu Aegis Network CEO Jerry Buhlmann pointed to a simultaneous push and pull from globalisation and media convergence. But the business case he made in his 'Goliaths' talk has further implications than just for holding company structures. These issues affect everyone related to the media industry. All companies need growth, so Buhlmann's question is: where will it come from?[QQ] The banking crisis of 2008 has largely abated and while economic growth projections are not breathtaking, they are positive and relatively healthy. The United States should see a nearly 3 per cent expansion, Buhlmann said, and Europe may come in at about 1.3 per cent. In Asia, he pointed out, China is still the engine, with a projection of 7 per cent growth, which he considered a reliable number because the country is "good at sticking to its forecasts". And even Japan may make it to 2 per cent as it "responds well to Abenomics".[QQ] Therefore recovery is in play, but Buhlmann sees the continued theme of globalisation as a more important consideration. The more benign a cross-border trade environment the world can manage, the more positive the outlook can be. As companies scale to cover worldwide markets, the activity boosts economic opportunity and international adspend. "There are more brands on the shelf in the average Chinese supermarket than in the West" and presumably there's potential for any, if not all, of them to go international.[QQ] That's the push. The convergence pull comes from consumers demanding consistent content across platforms. As media powerhouses respond to that, the dynamic creates a self-perpetuating cycle of deals. The proposed Comcast-Time Warner merger was one example he offered, as well as Google's ability to buy companies (little app makers or big ***manufactures***) as it sees fit.[QQ] What will be key though, he explained, is the ability "to execute well in a data-fed ecosystem."[QQ] Combining all of this puts digital technologies at centre stage. And that is the answer to Buhlmann's opening question. Digital is where the real growth can be found, even for the new Goliaths. His growth forecasts for social, mobile and video all surpass 50 per cent. Which brought up the day's first mention of "programmatic buying". The term surfaced repeatedly in different Media360 sessions signalling an unofficial recognition of the technology's arrival on the scene.[QQ] People can't handle the volume or the complexity on their own any more, he explained. The landscape is too fragmented and programmatic tactics can only grow in importance. Overall, he implored companies large and small to bulk up on digital skills and assets, because "that's where growth is going to come from".[QQ] Laying out his ideas about how the Goliaths will have to address their own structural integrity, Buhlmann said culture, product, organisation and competitiveness would matter most, with culture claiming the greatest significance. "Culture can be the glue to hold them together or it can be glue that slows them down."[QQ] The Goliaths are here and there's not much room for more. In future, competition will centre on digital organisation. Unlike mergers in other business sectors, where combined entities typically capture a greater portion of the market, there's no such guarantee in the agency world, because "clients could just walk".[QQ] In the following Q&A session, Ruth Rowan, CMO AMEA at BT Global Services, and Seraphina Wong, executive director of global advertising at UBS, joined Buhlmann on stage to talk about the client perspective on the Omnicom-Publicis and Dentsu-Aegis mergers. Campaign's Atifa Silk was the session's moderator. The two marketers agreed that scale is an important factor for selecting an agency. When looking for a partner, both said it should be global in terms of operations and expertise. Therefore each expected benefits from the mergers and all three dismissed the old notion that global agencies don't do a good enough job in transferring skills between local offices. Wong emphasised that "day-to-day communication still needs to be local and consistent".[QQ] Asked what advice he would give Omnicom-Publicis, based on his own experience, Buhlmann joked: "Don't do it," before offering the insight that "it's all organisation and culture". To turn into one company, the two sides need to share both vision and values: "That's what's behind culture." He also warned that the transition could be more difficult for his competitors because they have a lot of similar assets, which was not the case for Dentsu and Aegis.[QQ] To close the session, Silk asked Buhlmann to speculate on how the advertising landscape might look in 10 years, post consolidation. His prediction was for more real-time orientation in media buying, much greater reliance on programmatic technology and an APAC region with greater influence.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Keep the tank full. [BB] By Madeleine Ross. [NT] News [PP] 62 [QQ] Client caution inhibits agencies' ability to reinvest to keep up with change.[QQ] Sourcing and retaining talent in Asia's developing markets, and sustaining large enough profit margins to keep up with the pace of change will be the biggest challenges for media companies in Asia in the next few years, GroupM president Dominic Proctor told the audience at Media360Asia.[QQ] In conversation with Campaign managing editor, Jason Wincuinas, the former Mindshare Worldwide CEO stressed the lack of an existing talent pool was a key obstacle to the company's ambitious regional expansion plans.[QQ] "We will be recruiting around 6,000 people this year in Asia. This gives you some sense of the scale of the challenge that we have in a market that is not oversupplied with talent," he said.[QQ] How is he solving this?[QQ] "In a market like China, where we forecast growth extremely quickly ... we work super closely with universities in the major cities and the tertiary markets to bring them in at an entry level and train them and incentivise them as much as we can to stay within our business."[QQ] Despite the huge growth opportunities in the region, clients' are still extremely cautious - a mindset Proctor said he believed was here to stay. In recent years, there has been far more attention and focus from clients on ROI, rigour and procurement; on making sure they are getting ultimate value for money from media. While that presents its own frustrations, Proctor said this reaction to the global financial crisis, and now a characteristic of the industry at large, has improved the media business.[QQ] "The pressure we are under to continually justify what we do has made the business more professional, more rigorous and respected," he said. "It's really for us to constantly demonstrate our worth beyond simply the transactional part of our jobs, and if we're not able to constantly demonstrate that worth, then more fool us."[QQ] Nevertheless, the issue is one which keeps him up at night. The biggest financial challenge is to continue to make big enough profit margins to be able to reinvest in the business to keep up with the pace of change. It's an expensive business these days, with media shops spending millions on technology, data, and the ability to analyse and optimise that data.[QQ] "We need to continue to prove that what we do is of value to those clients so they continue to pay us enough to reinvest in that business. If we don't do that we get into a tricky downward spiral of cost cutting and therefore not adding value, and then getting into a race to the bottom. And that's a seriously big problem," he said.[QQ] Continuing the momentum that allows the business to keep fuel in the tank and prevent this race to the bottom is clearly a priority.[QQ] Zooming in from a macro to a micro level, Proctor also addressed the challenge of rethinking advertising for today's billions of small, mobile screens. Thanks to the increasingly precise data presented to them by media planners, advertisers are beginning to understand that consumers consider content on their mobile device screens to be as important as on their televisions.[QQ] In spite of this, Proctor believes the industry has not yet figured out how to truly capitalise on this brave new small-screen world. "I think it is more of a creative issue," he said. "The challenge is much more on the messaging side - how to produce creative, which is as much a breakthrough on a tiny screen as it is on a larger screen."[QQ] As for the industry's recent and impending mergers - both the Dentsu-Aegis and Omnicom-Publicis acquisitions - he views this consolidation as "inevitable and good"; as a sign of market maturity; and a way to reduce the number of competitors.[QQ] Furthermore, he believes it validates GroupM's long-term strategy, which has always been a strategy based on volume. "We've always felt that in marketing services the only part that really benefits strongly from scale is media. Not just in terms of media buying, but the scale of investment it affords back into the business."[QQ] But while competitors may be dwindling in the traditional space, they are popping up in new places. Management consultancies such as Accenture and Deloitte are increasingly moving into agencies' traditional territory, offering marketing strategy, analytics, customer experience, campaign and content management, and e-commerce advice and expertise.[QQ] Proctor's game plan for staying ahead of the new players is to ensure GroupM can offer an entire suite of specialists in-house, and present these marketing services and media experts to clients in an integrated way.[QQ] He said it is essential for media agencies to focus on adding services and products, and to continually reinvent themselves to ensure they creep up the value chain and avoid becoming transactional suppliers. Only in this way will they maintain their relevance and leadership in today's fast-paced, data-driven world.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: News rules - Blurred lines threaten to turn audiences off. [BB] By David Blecken. [NT] News [PP] 63 [QQ] Newsrooms and brands are moving ever closer together. Against this backdrop, Michael Kassan, chairman and chief executive of MediaLink, interviewed Andy Lack, chairman of Bloomberg Media, on what it takes to create a media organisation with digital at its core.[QQ] Kassan began by noting that so-called 'native advertising' is becoming a bigger part of how media organisations make their money.[QQ] "You want to be open with your audience," Lack said. "They need to know what is an ad and what is editorial. At the same time, they know there are times when that line will be close. It's not a threat to editorial content unless you blur that line."[QQ] Later in the session, a media agency executive in the audience expressed concern that news companies, particularly those based on the written word, are objecting less to the blurring of that line than they once did. "You're right to be worried," said Lack, noting that TV has typically always had a slightly less rigid distinction between editorial and commercial teams.[QQ] The conversation also touched on entertainment and news, and whether they should overlap. Lack said video content played a key role in keeping people turned on. "These words bang into each other," Lack said. "I've always thought the key to running a robust news business is engagement with the people who consume news. How long can we keep you interested in what we're reporting? Bloomberg provides more video in the business world than anyone. It's about that word engagement - how to tell stories for the screens on which video is being viewed."[QQ] He said the world might be "entering one of the most glorious periods to create and consume news content". Kassan pointed out that global audiences are predicted to increase 100 times, while there will be a tenfold reduction in price points.[QQ] "That's not a bad formula," said Lack. "The fear you have in content creation is that there will (in reality) be a bigger reduction."[QQ] Bloomberg, of course, is lucky in that the bulk of its revenue comes from its terminals. But Lack said an untapped area for the company is "creating products for CTOs, CIOs and CMOs and providing them with the information to make decisions. Those stakeholders constitute smaller audiences, he said, "but they are important audiences and we're going to make products that serve them".[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Real-time content gets real. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 64 [QQ] Advertisers cannot succeed in content creation without collaborating, thinking like publishers and acting like newsroooms, writes Madeleine Ross.[QQ] Brands can no longer create content in isolation if they want to communicate well with their target audience. That was the takeaway from a panel around the theme of collaborative content, featuring Dean Dacko, SVP of marketing products at Malaysia Airlines; Chris Davies, director of sales and marketing at BBC Global News; Hari Krishnan, MD of Asia Pacific & Japan at LinkedIn; and Jayant Murty, director of strategy, media and integrated marketing at Intel. Adam Najberg, digital editor of the Wall Street Journal, moderated.[QQ] 'Collaborative content' has become a buzz phrase in the last year, and it seems everyone thinks of it slightly differently. Essentially, it refers to highly nuanced content created in partnerships between brands and publishers, publishers and social networks, brands and social networks, or a mixture of all three, for the mutual benefit of all parties.[QQ] Once upon a time, the creative idea came first. But brands are slowly realising that the days of devising big, linear campaigns and expecting consumers to come, have disappeared. Now, more than ever, the medium - particularly the network, publisher or portal - is the message. Brands need to be where conversations are happening, speak to consumers in the way they want to be spoken to, and deliver them the content they need.[QQ] The reality is that consumers are swamped by information in today's digital marketplace. Increasingly they are retracting from the deluge of data at their fingertips and gravitating towards fewer selected and trusted sources of information and dialogue, whether these are online news portals such as Bloomberg or the BBC, professional portals such as LinkedIn, or social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.[QQ] "(Consumers) are going to less places for more stuff. They're not logging on to 50 websites, they are going to a few key sources, quality, trusted services, where they know they will get what they want. The industry is now having to follow," explained the BBC's Davies.[QQ] The crux of collaborative content approach is getting in the stream of quality, trusted content, then amplifying this via social networks.[QQ] HSBC recently did just this with the BBC. Together they produced the 'Ideas Exchange' TV segment. "For (HSBC) it's a platform. They can reach all their audience through us. For us its an opportunity to create content that we might not be able to create," said Davies.[QQ] In addition, the broadcaster is partnering with social networks and tools such as Twitter Amplify. "We take a brand with us and then go out on to the Twitter platform and start to get the message across. If you create your own branded space you're probably only talking to your existing audiences. What you want to do is talk to people who aren't engaged in your brand."[QQ] But collaboration doesn't end there. The broadcaster is taking collaboration one step further by working with audiences to generate 'open journalism'. Using social listening tools, the network identifies trending topics, then uses such topics as jump-off points in the creation of additional content, thereby working with audiences to produce news.[QQ] The goal of a collaborative content approach is to generate interaction and dialogue with consumers; and to create brand advocacy by engaging with your target audience in the forums they choose, in the ways they like, with information they want.[QQ] Increasingly the most sophisticated brands are, according to LinkedIn's Krishnan, "pulling up a chair" to the conversations happening on portals such as LinkedIn, listening to what users are saying, then positioning themselves in these conversations.[QQ] To highlight this, Krishnan pointed to the example of the workshirt brand Van Heusen, which, using LinkedIn's API, engaged the network's uniquely professional audience and made its way into conversations by encouraging users to recommend their peers as "India's most fashionable professionals".[QQ] Furthermore, Intel's Murty believes that to be successful in environments such as these, brands need to act like newsrooms and adopt the mindsets of publishers. "Buying audiences doesn't work well these days ... People aren't interested in your brand; they're interested in their lives. We want to think like a publisher, we think like a newsroom.[QQ] "We have 30 people in our team who are very special interest - fashion, ***medicine***, etc. For us this is really important because there's almost nothing technology doesn't touch," he said.[QQ] Some brands have had such success with content partnerships that their business models have actually changed. Red Bull now calls itself a media company, while Nike creates more content than it does trainers. Both companies are considered publishers in their own right, and extremely successful at it.[QQ] But brands don't necessarily need to be creating content themselves, as long as they can curate it well. LinkedIn's Krishnan says the latter is a "good start". "We have a lot of people who are sourcing content from educational institutions or research and sending it out on their Twitter ***feeds*** or to their Facebook fans. People care about where they heard about something, they don't care if you created it. Curation of content is just as big a deal."[QQ] Brands must now ask: "What information will be useful to these consumers? How can you make the message less about the brand, and more about their lives?" By thinking more like news journalists, then working with publishers to create engaging, useful content, brands can enhance the publisher's content output, and, ultimately, engage their target audiences more effectively.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Mad men and math men find common ground. [BB] By Matthew Miller. [NT] News [PP] 66 [QQ] Far from weakening creativity, automated processes have the power to enable it.[QQ] A panel discussion entitled 'Mad Men versus Math Men' yielded neither anger nor a deep dive into mathematics, as the participants broadly agreed that the victors of the future will be the smart men (and women) capable of combining creativity and technology to the greatest effect.[QQ] Moderator Adam O'Conor, CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Group, Hong Kong, may have expected fireworks to erupt among the participants, who included Alicia Carey, marketing director for emerging markets at Microsoft Advertising; John Sheehy, president of global operations for Starcom MediaVest Group; Rahul Welde, vice-president of media for Unilever Asia, Africa, Middle East, Turkey and Russia; and Greg Williams, co-founder and senior vice president, Open partnerships, at MediaMath.[QQ] However, Welde immediately set an agreeable tone. Despite the session's title, he asserted, the situation is not one of opposing forces. "It's really about the smart men and smart women, using the power of the creative," he said. "And in the new world, being able to use the power of intelligence which maths and analytics now provide. The smarter people are at combining the two forces, that's what will lead to success."[QQ] The trick is combining "the magic and the logic", Welde continued. "What maths or analytics does is just powers the creativity, to make it that much more effective" by using targeting to get the right message to the right people at the right time.[QQ] Sheehy also cited technology as a big part of the solution for advertisers and agencies trying to come to grips with rapid changes in consumer behaviour. "The challenge for us as an agency is that were seeing models not bending, not changing gradually, but breaking," he said.[QQ] With the demise of traditional integrated marketing ("We don't have nine months, we don't have millions of dollars") the importance of technology partnerships has risen. "We're really focusing on looking at how we bring all these moving parts together in a much faster, more agile way," he said. And data allows brands to be there when consumers want them, with interesting things that are truly engaging.[QQ] As the publisher on the panel, Carey argued that even in a programmatic-driven world, there will always be a place for creative catering to advertisers. While programmatic exchanges allow scale and efficiency, she said: "We still see a role for that bespoke, custom opportunity. Whether it's around content or a sponsorship, the gain that comes from those opportunities and the brand differential you can build is substantial."[QQ] An underappreciated benefit of programmatic buying, Carey added, is that it "releases bandwidth" on the publisher's side, freeing them up to work on such bespoke solutions.[QQ] Seeking some measure of disagreement, O'Conor turned hopefully to the panel participant who founded a company with the word "math" in the name. And Williams did state strongly that MediaMath believes all media buying, without exception, should be automated.[QQ] "What we're seeing with our clients is a demand and a mandate for getting data faster," he said. He went on to make a concise case for programmatic buying: quicker decision-making to deliver the message to the right consumer at the right time across hundreds of thousands of sites with precise control over cost. Yet he was also careful not to imply that such automation would make the role of marketers and agencies less critical. "The strategy and business decisions on top of that automation are what will be key to the brand marketers and the agencies that are working with them," he said.[QQ] MediaMath's goal is building the "underlying framework" that sits underneath the "soul" of the brand and aids in day-to-day functions, he said.[QQ] In fact, Williams argued that many brands get bogged down in tactics and don't pay enough attention to their messaging. Historically, clients and agencies have had no choice but to focus on the minutia of buying and placing ads. Now, however, the tools are sufficiently advanced that humans have the ability to focus their intelligence and creativity on the higher-level tasks that really make an impact, he said.[QQ] Welde, agreed enthusiastically. "The whole area of programmatic buying is transactional: It increases efficiencies and rate of return," he said. "However, for brands to succeed it is about longer-term strategy. What you really stand for. What's your point of view?"[QQ] Technology provides great capabilities, but we sometimes overrate the power of technology and underrate the power of creativity, when in fact a balance of the two is required, he said. After all, "I don't know of a machine that can make a person cry, laugh or get angry."[QQ] The panelists also agreed that the new world order requires major adaptations. "I think our biggest challenge, whether an agency, publisher or marketer, is recognising that a lot of the people in this room don't have the skills and the knowledge base to connect all these things and keep up with the consumer," Sheehy said.[QQ] Welde descibed how Unilever has adjusted the composition of its marketing teams to handle not only the technology, but the ways "creativity has been reframed by technology" - examples being the requirement for always-on communication and the opportunity to make not only 30-second commercials, but everything from six-second Vine videos to four-minute online films.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Time to get a handle on Asia's addiction to pitching - Were last year's 4,613 reviews all necessary? [BB] By Jenny Chan. [NT] News [PP] 68 [QQ] Budgetary power no longer rests exclusively in the hands of marketing. As the role of procurement becomes an increasingly integral part of the process in major Asian markets, media services are being excessively commoditised. But Jonathan Rudd, associate director of marketing agencies procurement Asia Pacific at Johnson & Johnson, prides his work on focusing on analytics and taking the marketing team through that. "Marketers aren't necessarily ready to evaluate the success level of a partnership structure with agencies without the procurement department, so we have a supply management programme in place to make sure of continued benefits for both," said Rudd.[QQ] And given the lack of longevity among client-agency relationships, especially in China and India, discussion moderator R3 principal Greg Paull, asked his panel of marketers how to reduce the number of pitches. There were 4,613 pitches in Asia in 2013, amounting to USdollars 7 billion in billings.[QQ] Quoting Winston Churchill ("Democracy is the worst possible form of government, except for all the others"), Paull added: "To be honest, the pitch process has some shadows of that as well."[QQ] Emotions, an intangible part of the pitch process, are a complicating factor, according to Caroline Giller, regional innovative marketing and digital manager for Asia & Middle East at Fonterra. What is fundamental for agencies is to establish what the clients' needs are - that will move the process closer and quicker to the final decision, Giller advised.[QQ] "Always bring it back to the objective, not the subjective." Jessica Spence, marketing director at Carlsberg Asia, agreed. "When people are under pressure, they get emotional; we probably should have allowed a little bit more time," she said, in hindsight. While Spence got pitch presentations of "great quality", next time she would consider giving three months or more to "let things happen at a pace which people can keep up with".[QQ] When Sameer Singh, VP and head of global media at GlaxoSmithKline, moved the company away from a system where each market's media agency made individual decisions, he also made sure time was sufficient. GSK consolidated the bulk of its global media buying and planning account with GroupM, PHD and Dentsu during September 2013.[QQ] "It was a new way of doing things for us, so internally we came together for close to a year. If you break the period down, it took about nine months for discovery and exploration, and 100 days for conversations with 40 markets," said Singh.[QQ] Spending more time planning, investigating and aligning everybody before decision-making helped to smooth the implementation phase after the pitch, he said.[QQ] This is why Rudd repeated that the procurement department is tasked to help a business come to a definitive solution, whether in pitching or crowdsourcing. "Procurement is playing a key role in the regional marketing chain. When it comes to costs, we position ourselves as the experts who decide the split in the media budget. Whether there are right people in the roles of marketing to make that decision is questionable."[QQ] That said, procurement KPIs are not just about cost-cutting, pointed out Giller. "It may sound cliched, but it's also about people. All the media agencies have very similar suites of tools and platforms, which are really hard to understand without the 'people element'," she said. "It comes down to the organisational cultures of both client and agency to achieve that strategic level of partnerships that drives change to get fresh impetus."[QQ] When Paull put forward a question of horizontality in client-agency relationships, Giller said her industry is "fairly fragmented, so it is (almost) impossible" to have a single agency or holding group across all sectors. At the end of the day, while agencies are good at what they do, clients have to be the ones to drive integration, she said.[QQ] "It comes back to the client's expectations. Are you clear of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies," asked Singh. "Are you clear on your mechanisms on handling conflict? As long there is clarity, there will be mutual respect and we can move forward, otherwise we will all work in a philosophical black box."[QQ] Spence said she was 'paranoid' about conflict and "runs a mile away from it", adding: "Media and other professional services have shown there are obviously benefits to scale. The big agencies have strength and those are who we want to be working with."[QQ] Giller said it is far better to nurture the existing relationship and minimise the number of pitches. "If the relationship's not working, let's try and understand why, because sometimes the client becomes complacent as well." Unless a brand is going all out to benchmark against best practices in the marketplace, steer away from pitches as much as possible, as they take up a lot of time, she recommended. Spence agreed: "It's not worth waiting until the relationship is broken before you mend it. At that time, it becomes incredibly difficult to get a new agency in when everyone is drowning under pressure."[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: An opportunity to decommoditise media. [BB] By Emily Tan. [NT] News [PP] 70 [QQ] Clients and agencies are both responsible, but there is a way forward.[QQ] Media agencies are to blame for the commoditisation of media, said Philips' senior director and global head of media, Sital Banerjee during the panel discussion on the subject. "While I agree that clients have played a role over the years by asking for more for less, the agencies keep delivering it."[QQ] The process of treating media as a commodity, he continued, started when the media agencies were formed. "Initially there was a huge amount of energy and excitement to prove themselves, as they were now separated from their more trendy colleagues. But very quickly the game moved towards a billings game. Agencies were jumping on top of each other to get maximum billings as a show of how much better they were than the competition. That's when the commoditisation of media really started."[QQ] Not so, insisted Steve King, worldwide CEO of ZenithOptimedia. It was the proliferation of media in the 1990s that led to the formation of the media agencies and necessitated the treatment of media as a commodity as, at the time, there was no other way to scale up the buying and planning of media. "When ZenithOptimedia started 25 years ago as the first of the independents, there were two TV channels in the UK and buying was spot by spot and insertion by insertion. What happened next had nothing to do with the media agencies it was the explosion of the media scene."[QQ] "But is the commoditisation of media really a threat?" asked moderator George Pattern, managing director of Accenture Interactive Media Management.[QQ] "Commoditisation treats all eyeballs as equal and they are not equal, there lies the danger," responded Henry Tan, COO of Malaysian pay-TV broadcaster Astro. "Ease and standardisation come at the expense of real results and effort." Distributing 170 channels, 68 of which are Astro's own, Tan stands in the unique position of being both media owner and major client. Furthermore, when Tan joined Astro in 2008 it was after 24 years as a media specialist and CEO of GroupM Malaysia and Singapore.[QQ] The fault perhaps lies both with agency and client as both parties have the power to change the dynamic, commented Tan. "As a client, we changed our planning team because they were really into CPRP (cost per rating point). I was opposed to this approach because that's the last thing I want for my business. I would rather focus on winning ideas that will give us results ... It's a means to an end, why would you buy the cheapest?"[QQ] For clients, the key for the CMO is to work closely with procurement, said Banerjee. "Procurement won't tell me how to run a pitch. I agree though that clients have played a role over the years in asking for more and more with less and less, but agencies have delivered it. When you have a system where you agree to everything clients ask for, you will have commoditisation."[QQ] The truth, said King, is that procurement is not going to go away and the agencies will have to learn to work with them. "We have to learn to validate and drive ROI, but there are, in the minority of cases, pitches handled by procurement where the CMO stands aside. When the pitch is all about chasing the lowest cost pricing, it's up to us if we'll participate or not."[QQ] Those pitches shouldn't take place, said Tan. "I know of a CMO who was terribly proud of how much money he'd saved. But, I told him: 'Your role in marketing is about adding value and building the business. It's not about saving money. Not that it isn't important but that's the job of the CFO and the CPO and if you're so good at it, why not fire them and take over?'"[QQ] "We have all walked this journey together," conceded Banerjee. "Publishers, media agencies and advertisers. We (clients) cannot keep asking more for less. There will always be those who go for cost, but increasingly we realise that we have to start investing. I was at an ad forum last week with 25 other global advertisers and it wasn't a session of agency bashing. It was about partnering with agencies to grow talent and infrastructure. If agencies lose, clients lose."[QQ] The agencies too are not the same as they were, added King. "We're all racing to try and innovate to use technology, but we can't do this in isolation. We need the vendors and the clients."[QQ] Thanks to these advances, agencies are now in a position to decommoditise media with data providing better targeting and automated buying platforms allowing media buys to be managed at scale, King noted.[QQ] "This is the opportunity, media people this is your stage and the spotlight is on you," said Tan, throwing a challenge out to the audience. "If you don't add value and make a show and dance of it, the spotlight will move on."[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Agency heads seek trusting relationships - The ability to measure gives agencies a much stronger case. [BB] By Matthew Miller. [NT] News [PP] 72 [QQ] Late in the afternoon, three agency executives - Gerry Boyle, regional chairman of ZenithOptimedia; Cheuk Chiang, regional CEO of Omnicom Media Group; and Mark Patterson, regional CEO of GroupM - took the stage to answer for all the sins of all media agencies in the 'race to the bottom' that came up so often through the day.[QQ] Or at least that's how it seemed, as the questions from moderator Emily Tan of Campaign Asia-Pacific and the audience focused on whether agencies are their own worst enemies. All three spoke frankly about the overpromising tendencies of some media agencies - though not their own, of course.[QQ] The reality is that many agencies do not understand what makes up value, Chiang said, reminding the assembled of a simple formula: benefit minus price. In their too-narrow focus on price, media agencies fail to adequately communicate the value they provide - or get compensated for it. They hew too closely to the adage that the customer is always right. "As service people and as media people, we're serial pleasers," he said.[QQ] Patterson spoke pragmatically about the necessity of competing on price. "We shouldn't kid ourselves that price is not a paramount factor," he said. "We're a business, we make commercial decisions." The temptation to chase billings and new business is always there.[QQ] Lest the session turn too self-excoriating, the group turned to describing solutions. Many clients include strategy in their pitch calls, but it's often forgotten, Boyle said. "In my opinion ... without great strategy, you have nothing," he said bluntly. "Great strategy is what gives you permission to execute on behalf of the client, and I firmly believe is the single biggest differentiation."[QQ] But more important is the ROI conversation. Clients are either trying to change behaviour or change perception with their advertising. "If they are trying to do one of those two things, then we can measure it," Boyle said. "And if we can measure the change we make for clients, then we can judge the value we are creating for those businesses. We should share more fully in that business improvement."[QQ] Chiang agreed, and both men spoke in favour of performance-based forms of compensation. "Traditionally it's been about commissions and service fees," Chaing said. "We're moving the conversation to one based more around partnership, which is about having skin in the game." Examples include anything from digital metrics to tangible items like the number of SIM cards activated for a telco.[QQ] The panelists returned repeatedly to the essential factor of trust, and the ways to nurture it. When a promise is going to be difficult to keep, Patterson advised, agencies must head it off in frank conversation with the client immediately rather than trying to bury it, which inevitably means it will come back to haunt them six months later. Clients are pragmatic, and changing agencies is a big cost for them, so it's better to discuss and manage a problem than try pull the wool over their eyes, he said.[QQ] Chiang made direct reference to the Chinese concept of guangxi, explaining that it has two components: close personal relationships and trust. "If trust is going to be broken, that's where you really rely on the closeness of the personal relationship," to maintain the relationship, he said. "We haven't invested enough time in doing that. Creative agencies do it well. We haven't."[QQ] Boyle said trust also implies honesty about what an agency can and cannot provide. "At the end of day the single thing that will create our success is our client's success," he said. "Any pursuit of short-term gain, from a revenue or agency perspective, at the expense of the long-term interest of the client, is a very very silly thing to do."[QQ] Prompted by a question from the audience, Chiang made a case for technological innovations as a way to better prove value to clients, specifically referencing automation in planning and operations.[QQ] Boyle did not disagree, but again brought the conversation to the bottom line. "It's not incumbent on us to explain the technology," he said. "It's incumbent on us to explain the benefit of the technology" by showing the agency is delivering better ROI for every single cent invested.[QQ] Patterson added a further underappreciated element for proving value. "Clients buy on price and clients buy people," he said. "We all have lots stuff and bells and whistles and it does great stuff. But they sit forward when you talk about the pricing. And they sit forward when they see someone talking who can understand their business well and who has the passion and energy to deliver all the tools and services."[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Asia a bellweather for global media business. [BB] By Jenny Chan. [NT] News [PP] 74 [QQ] Tech adoption means APAC could drive next the big shift in media.[QQ] With recessionary pressures once again on the rise, the demand for maximum ROI is evolving traditional media businesses into more sustainable models. Agency bosses such as Mike Cooper, CEO of PHD, are viewing technology and data-focused organisations as long-term partners instead of threats. So does David Sternberg, head of media at Manchester United.[QQ] "From my perspective, producing and distributing content on digital platforms and outlets about that live event that plenty of people feel passionately about is exciting. So with the advent of social media and the immediate metrics that go along with it, we are working to harness that for the benefit of fans around the world," said Sternberg.[QQ] From a business standpoint, technology organisations are partners to Manchester United. "To be honest, we don't have a huge marketing budget, which is surprising given the scale of our brand," said Sternberg. "So big data allows a much more intelligent allocation of the resources we have and, at the same time, immediate guidance on where we should be concentrating our owned-media creation and distribution," he said.[QQ] Karim Temsamani, president of Asia-Pacific at Google, explained how, through data partners, the ability to provide content to users on different types of platforms in the ways they want it to be consumed is higher now. Mobile devices in particular are showing tremendous data potential. "We are able to get current insights and also look into the future. But the reality is we still have an enormous discrepancy between the amount of time people spend on mobile devices, and the amount of investment from clients, as they haven't yet embraced it as a real need," Temsamani said.[QQ] There will be 80 billion connected devices in the next eight years: your fridge, your smoke alarm, will all be connected, providing tremendous amount of data that can be very useful for marketers and agencies. From a sponsorship standpoint, the two dozen network operators in partnership with Manchester United show that their love of data is profitable. To encourage their own customers to consume data (where the money is in for telcos), they are quite happy to take Manchester United content to the customers directly, such as mobile apps.[QQ] Finding ways to engage with consumers via mobile is crucial, said Cooper, so mobile services are becoming a very well-developed specialist skill within the media agencies. "We can stay a pure media-buying business, but we will shrink and shrivel."[QQ] As for media platforms, the numbers are "really staggering", according to Dan Neary, vice-president for Asia Pacific at Facebook. Roughly three-quarters of Facebook's 1.2 billion members are on mobile. "The level of engagement that is going on is equally staggering, at 14 pus times a day," Neary said. "When this is put in the marketing context, brands increasingly want in on that. Take a look at Facebook's revenue last quarter: for the very first time, mobile revenue was 53 per cent of the total, crossing over from its desktop business."[QQ] This is especially true in Asia-Pacific, where it is a "mobile-breeding" environment with a large number of mobile users in places like India and Indonesia. "Because of mobile-user behaviour, the centre of gravity is shifting to Asia," added Temsamani. Most of the mobile app developers are also in this region, he said, citing instant-messenging examples like WeChat, Line, KakaoTalk.[QQ] By the same token, emerging markets in Asia are also countries that are very hard to monetise considering the low GDP levels and household incomes. "We're trying to find big ideas that will work across the whole world, such as the Dove global viral campaign - the third most-viewed content in the history of the web for a relatively modest media investment," said Cooper.[QQ] WeChat is a high-flyer reaching far beyond the boundaries of Asia, being "incredibly smart and agile", said Temsamani. "I'm very impressed with what many Asian tech companies do as they are very user-focused to create innovative things we've never seen before. They're thinking 10 or 20 years ahead, and not wanting to make a profit tomorrow; in some areas we're trying to catch up."[QQ] Changes in media are driven by changes in technology, and Cooper predicted that the next major technological development to affect the media business will come out of Asia-Pacific.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: In praise of hacking - Bonin Bough is an ambassador for doing things differently. [BB] By Jason Wincuinas. [NT] News [PP] 76 [QQ] In an extremely high energy session, Bonin Bough, VP of global media and consumer engagement at Mondelez, explained how hackers have instigated a monumental shift in business and culture. Watching the rock star-like success of tech start ups (as some leapfrogged from initial launch to a USdollars 100 million buyout in just four months with a staff of only 13 people) inspired him to look into the world of hacking. Not the surreptitious black-hat variety, but rather the healthy tinkering type that leads to new companies and disruptive business models.[QQ] What do these nimble thinkers do that a large company could learn from? Or even more urgently, what do big brands absolutely have to learn, because selling snacks on a global scale means, like it or not, recognise it or not, you have to be and think like a tech company.[QQ] Bough was on a mission to transform Mondelez from a staid grocery supplier to an impulse-driven consumer brand. That led him to investigate the customer journey and all the touch points along it. In terms of media, he found people consume 25 per cent on mobile devices. "But yet less than 1 per cent of all advertising spend is done for mobile." To emphasise the short-sightedness of that spending gap, he explained that of the seven billion people on earth, 5.1 billion own a mobile phone, but only 4.2 billion have a toothbrush. "That means nearly a billion people didn't get the text message about the importance of personal hygiene."[QQ] More people stare at a phone than brush their teeth. What does that say about the platform's critical mass? To bolster the case, he illustrated that radio took 38 years to reach a user base of 50 million. TV took only 13 years, desktop computers four years and only two for Apple's iPhone. Just the iPhone, never mind the tidal wave of similar devices.[QQ] Change is accelerating and media, or an advertiser's approach to it, needs a rethink. That's what brought Bough to hacking. "Hackers create value by breaking things."[QQ] He cited the example of Facebook's 'like' button, possibly the most recognised symbol from social media, which has become iconic throughout popular culture. "That came from a hackathon," he exclaimed. His excitement climbed as he described a study claiming social media on smartphones is as addictive as cocaine, which puts it on a level way past TV in terms of technological relationships. Why then do marketers still dedicate so much money to a medium that consumers only spend a few hours with? Mobile devices travel with people wherever they go and are in nearly the whole world's pocket at all hours of the day. They are with consumers along the whole journey leading to a purchase.[QQ] And when a TV ad comes up, most people take that as a signal to turn on the phone and tune out the TV. Effectiveness on the living room's big screen has dropped, according to his own company's measurements, but the reasons are not to do with creativity or audience size.[QQ] The fact is people are less engaged because they are looking at something else. And that is what his team tried to hack. Rather than spend more to outpace diminishing returns, Mondelez aimed to run social media campaigns at the same time as TV commercials. "And we see two times the effectiveness of the television spot when we are running on social at the same time."[QQ] That is what he means by hacking. Brands need to approach business problems not with the same old tools, but with all possible tools, systematically working through a challenge until reaching a formula that works - take it apart and put it back together in a new way.[QQ] For years brands had no choice but to surrender the final, direct link with consumers to retailers. They had to ship goods to the store and hope for the best. Bough illustrated it on stage with herding-like motions while intoning: "We wish you luck - go sell yourselves".[QQ] But mobile and social technologies offer a new way to address the consumer audience and create opportunity to get into the conversation and drive impulse buys.[QQ] As further evidence Bough pointed to a single campaign for Nilla wafers that Mondelez ran only on Facebook,"But still we got a 9.6 per cent boost to a USdollars 110 million business".[QQ] Such a large portion of buys inside a store are impulse purchases. Recognising that and decoding (or hacking) those behaviours is what Bough urges marketers to look at. It's one thing, he proclaims, to say you are a mobile marketer, it's another to put dollars behind that statement. The world is changing and "the best way to predict the future, is to hack it".[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] MEDIA360ASIA: Cause unites industry. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 77 [QQ] A charity dinner and auction raise USdollars 80,000 for Mother's Choice.[QQ] Following the Media360Asia conference, a charity dinner on behalf of Mother's Choice, presented by Campaign Asia-Pacific in association with GroupM and Omnicom Media Group (OMG), raised close to USdollars 80,000.[QQ] The event drew nearly 200 guests from media agencies, media owners and brands. Auction items included Mandarin Oriental spa vouchers donated by Fox, luxury holiday packages, artwork and signed prints.[QQ] Alia Eyres, chief executive of Mother's Choice, gave an impassioned speech about the charity and in particular the importance of adoption. "The media industry plays a pivotal role at Mother's Choice," she said. "The evening's events not only helped us raise much needed funds, but also gave us access to the creativity, inspiration, and resources of the media industry to help us change perceptions."[QQ] Cheuk Chiang, CEO of Omnicom Media Group Asia-Pacific, said the speech "made an impact on all of us". Mark Patterson, CEO of GroupM, added that it was "wonderful to see our industry coming together as one" for the greater good.[QQ] View the gallery at campaignasia.com[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] The Work: Private View. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 78 [QQ] CREATIVE - SUBHASH PINNAPOLA, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, TBWA TAL SRI LANKA[QQ] Hi everyone, I have just joined this amazing network and am currently enjoying the ride and everything it has to offer.[QQ] OMO (1) This film goes beyond the product promise and sends an important message to parents that dirt is part of your child's growing up, and that no matter the dirt, the child will turn out to be good. I also like how the team adds value to the category.[QQ] Cadbury (2) This is very smart. Pushing one's thinking to such a great level to finally reveal the simple thing that there is a Panda toy collection from Cadbury is just WOW! Why I say this is because you don't find even a single tactical element in the film which you usually get to see on promotional communications such as giveaways.[QQ] Snickers (3) Interesting ... I'd say it's a nice way of engaging the youth. It's got the correct attitude, which complements the product's own. I'm sure all involved will remember the experience for a long time, and will love the product more than ever. That's all I have to say on that.[QQ] UWA (4) It's simple and nice. I like the disruption caused by the actor in his monologue while you are watching the film ... that you should be watching. Even the excitation was pretty good.[QQ] Intel (5) An engaging narrative and strong visual representation makes Lin's life story come alive. I especially thought the use of his tattoos to recount events of his life was really cool. It felt like watching a movie. The beauty of this film was seeing the characters and story screened on Lin's body. In all, it's a beautifully packaged case.[QQ] Petronas (6) It's a charming and innocent way of telling a story. The plot was constructed in such a way that I felt I had my eyes closed throughout the entire film and only opened them at the end, when the real couple was revealed. Petronas has maintained a certain feel in its communications ... the same applies here.[QQ] VP - KIM DOUGLAS, VP & MD, SINGAPORE & HONG KONG, SAPIENTNITRO[QQ] Local traditions and festivals always bring out the sentimental, from Chinese New Year to Lin Dan there's a warm-fuzzy feeling that prevails in many of these. Let's take a look ...[QQ] OMO (1) Great play on local market traditions. Nice bit of Chinese heritage. Shame they forgot to put the product in the commercial.[QQ] Cadbury (2) I can only assume the strategist on this project got lost coming out of the pub and figured it would be charmingly irresistible to position this toy Panda and confectionery product as 'ageless'. Is there an adult market for toy sweets in India? I'm not convinced. Sorry.[QQ] Snickers (3) 'Hungry face morph' is a slick activation, with a nice technology build that plays extremely well to the photo booth mentality. It would have been hotter three years ago, but what the heck? There's clearly still much genuine enjoyment to be had with this.[QQ] UWA (4) A self-involved hipster leads us through a list of what you can do on campus at UWA. They've given us a reason not to study there as you might bump into this guy. Nice attempt at engaging a cinema audience, but better luck next time.[QQ] Intel (5) Stunning cinematography and beautiful graphics bring Intel's great positioning to life. Creatively, using Lin Dan is a perfect embodiment of this, and is perfectly depicted through his tattoos in the footage. The six episodes created allow Intel's core values to be expressed in personal storytelling. Thumbs up.[QQ] Petronas (6) After three-and-a-half minutes I'd lost the cute fuzzy feeling at the start and had turned to boredom as the predictable twist played out. Regardless, it's a nice attempt to tell a happy story from Malaysia's biggest energy giant. Will it relate to a Malaysian audience? Yes. Is it too long? Yes.[QQ] Get your work into Private View[QQ] Interested in having your campaigns reviewed? Send submissions in the form of mpegs, high-resolution jpeg files (print, posters and screen grabs) to: [*david.blecken@campaignasia.com[QQ]*](mailto:david.blecken@campaignasia.com[QQ]) [TB] 1. WATCHING ME, WATCHING YOU Client Omo Agency Lowe Vietnam Copywriter Lisa Glasgow. Art Director Loh Seow Khian. Agency Producer Nigel Kenneally. Planning Ranjit Jathanna, Phuong Pham Account Management Srija Chatterjee, Khatkhanang Chavalitsakulchai, Shaifali Dayal Exposure TV 2. CADBURY GEMS PANDA Client Cadbury India Agency Ogilvy & Mather, Mumbai Production Early Man Film Pvt. Ltd Director Ayappa Creative Manoj Shetty Producer Amarjeet Phukan Executive Producer Anand Menon DoP Sanu Varghese Exposure TV 3. HUNGRY FACE MORPH Client Mars Korea Agency INNORED Korea Director YK Kim Executive Creative Director Minseo Art Director SM Park Copywriter TJ Yun Account manager HG Kim Exposure Web film 4. INTERRUPTED Client The University of Western Australia Agency The Brand Agency, Perth Director Ben Young Creative Director Craig Buchanan Copywriter James Wills Art Director David Donald Agency Producer Gemma Kay Exposure: TV 5. LOOK INSIDE Client Intel Agency JWT Beijing Creative Directors Polly Chu, Gary Wang Copywriters Gary Wang, Theresa Ong, Tenten Ma Producers Amber Yu, Tetsu Bi Director Hailong Li Exposure Web film 6. YOUNG HEARTS Client Petroliam Nasional Berhad Creative agency Leo Burnett ECD Eric Cruz Art director Tam Jian Zhong Writer Andrew Shee Agency Producer Melanie Ranatunga Planner Sutapa Bhattacharya Client Servicing Tony Khoo, Van Sharma, Eda Ariffin, Victor Loh & Kristen De Silva. Media agency Zenith Media Sdn Bhd Exposure Web film [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Career Counsel: On the Campaign couch with Jeremy Bullmore. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 80 [QQ] Q: Why do you think so many people are writing books about advertising? I'm thinking of doing the same. Do you think there is a growing interest for such titles?[QQ] A: The great James Webb Young used to write book reviews under the subhead: "The best books about advertising are not about advertising."[QQ] He also wrote: "No limits can be placed on the kinds of knowledge that are useful to the Advertising Man. Indeed, it can be safely said that the broader his education, and the better stocked his mental pantry, the better at his job he is likely to be. Every really good creative person in advertising whom I have known has always had two noticeable characteristics. First, there was no subject under the sun in which he could not easily get interested. Second, he was an extensive browser in all sorts of fields."[QQ] Good agencies contribute more to clients than efficient communications. They also act as a gateway to many other worlds. Good agencies need to have a pretty shrewd idea of what is happening in the worlds of music, cinema, sport, art, behavioural economics, neuroscience, research, fashion, politics, cyberspace, media, ***medicine***, showbiz and education - and will know that none of these subjects is a discrete, neatly labelled island, but all are part of some great moving, muddly mass of stuff, all of which is going to have some influence on those to whom their clients hope to appeal. That's what Jim Young meant when he said that the best books about advertising aren't about advertising.[QQ] Oddly, most of the recent books about advertising aren't about advertising either. They are mainly about advertisements and advertising people and advertising agencies from times past and, but for the Mad Men phenomenon, might never have found a mainstream publisher.[QQ] I don't see why the general reader should ever want to buy a book about advertising that is actually about advertising. Even the bestselling advertising book ever, David Ogilvy's Confessions Of An Advertising Man, is more of an adventure story than a book about advertising. The title was a typical Ogilvy come-on.[QQ] When my own book was about to be published, it was DO who recommended it be called Behind The Scenes In Advertising because, he said, "it suggests skulduggery and sex". Alas, it didn't. Millions rejected the opportunity to buy it; which is just as well because they would only have been deeply disappointed.[QQ] So I wonder what makes you think you might have something to say about advertising that would appeal to the general reader? Unless, of course, you've got access to unlimited quantities of legally cleared and detailed evidence of skulduggery and sex ...[QQ] Q: I am currently looking for an innovative, technologically minded creative agency that also does brilliant traditional advertising. How do I find one?[QQ] A: Spend a day or so cruising through the websites of IPA agencies. You'll be pleased and surprised by just how many technologically minded creative agencies there are that can also do brilliant traditional advertising.[QQ] And there's also a gratifying number of agencies that do brilliant traditional advertising while being equally recognised for their innovative technological work. So finding one isn't your problem; it's picking one.[QQ] Try word of mouth. Quiz everyone you know who knows an agency. Read the trade press. But don't let it be known that you're looking or you'll be buried alive. You may still end up with an intermediary - but they do have one unchallengeable advantage: you have someone to blame if it all goes horribly wrong.[QQ] Q I am dreading going to Cannes this year. Last year, I spent my time mainlining rose with some of our dullest clients (the last people I'd want to spend a sunny afternoon on the Croisette with). I wished I was very far away. Is it just me?[QQ] Interestingly, my spellcheck just queried "Croisette" and offered "creosote" instead. In a flash, I was prompted to see you back home in Esher, in your Fair Isle jumper, contentedly weatherproofing your garden shed. When you opted for advertising as a career, did you have a second choice? And do you think it might be time to reconsider it?[QQ] Jeremy Bullmore is a member of WPP's Advisory Council and a former chairman of J.Walter Thompson. Ask Jeremy, a collection of his Campaign columns, is available from Haymarket, priced USdollars 20.[QQ] Send your questions for Jeremy Bullmore to [*careers@campaignasia.com.[QQ]*](mailto:careers@campaignasia.com.[QQ]) --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Career Counsel: The Things I've Learnt in my Career - David Rose, Virgin Atlantic Airways. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 80 [QQ] Don't worry if your first few jobs don't immediately have a clear career path. Focus on building experience and transferable skills - especially in dealing with staff, customers and projects. These skills will always be essential.[QQ] My work after university included time in the British Army, charity work in Africa, and business consulting: varied and not linked to aviation, but still proving to be very useful.[QQ] Working abroad can be a cliche, but exposure to unfamiliar cultures helps to develop an ability to read and understand peoples' true motivations, not just what they outwardly display.[QQ] As a manager, it's essential to be scrupulously fair. Your team may not like some of your decisions, but if they know you're unbiased it's easier for them to accept.[QQ] When dealing with a difficult situation, it's always better to phone or speak in person. Conversation can take a different path due to the interaction, while an email cannot adapt.[QQ] It's always been important for me to recognise when I've stopped learning in my role. It's a good sign that it's time to look for greater challenges.[QQ] Be honest with your manager about your aspirations, and with your manager's manager too. The better understanding and knowledge of your aspirations they have, the greater support and honest advice they can give you.[QQ] Business values people's ability to get things done. All the world's thinking, forecasts and plans mean nothing if there's no execution and tangible change when necessary.[QQ] [TB] CV 2013: Head of Asia-Pacific, Virgin Atlantic 2012: Country manager, China, Virgin Atlantic 2010: Country manager, Kenya, Virgin Atlantic 2009: Revenue and pricing manager, UK HQ, Virgin Atlantic [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Offline: Stories we could tell ... Horseplay and a Canto lesson. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 86 [QQ] Forget Cannes - there are more lions prancing across Asian agencies than you can shake a stick at in February. But while these beasts are the standard way to welcome the Lunar New Year and mark the opening of a new business premises, there are other ways. At a meeting with marketing folk from Okamoto in Hong Kong recently, one of our (female) reporters was presented with a large bag full of horse-themed condoms to see in the year. And for the unveiling of its new office here in Hong Kong, Cheil decided to forego the lions for some decidedly more economical Korean tambourines. There was more entertainment too: when making his speech, Cheil EVP Michael Kim, who had just arrived from Korea, apologised for not speaking Mandarin. He was swiftly informed in no uncertain terms that 'we speak Cantonese in Hong Kong'. But it has to be said that in true Korean style, Cheil does throw a good party.[QQ] Of course, there was Valentine's Day too. Maxus once again took to tweeting messages of love to its clients, including gems such as "@Barclays we can always bank on you!". At the other end of the spectrum, 'Dumb ways to die' animator Nick Frost presented two offerings. The first, 'Dumb ways to Valentine', featured a blue kidney-shaped fellow who rips out his heart, presents it to the object of his affection, and keels over. It has already clocked up close to 9.5 million views on YouTube. The other, for Turner, features Tuzki, a white rabbit. Needless to say, Tuzki is not your typical fluffy creature. He is in fact a 'Love assassin', armed with a bazooka, who is able to survive without a heart.[QQ] February also saw birds shot down in mid-flight. Vietnamese game developer Dong Nguyen attracted death threats when he suddenly pulled the immensely popular 'Flappy Bird', a mobile game he created in three days, due to a crisis of conscience. While flying, Flappy reportedly pulled in around USdollars 50,000 a day for him.[QQ] In Singapore, the Institute of Advertising's (IAS) Career Fair for undergraduate students drew some colourful participation. The theme of BBDO's stand, for instance, was 'Impossible sell'. This had students selling Barbie dolls to macho guys (did Chris Thomas buy one?) and apparently making a pitch to a Stormtrooper.[QQ] Finally, it has come to our attention that Sital Banerjee of Philips, who took part in this year's Media360Asia conference, is also an accomplished Bollywood singer. Pictured is the cover of his debut album Pelhi Mulaqat.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Offline: Who does google think you are? - Rob Hughes, CEO, Dentsu Asia Network, North Asia. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 86 [QQ] It's admittedly hard to compete with "the world's most famous art critic".[QQ] - And a renowned New York Times sports writer.[QQ] - But London crooner?[QQ] - Perhaps Dr Hughes can help our Hughes to psychologically attract the selective attention of Google.[QQ] - Being beaten by a budding TV reporter, though, is disappointing.[QQ] Verdict: Inadequate[QQ] Action: Hughes may want to start taking an interest in the arts, or, God forbid, journalism to raise his profile on Google[QQ] Robert Hughes (critic)[QQ]   [*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\_Hughes\_(critic)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hughes_(critic))[QQ] Robert Studley Forrest Hughes AO was an Australian-born art critic, writer and producer of television documentaries. His bestseller The Fatal Shore is a study of the British ...[QQ] Rob Hughes - The New York Times[QQ] topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/.../rob\_hughes/[QQ] Recent and archived news articles by Rob Hughes of The[QQ] Robhughesmusic.com - Rob Hughes Music[QQ]   [*http://www.robhughesmusic.com*](http://www.robhughesmusic.com)/[QQ] Rob Hughes Music. Home. About. Blog. Concerts. Audio & Video. Lessons. Store. Contact. Copyright (c) 2014 Rob Hughes Music ...[QQ] Dr. Rob Hughes - Research - Royal Holloway, University[QQ] pure.rhul.ac.uk ... Profile Researchers[QQ] Cognitive psychology of selective attention, particularly the Rob Hughes [s61] News Team - KOCO Home[QQ]   [*http://www.koco.com*](http://www.koco.com) On TV News Team[QQ] Rob Hughes joined KOCO 5 as a general assignment reporter in January 2013. Before joining KOCO ...[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Offline: Events pictures. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 86 [QQ] [TB] Former Stormtrooper seeks a new line of work with BBDO at the IAS Career Fair Mother's Choice charity dinner at Media360Asia Artist Mari Kim at Cheil in Hong Kong Engine's Shanghai office-warming Lions galore with Yannick Bollore at Havas in Singapore Go to campaignasia.com/galleries for more photos [TE] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Offline: Twitterati. [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 86 [QQ] Ian Thubron[QQ] President, TBWA Greater China[QQ] 313 following[QQ] 302 followers[QQ] China is blocking @klustout Station Promo for her 'Internat. Media in China' programme on @CNN Screen goes blank - like the old days[QQ] Feb 18[QQ] Tokyo bound. Makes a change from China @cathaypacific[QQ] Feb 16[QQ] Aspiring writers must read @StephenKing 'On writing'. BRILLIANT[QQ] Feb 16[QQ] Interesting that the law of the land and the teaching of the church are now completely at odds over same-sex marriage - a conundrum methinks[QQ] Feb 16.[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA] [SO] MEDAS [DD] 01:03:14 [HH] Offline: Gossip watch - What topics has the industry been discussing this month? [BB] By [NT] News [PP] 86 [QQ] THE TALK[QQ] 16 mins: Mark Birman is tipped to have resigned as ECD of Publicis Hong Kong, but is sticking around for a while to work on the regional Marriott business. What's next?[QQ] 12 mins: POG received quite a bashing from rivals at Media360Asia. But will the deal be finalised by the second quarter as expected?[QQ] 03 mins: Noah Regan's stint as ECD of Host in Singapore didn't last long. Who's up next?[QQ] --------------------[QQ] Did you find this article useful? Why not subscribe to the magazine? Please call 08451 55 73 55 for more information or visit   [*http://www.haysubs.com*](http://www.haysubs.com) [EA]

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