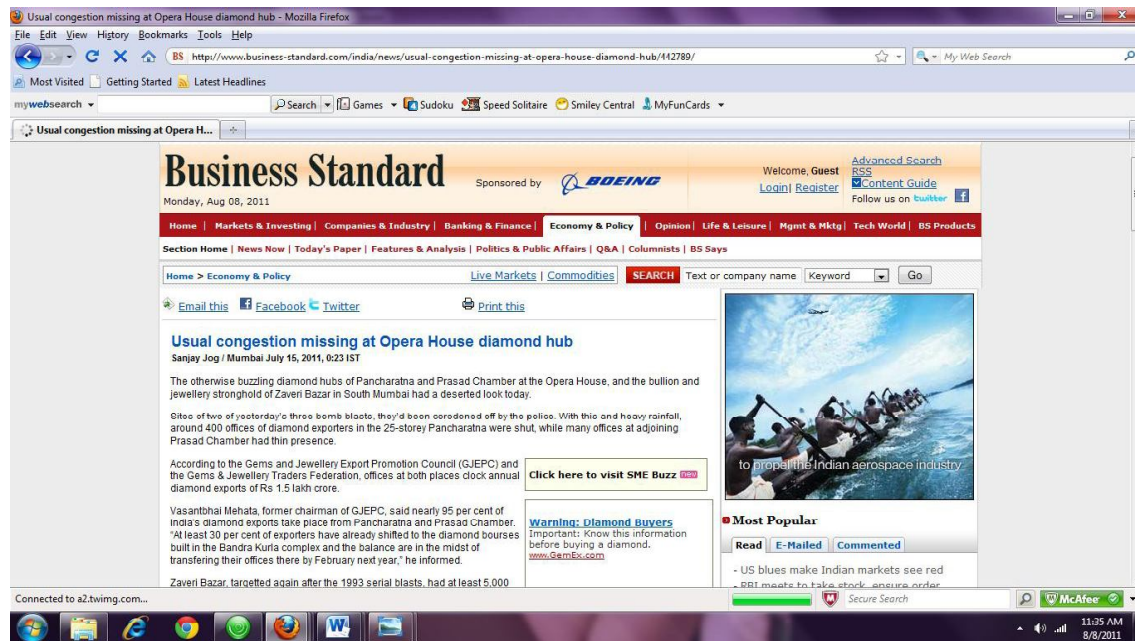


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## Usual congestion missing at Opera House diamond hub

Sanjay Jog / Mumbai July 15, 2011, 0:23 IST

The otherwise buzzing diamond hubs of Pancharatna and Prasad Chamber at the Opera House, and the bullion and jewellery stronghold of Zaveri Bazar in South Mumbai had a deserted look today.

Sites of two of yesterday's three bomb blasts, they'd been cordoned off by the police. With this and heavy rainfall, around 400 offices of diamond exporters in the 25-storey Pancharatna were shut, while many offices at adjoining Prasad Chamber had thin presence.

According to the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) and the Gems & Jewellery Traders Federation, offices at both places clock annual diamond exports of Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

Vasantbhai Mehata, former chairman of GJEPC, said nearly 95 per cent of India's diamond  
30 per cent of exporters

have already shifted to the diamond bourses built in the Bandra Kurla complex and the balance are in the midst of transferring their offices there by February next year,” he informed.

Zaveri Bazar, targetted again after the 1993 serial blasts, had at least 5,000 bullion and jewellery shops and offices. Most were closed today. Zaveri Bazar alone clocks an annualturn of Rs 3 lakh crore, estimates the Bombay Bullion Association. Prithviraj Kothari, a representative of the Association, told Business Standard: “Due to heavy rainfall and heavy security, a majority of shops and offices in Zaveri Bazar are closed. There is expected to be a loss of Rs 500 crore due to today’s closure.” He said Zaveri Bazar was an obvious target for attackers as nearly a million people come daily to this area, marked with narrow lanes and bylanes.

Adding: “We had already submitted a detailed plan to the civic authorities for the beautification of the area by making it free of hawkers and shifting of parked cars. We reiterate that a special plot be allocated at the earliest in the Bandra Kurla Complex to gems