

In Brief

Saudi authorities deport 13 Yemeni fishermen

Saudi authorities have deported 13 Yemeni fishermen through the border port of al-Tewal, Yemen's Interior Minister reported on Tuesday.

The deported fishermen said that the Saudi navy detained them while they were sleeping on their fishing boat, which was anchored off al-Asheq Island last Friday.

They claimed that a boat belonging to the Saudi navy towed their boat from the island and into Saudi territorial waters, where they were held before being deported to Yemen through the port of al-Tewal.

The fishermen added that their boat and two of their fellow fishermen are still being detained by Saudi authorities.

Arrangements underway for World Tourism Day celebration

Arrangements are underway for the marking of World Tourism Day that will fall on Sept. 27.

Activities will be held in the Secretariat Capital and three other provinces under the slogan 'tourism and biodiversity,' the director general of activities at the Ministry of Tourism, Ahmed al Bail confirmed.

The activities will shed light on the role of tourism in supporting the national economy and the importance of preserving biodiversity, an important factor for sustainable tourism.

They will also highlight the cultural, social, political and economic values of tourism as well as highlighting the important role of tourism in creating jobs in Yemen.

Yemen to attend World Coffee Conference 2010 in London

Yemen, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, will take part in the World Coffee Conference 2010 organized by the International Coffee Organization in London on Sept. 20-24.

"The participation is of great importance because the conference will

be the first expanded meeting of the ICO," Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Abdul Malik al Thawr said.

"By gaining full membership Yemen can enjoy privileges offered by the ICO including the development and improvement of its coffee production and opening external markets for exporting Yemeni coffee," he said.

Yemen will also enjoy the ICO support in areas such as research and capacity building as well as studies on coffee production and consumption. In addition, Yemen will benefit from the ICO information provided to the member states about coffee production, exports, imports and trade in general, he concluded.

SHABWA**Yemen LNG pipeline was subject to sabotage attempt, says the company**

Yemen LNG Company confirmed on Monday that its 320km pipeline had been subject to attempted sabotage in Shabwa governorate, eastern Yemen, causing minor damages.

"At 7 am today, Yemen LNG pipeline was subject to an attempt of sabotage in Shabwah, causing minor damages to the pipeline which will be repaired rapidly," Yemen LNG said in a press release posted on its website.

"There were no injuries and the pipeline remains in operation and LNG production continues uninterrupted," it added.

The main pipeline connects the two gas processing facilities in the gas fields of block 18 in Marib governorate to the liquefaction facilities in Balhaf, Shabwa, around 400 km east of Aden province.

The company pointed out that "emergency procedures have been activated to monitor and control the situation and security along the pipeline has been reinforced with Yemeni Government forces".

The first phase of the US\$ 4.5 billion Yemen LNG project was launched in

November 2008 with the gas arriving in the Yemen LNG Balhaf plant from the gas fields through the pipeline.

The Yemen LNG shareholders are Total (39.62 percent), Hunt (17.22 percent), Yemen Gas Company (16.73 percent), SK Corporation (9.55 percent), Kogas (6.00 percent), Hyundai (5.88 percent) and the General Authority of Social Security and Pensions (5.00 percent).

HAJJ**Yemen border guards thwart infiltration bid into Saudi Arabia**

The security services of the border guards have thwarted an attempt of nine Bangladeshis to enter Saudi territory, security sources said on Monday.

A group of Bangladeshi men were intercepted at a border region in the northern Yemeni province of Hajjah, nine of whom could not produce any identity documents.

The Bangladeshi men have been referred to an investigative procedure to assess how they entered Yemen. They face charges of attempting to enter Saudi Arabia illegally.

TAIZ**Yemen captures 26 African infiltrators**

Security services have captured 14 Ethiopians in Taiz for attempting to enter the country illegally.

Meanwhile, Yemeni Coastguard forces in Aden also seized 12 Africans who had been brought by a smuggling boat to Yemen.

Security sources believe that 15 Ethiopians and 10 Djiboutians on the same boat may have escaped to the mainland with assistance of unidentified persons.

SANAA**On Eid al Fitr, Saleh orders 1346 insolvent inmates released**

On the occasion of Eid al Fitr, President Ali Abdullah Saleh has ordered

the release of 1346 insolvent prisoners who meet the requirements of conditional release and for the payment of around YER 187 million they owe under private rights verdicts.

President Saleh urged the supreme committee on prisoners and jails to continue its responsibilities with the aim to improving the performance of correctional institutions and providing them with necessary equipment as well as classifying inmates according to their crimes.

ADEN**Health complex to be opened in Aden next October**

The project of Typical Health Complex in Dar Saad district, Aden governorate, with a cost of USD 260,000, is to be opened in next October.

The complex project, financed by the Social Fund for Development, consists of two floors including a number of medical sections, and will provide medical and health services to the district people-around 60,000 locals, in addition to the neighboring areas.

The health complex, equipped with modern medical devices and equipment, will be one of the most important service projects in the district and will improve the quality of medical and health services provided to refugees.

HODEIDA**Heavy rain death toll rises to 56 in Hodeida**

Heavy rains in Hodeida governorate, in western Yemen on the Red Sea, killed five people on Monday increasing the death toll to 56 in the governorate, a medical source said on Wednesday.

The GPC-run almotamar.net cited the source as saying that floods and thunders have killed two people in al-Muhailes area as well as a child and his pregnant mother in al-Madman area in al-Tuhayta district.

One man was killed and another was wounded in Zapid city of Hodei-

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dah due to thunders.

Heavy floods in several districts of Hodeidah caused 40 deaths in less than a month after 11 people were killed in similar floods that hit al-Jarrah district over a month ago.

Yemeni and Jordanian hospitals sign twinning agreement

A twinning agreement has been signed in the Jordanian capital, Amman, between Al-Thawra General Hospital in Hodeidah and Prince Hamzah Hospital in Jordan.

Dr. Mohammed Qatqat, General Director of the Board of Al-Thawra General Hospital in Hodeidah told Saba

that the agreement was aimed towards facilitating and providing medical services for citizens of both countries at discounted prices.

The agreement included activating aspects of training the medical and health cadres and enhancing health cooperation between the two hospitals, Dr. Qatqat indicated.

He pointed out that a delegation from Prince Hamzah Hospital would visit Al-Thawra General Hospital during the coming period to get acquainted with services and health care provided by the hospital and to discuss areas of cooperation in the medical and health field.

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Head of Yemen's Youth Parliament to the Yemen Times:

“I will have to be worthy of the responsibility on my shoulders.”

Interviewed by Layla Asda
For the Yemen Times

Rumila Al-Aghbari, 24, from Taiz, is a young activist who wants to be a leader for change. In April, she was invited to represent the Yemeni branch of Nassej, a regional development organization working with youth in Beirut, on a popular Lebanese talk show. During the interview, she also represented Yemen's new Youth Parliament for a regional audience for the first time.

Rumila joined the Children's Parliament at the age of 14, was briefly a member of the Youth Consultative Council at the age of 21, and then became the first head of the Youth Parliament last February for a period of two years. She has now completed her studies and in 2009 graduated with a BA in German from Sana'a University. During the next few years, the Youth Parliament will expand to include members from all of Yemen's governorates and to work in all of these areas. Rumila spoke to the Yemen Times about bringing about change for youth in Yemen.

How did your upbringing help make you the person you are today?

Well, I can say that I'm still learning and will continue to learn till the end of my life. It's a long journey, though. It has been ten years since I joined the Children's Parliament at the age of 14, then the Consultative Council, which is a transitional phase of the Children's Parliament, and now I am the head of the Youth's Parliament and a volunteer for several organizations. There have been a lot of changes, whether in my way of dealing with people or in my way of thinking. I am now learning a lot of new things to teach people through experience.

How does someone decide to become the head of the Children's Parliament?

Well, as a child it was something excit-



Rumila Al-Aghbari talking on a TV channel

ing for me. I felt special that the students had chosen me especially since there were certain qualifications for you to be nominated.

You need to be hardworking and a well-behaved student as well as having the ability to stand up for all students. It was wonderful for me to stand as a candidate in the elections and have my picture all over the place and to be able to represent all my classmates.

I was elected to be the rapporteur of the Children's Parliament and my job was more like that of a deputy. I was in charge of handing the recommendations and decisions to the Governing Body to make final decisions.

Then I became the head of the Consultative Council which is a transitional phase of the Children's Parliament. And now I'm the head of the Youth's Parliament, although I'm not the best one of them at all. You have Ibrahim Al-Nehari, Huda Al-Jabri, Abdulrazaq Al-Azazi and a lot of other figures, but they chose me

out of trust.

When we held the elections, we had already reached the point that the barrier between males and females had started to vanish. What really matters is the abilities the one has, and whether one is going to achieve something or not.

You now are the head of the Youth Parliament and you work for an organization called Nassej as well. What is Nassej? And how did you start working with it?

Nassej is the first youth organization that cares about all of the youth's needs. It is a regional organization that used to belong to Save the Children, in which the participating states are Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Mauritania and Jordan, where its headquarters are.

Nassej takes care of training young people and provides opportunities to support youth initiatives. I became involved with them when I started seeking support from Nassej for specific projects. Nas-

sej, for me, was the real paradigm shift in my life because I received a huge benefit from it. I am now in the process of becoming one of their trainers.

What projects were you directly involved in and how?

Nassej in general supports all initiatives in every field whether in health, environment, or even supporting the poor and marginalized – areas not often targeted by other organizations.

I worked on my own initiatives with their support. I was responsible for a lot of projects such as the project working with the Ja'ashin children, who ran away from Ans, Dhamar, where there was war of vengeance. We took those children and made recreational and educational activities for them in cooperation with [Yemeni mobile phone company] MTN and the Information Center for Human Rights. It was very inspiring for me because I was able to see the change in the eyes of these children. We also worked on the Nasr Al-Aqsa project in 2008 to provide Palestinians with food and medicine, in which we sought financial support in uncommon places, such as from barber shops and housewives.

What was the most rewarding project you worked on there?

Personally, being trained was the most rewarding for me because I participated in regional training sessions. Also rewarding was the experience that I gained, especially from the exchange of information during the training sessions because we got the chance to meet the representatives of other initiatives in the Arab region.

The nice thing about Nassej is that it really understands youth's needs and you receive support without difficulties.

You were a guest last April on the popular Lebanese talk show Sira Wa Infatहत ma'a Zafin that discusses social issues, hosted by Zafin. How would you describe this experience?

Being hosted on this program was a great step for me. I started to feel that I'm really representing the youth and being responsible for them.

I will have to be worthy of the responsibility on my shoulders. Having worked with a great deal of youth groups, we should be productive in order to move forward. We must try as much as possible to work harder.

It's an honor for me to represent the youth and my country and I hope that I'll do the job right.

What are the youth's problems that most concern you as a head of the Youth's Parliament? What issues are you giving priority to? And how would you try to solve these problems?

Youth's self-esteem and having their way of thinking and ideas actually appreciated by the community in my opinion are issues that we should give priority to in order to solve other problems resulting from these issues.

Youth is an enormous source of concealed energy. If we had the ability to tap into this, many changes would happen.

For example, as a human rights activist, I will try to understand the thoughts of the youth and to use their abilities and activities to invest them in a project. We should focus more on their ambitions.

If I had greater authority, I would adopt bigger issues like unemployment and high dowries. Believe me, if we take these youth and give them the right training that would qualify them for work, and believe in them, they are the ones who are going to improve our country.

To what extent does the Youth's Parliament defend women's rights? Do you think that the women in our country have all their rights?

Everyone, whether the Youth's Parliament or any other organization, agree on one topic which is women's rights.

I believe that youth's rights, whether

male or female, should be taken more seriously. For instance, all organizations took early marriage more seriously than anything else. But why don't they also take the issue of unmarried girls into consideration and try to solve it? What I mean is that people care about one issue and neglect other issues, although they are just as important. They need to focus on the youth because they are the ones who are going to build the community.

Did you face any problems during your time working as head of the parliament and as a member of Nassej? If so, what were they and how did you overcome them?

The difficulties are numerous. They can be personal or social. The personal difficulties were sometimes linked to the qualities that one should have in order to be able to face problems. For example, I wasn't logical to some extent and I used to rush things.

As for the social ones, in the past I feel that the community didn't quite see women at the same level as men, but now it has changed miraculously where we have reached the point of being almost equal.

Another problem which is difficult is the community's rejection of something we believe in. Sometimes we work on an issue that we think is important while the community doesn't give it any priority. However, with determination everything will be solved no matter how many obstacles we may face.

What are your future plans?

I really wish to have my own business or company in which I could put in place new mechanisms of quality for young people. I haven't decided yet the details, but what matters to me is that I hire as many youths as possible, respect their ideas and apply them.

And I want to have a charity project. This is my work.

As for education, I want to prepare a masters and PhD in political science.

Windows into international development work in Yemen:



IFAD in Yemen

IFAD has been financing development initiatives in Yemen since 1979. Yemen was one of the first countries to receive loans from the organization. To date IFAD has financed 20 development programmes and projects in Yemen, with a total of US\$206.3 in loans and grants. The total cost of the programmes and projects co-funded by IFAD is US\$635.5 million. Early IFAD-funded initiatives supported the country's development strategy, promoting crop intensification in the most suitable areas and building institutional capacity. The primary goal was to improve food security. Later programmes and projects addressed the isolation and marginalization of poor rural people and their exclusion from the benefits of economic activities.

The organization invests in programmes and projects in the poorest, marginalized parts of the country, particularly in remote coastal areas and rugged, mountainous zones. The objective is to empower poor people to improve their incomes and standards of living. IFAD supports activities to reduce poverty and conserve natural resources, particularly diminishing renewable water supplies.

There are five IFAD-funded projects currently ongoing in Yemen. Recent operations include an area-based development project in Dhamar and further support for environmental protection in the Tihama Plain.

IFAD's 2000-2007 country programme in Yemen helped participating communities establish 450 community development committees and formulate village development plans that are gradually being incorporated into local government planning and budgeting processes. Completed investments in the plans have provided safe drinking water to some 120,000 households, improved the access of isolated communities to markets and services, and provided animal drinking water and irrigation. They have also provided agricultural services in extension and crop protection that have helped increase crop yields.

Proposed initiatives have the aim of improving the livelihoods of poor people in fishing villages on the south-west coast, and of poor farmers and herders in the Al-Baidha, Taiz and Lahej governorates.

IFAD has forged strong partnerships in Yemen, working with the government, the International Development Association,

the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Islamic Development Bank, and the governments of Italy and the Netherlands.

IFAD's strategy in Yemen

IFAD's new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for Yemen covers the period from 2008 to 2013. Its aim is to integrate IFAD's programme into the country's poverty reduction strategies and plans for development. The strategic objectives are aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and with Yemen's national poverty reduction strategy and rural development strategy, as well as with IFAD's own Strategic Framework 2007-2010.

The target of IFAD's country programme in Yemen includes poor rural people – men, women and young people – and especially those who depend on rainfed agriculture and livestock production systems. The goal of the country programme is to achieve improved, diversified and sustained livelihoods for these people.

The new COSOP states the strategic objectives of IFAD's initiatives in Yemen:

- empower rural communities
- promote sustainable rural financial services and pro-poor rural small and medium-sized enterprises
- enhance the food security of poor households

All of the organization's initiatives work towards achieving direct participation of the people involved, as well as gender balance and environmental sustainability. Gender activities will contribute to the gender mainstreaming strategy that the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation has developed with the support of other donors. Its key objectives are the access of women to extension services, land, microfinance and time-saving technologies.

A key ingredient of IFAD's strategy in Yemen is developing partnerships to achieve synergies and complementarity. To empower rural communities, IFAD will work with the government to improve linkages between community institutions, civil society organizations and local government structures. To promote sustainable rural financial services, IFAD will support the development of savings and credit associations for poor people in remote rural areas and a broader reach of microcredit organizations.

To enhance food security, IFAD will support efforts to restore and increase produc-

tivity, working with communities, farmers' and trade organizations, and the private sector. It will team up with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and other potential partners to encourage measures for adapting to climate change. Innovations will include sustainable measures promoting better management of water resources and development of rural financial products, such as crop insurance, to lessen risk.

Leading by example: young Yemeni women teach their communities key skills

Two remarkable young women born in one of the driest, poorest countries in the world are showing their families and their communities the way out of poverty. Ibtisam and Sabah live in the Dhamar Governorate of Yemen, where up to 70 per cent of the population in highland villages lives on less than two dollars a day.

Through a project supported by IFAD, both young women have acquired important new skills, enabling them to increase their incomes, earn the respect of their neighbours and take up positions of responsibility in their communities.

The Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project started work in 2004 and has reached over 25,000 households so far. The project is working to help smallholder farmers and herders increase their production, their family's food security and their incomes, and improve basic living conditions in the villages.

One of the project's underlying goals is also to mobilize local community members, in particular women and young people, to take part in planning and implementing project activities. These include agricultural extension work, literacy training classes and rural finance groups. The mid-term review team that visited late in 2009 found that the project had successfully mobilized poor rural people in more than 130 communities.

Women's work

As in many poor places around the world, women in Dhamar have the odds stacked against them. Their daily responsibilities are onerous. They fetch water, collect wood, prepare food, tend the fields, care for children and look after grazing animals. But the majority have not been taught to read and write, their participation in social and civic affairs is restricted, and they have limited ownership of land or property.

One of the project's greatest successes so far has been in teaching young and adult women to read and write and enabling them to manage their money. More than 6,500 women have completed elementary literacy training and nearly 3,000 have started their second year.

Building on this achievement, 140 savings and credit groups have been set up, the vast majority of which are women's groups created by women from the literacy classes.

Sharing skills and earning respect

Ibtisam is 19 and has a high school diploma. She lives in Talhamah Village, Jaharan District. She is spontaneous and ambitious, and her parents fully support her dream of obtaining a higher education and becoming an English interpreter. She has eight brothers and sisters. Her father owns a small grocery shop in the village and is a smallholder farmer. Like most rural Yemeni girls, Ibtisam grew up grazing animals, helping her father on the farm and doing her homework in her spare time.

Today, Ibtisam teaches reading and writing to other women in her community, and her mother is one of her students. She first learned about the Dhamar project when a literacy officer visited the village and shortlisted her and other candidates for the literacy-teacher training programme. She was selected on the basis of her education and natural communication skills. Her younger sister Hiyam, who is also a high-school graduate and teacher at the local school, looks after their siblings when both her mother and elder sister are busy in literacy classes.

Ibtisam also serves as the chairperson of the village savings and credit committee, which has 35 members.

"I now enjoy a different status in the family and in the village. I have gained more respect within my family and my community," she says.

Ibtisam has developed striking business skills through training provided by the project. For example, she took out a loan of 40,000 Yemeni rial (about US\$200) from the savings and credit association to expand her father's shop. She has already paid back 33,000 rial, as well as the 10 per cent service charge. With this financial contribution, she has gained 50 per cent ownership of the shop. With her savings from allowances she received during the training programme, she bought and sold

some sheep at a profit. She has also started a successful business selling gas cylinders in the community and has opened a small shoe shop from her village home.

Through her business activities, Ibtisam has already managed to lift her family out of poverty. Her family's nutrition has improved significantly, with meat and other high-protein foods now part of the family's diet. Family income has almost doubled, from 50,000 rial to nearly 100,000 a month.

Before learning about the project, Ibtisam was struggling to find a way to free herself and her family from dependency and poverty. When she heard the Chinese proverb "women hold half of the skies," she immediately replied, "give me an opportunity and I'll lift the whole world above my head."

This is a remarkable statement from a young rural woman with her face completely hidden behind a veil, in a country where women are expected to be shy and reserved.

With the enthusiasm of youth, Ibtisam now says: "I would like to become as powerful as the Queen of Sheba. I would like to go abroad to complete my education, and I am prepared to pull away my veil should it become an obstacle in achieving my objective of becoming an English interpreter."

Ibtisam's message to her fellow countrywomen is that, in order to shake off the "dust of poverty," they need to obtain an education. And they need to become members of savings and credit associations, to invest in their own simple businesses, and to become economically self-sufficient.

"This is just the beginning, not the end," she says.

"I feel I am more empowered than ever before, and above all I can see the light at the end of the tunnel that my family and I have been living in for decades."

Learning new skills and gaining confidence

Sabah is also 19 and lives in Jabal El Sharaq. She was selected for the Dhamar project's veterinary skills development programme because she is qualified and competent. Every morning, Sabah works as a volunteer teacher in the local school, because she wants every girl and boy in her community to get an education. Every afternoon, she teaches literacy classes promoted by the project.

Sabah was not able to get a loan from

the savings and credit association for the veterinary micro business she had started, because the association had limited capital. So instead she invested her savings from the allowances she received under the literacy training programme in her new business. Sabah cannot afford to buy a refrigerator, so she buys veterinary medicines when she needs them and does not keep a stock of medicines that require controlled climatic conditions.

Sabah now works with 22 villages. She spent the first few weeks visiting farmers and telling them about her veterinary business activity and the services she can offer. She travels on foot and makes light of the great distances.

"Walking several miles up and down hills on dusty and sometimes dangerous tracks to fetch water, tend grazing animals and farm terraces is practically a daily job for almost every girl and woman in this part of the world," she says.

She knows that her most important achievement to date is gaining the confidence to speak to male farmers and herders without feeling intimidated. Her negotiation skills have improved to the extent that she has no problem setting the price of her veterinary visits. And she has learned to turn away farmers who haven't paid for her assistance in the past.

Because of her skills and the respect she has earned in her community, like Ibtisam, Sabah has also become the manager of the local savings and credit association, which recently started operations and currently has 25 members.

Sabah's family is proud of her determination and achievements and they support her ambitions. She has been relieved of household duties so she can focus on her goals. She aims to complete her education in agriculture and to set up a pharmacy so that local people will not have to travel far to get assistance. She wants to go abroad to complete her studies and learn from other cultures.

Sabah also wants to become a role model for rural Yemeni women. She has this message for women in her community and in nearby villages: "Learn and you will see the world from a different perspective. You will produce better generations, who will take proper care of this land whose natural resources are at the mercy of the climate. You will know your rights and how to set and achieve objectives."

Source: IFAD

Yemen's well-traveled bean

By: Eric Hansen
Saudi Aramco World

Every morning at first light, Sa'id Ahmad Wardah makes his way along the winding, cobblestone streets of the Old City in Sana'a, the ancient capital of Yemen. He opens the heavy steel doors to his coffee shop, and then takes up position behind a waist-high, tiled counter-top. He sets the kettles boiling and lays out a tray of clean glasses; within half an hour, the customers start to arrive from the nearby mosque. On a recent morning I found myself surrounded by a talkative crowd of coffee drinkers who were bundled up against the mid-winter chill. I was in Sana'a to investigate the unique qualities of Yemeni coffee, which is not only the world's oldest and most famous, but also one of the most expensive and sought-after of coffees. Sa'id's shop on the edge of the Suq Al-Baqr, in the Old City's market district, seemed like a good place to start.

"*Bunn halib*" ("Milk coffee") I shouted my order above the roar of Sa'id's pressure kerosene burners. He poured hot, sugared water into a long-handled, wide-bottomed container called a *jazwah*, spooned in a tablespoon or so of medium-roasted, fine-ground coffee and added some five tablespoons of evaporated milk. He allowed the mixture to boil up to the rim a couple of times before pouring out a frothy glassful. I took a sip and the hot, fragrant drink soon filled my mouth with rich and pleasantly pungent flavors: smooth, earthy and mellow with just the right touch of acidity to give it some bite. This was followed by the distinct bittersweet, chocolate-like aftertaste that distinguishes Yemeni coffee from all others. When properly made from high-quality beans, there is no other coffee quite like it.

"Water can be drunk in gulps, but not coffee," advised Mohammed Saleh Hussein, an elderly man who was sitting next to me. "Small sips with lots of air. And don't wait for the grounds to settle, because that is where you will find the flavor."

In Yemen, men often drink their early morning coffee at shops before breakfast; women often drink it at home, where many also do their own roasting. But from mid-morning on, the drink of choice among all Yemenis becomes *qishr*, a delicately flavored, tea-like infusion made from the dried husks of the coffee cherry. Unless one stays in a family home or arrives in a coffee shop sufficiently early, a traveler might see only *qishr* served, and this has led to the false impression that Yemenis no longer drink their own coffee. Yet the truth is that Yemenis not only drink the best of what they grow, but also on occasion spice it with cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom or cloves.

Holding the hot glass of *bunn halib* with both hands to warm my fingers I thought about the discovery of coffee and how

hard, bitter green bean. Like other hard beans, nuts and grains, however, people eventually learned to roast coffee beans to make them palatable. As everyone knows, fresh roasted coffee gives off a wonderful aroma, and when chewed, the beans create a flavorful liqueur in the mouth. Dancing goat theories notwithstanding, I suspect the fragrance, the unique taste and the caffeine jolt are what finally led to the practice of pounding the roasted beans into a powder, mixing that with hot water, and preparing an infusion. No one is quite certain when this event first took place.

Coffee's trade routes

Trade routes across the Red Sea have linked East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula since the early first millennium BC, and it has been suggested by William H. Ukers, in his definitive 1922 work *All About Coffee*, that sometime around the Abyssinian invasion of Southern Arabia in 525, coffee was introduced to the area that is now Yemen. Shaykh Abu Hasan Al-Shadhili, the legendary founder of the south Arabian export city of Al-Mukha, discovered coffee growing on the terraced slopes of the emerald-green mountains of Osab around the middle of the 13th century. It was villagers, the story goes, who introduced Al-Shadhili to coffee as a beverage. The new drink stimulated his thoughts and kept him awake. As a result of his discovery, Al-Shadhili began promoting coffee as the perfect drink to help focus one's thoughts and engage in religious contemplation. Coffee also became a common aid to producing a state of *kayf* which may be described as a condition of dreamy mindfulness and euphoric well-being.

The English word "coffee," however, comes from the Turkish *kahveh*, which in turn stems from the Arabic *qahwah*, a word that originally referred to wine. But in Yemen, coffee is called *bunn* (pronounced halfway between "bun" and "boon"), a word which in other Arabic-speaking countries refers only to the bean itself. This is the term used by 10th-century Arab physician Al-Razi (See *Aramco World*, May/June 1997), who is credited with the first written description of the medicinal properties of coffee. He refers to the bean and the tree as *bunn* and to the drink as *bunchum*—which, he adds, is good for the stomach. Shortly after him, around 1000, the scholar and physician Ibn Sina (Avicenna) also mentioned the value of *bunchum*, claiming that coffee "fortifies the members, cleans the skin...and gives an excellent smell to all the body."

Though the originals of these writings have been lost, the quotations survive in the *Argument in Favor of the Legitimate Use of Coffee*, a manuscript produced some time before 1587 by Abel Al-Qadir ibn Muhammad al-Ansari Al-Jazari, an adherent of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. Written in response to a reli-



Yemeni coffee farmers take their time to collect the Arabica coffee cherries. Only the red cherries are collected even if it means four visits to the same tree during the harvest season.

a single *Coffea arabica* tree and transplanted it to Martinique in the Caribbean. From that tree, Yemeni coffee traveled to the highlands of Mexico and Central and South America. By the 19th century, Yemen's coffee exports had dwindled to a mere one percent of world demand. In 1893, coffee beans were transported from Brazil to the British colonies of Kenya and Uganda, not far from the bean's ancient roots in southwest Ethiopia.

More than just a drink

Since its discovery, the drinking of coffee has been a social matter, in Yemen as elsewhere. Carsten Niebuhr, the intrepid Danish explorer who visited Yemen from 1761 to 1763, had this to say about the coffeehouse culture he found:

"These are the only theatres for the exercise of [non-religious] eloquence.... The Arabs would find their evenings extremely irksome if readers and orators, mainly poor scholars, were not there to entertain them. These young scholars walk about and recite or deliver discourses upon all subjects. They make up the most wonderful tales, inventing, singing, making tales and fables."

Sitting in the Sanaa coffeehouse of Sa'id Ahmad Wardah, I asked my fellow drinkers if they knew any verses or songs commemorating coffee. One man from Osab sang me a coffee farmer's song:

*Coffee of Yemen, oh pearls!
Oh treasure on the tree!*

*He who grows you will not be poor,
Nor will he suffer from scorn.*

Another man offered a local expression: "If a member of the Al-Kibsi family faints, give him the *lifah* to sniff to revive him." The Al-Kibsis are renowned for their love of good coffee, and the *lifah* is the palm-fiber filter and stopper used in a terra-cotta coffee pot known as *jamanah*.

As the morning coffee crowd began to thin, I paid a visit to Amin Muhammad Al-Kabous, a third-generation coffee roaster and exporter who buys his coffee from farmers he knows and trusts. Amin separates the husk from the bean using a mechanized stone mill, though many coffee merchants still grind by hand in Yemen. He sends the husks to the *qishr* merchants and then inspects the green beans and smells them to determine their quality. This is followed by a careful sample roast to confirm his selection.

Throughout this process, he takes an artisan's approach to his work, and this attitude is reflected in the excellence of his coffee. Amin looks for large, well-formed beans for the export market, and Japanese coffee buyers, in particular, have developed a long-term working relationship with the Al-Kabous family. There are larger and more modern coffee businesses in Yemen, but the Al-Kabous operation is the most highly regarded of them all. I asked Amin the secret of running a successful business in such a competitive market.

"There is no secret," he told me. "This coffee is the bounty of God. We protect the quality and we guard our reputation."

As we spoke, poor and elderly men and women came to the shop. They waited quietly at the side of the front door where they were handed small packets of ground coffee by one of Amin's assistants. "The poor?" he said, anticipating my question. "They are known and they don't have to ask. No one should be without coffee."

Hamid Al-Awadi is another successful Sanaa coffee roaster. He carries several

different types, but specializes in the coffee from Wadi Al-Udayn. He offers three roasts: a light yellow, usually prepared with ginger and cardamom (and sometimes with sesame or sorghum) that is popular among the tribesmen of the eastern desert; a medium roast to suit the typical Yemeni palate, and a dark roast for export that he calls *bunn Al-Nasraniyyin*, "coffee for the followers of the Nazarene,"—that is, Christians. He also sells several different grades of husks for *qishr*. When I asked Hamid about the popular misconception that Yemenis drink *qishr* because they can no longer afford their own coffee, he laughed. "The truth is that we save the best beans for ourselves," he said. "The early harvest produces the sweetest coffee. It is roasted in small batches, and this is what is served at home. A farmer sells his surplus, but keeps the very best for his family."

Coffee-growing, long a noble and honorable occupation in Yemen, remains widespread, so, following Hamid's suggestion, I drove into the countryside to talk with the farmers who grow the best coffee. I traveled for five days, during which time I made a loop that included the coffee regions of Bani Matar (near Mahwit), Wadi Al-Udayn, Yafi' (near Taiz) and the region of Osab. In a remote village, near the upper reaches of Wadi Surdud, I was invited to lunch in a private house where young men recited poetry praising coffee. I interviewed farmers, middlemen, and exporters. In each province I bought different types of green *bunn* to take back to the United States for roasting and tasting. I was curious to know how these samples would compare to each other, and how they might stack up against what is presently available at the top of the coffee market in the United States.

Taming the mountain tops

High-quality Yemeni coffee is cultivated on the narrow mountain terraces and in the fertile wadis of the western escarpment roughly between 1000 and 2000 meters' height (3250-6500'). It is produced by small-scale farmers, and one reason for the complex flavor of Yemeni coffee is that coffee is grown in a variety of places with a variety of exposures. Within the same valley or on the same mountain, Yemenis can distinguish different varietal characteristics. They have named the different types of coffee according to the areas in which they grow. Throughout the country, the beans are small and irregular due to the dry conditions, and the color varies from light green to yellow.

Among the coffee regions, Wadi Al-Udayn is among the most renowned—and mangos, bananas, sugar cane and papayas also grow superbly here. Throughout the wadi a beautiful canopy of fig (*Ficus vasta*) and tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) trees provides shade for both the fruit crops and the coffee trees that are interplanted with them. I arrived in Wadi Al-Udayn just as the autumn coffee harvest was beginning. Yemeni coffee is picked by hand, and the best comes when only the fully ripened cherries are harvested. Because not all the cherries on a tree ripen at the same time, each tree must be revisited repeatedly, as the fruit ripens, which extends the picking season over several months.

The coffee cherries are then dried in the sun for two weeks to a month, depending on weather conditions. If the coffee gets wet during this time, it may ferment and develop a sour flavor. Coffee needs even drying conditions, and unpredictable weather can adversely affect the end

result. According to a Ministry of Agriculture booklet on coffee-growing in Al-Mahwit Province, the moisture content in well-dried coffee cherries varies from 9.5 to 13 percent. The coffee should be hulled within three to six weeks of drying. All coffee in Yemen is carefully hand-sorted to remove stones and unripe or broken beans. The green beans are then stored in a dry place to even out the moisture content prior to roasting.

Because I had read that Yemeni coffee was a natural, organic product, I asked a farmer from Wadi Al-Udayn if he ever used chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

"Who can afford fertilizers?" he replied. "We use dried animal dung, and the irrigation water brings minerals and nutrients. Pesticides?" he laughed. "We tried them on a caterpillar [of the coffee-cherry moth, *Prophantis smaragdina*] that gets into the green fruit. The government distributed and encouraged the use of this pesticide. It worked for a few years, but the worms came back and then nothing would kill them!"

Following that experience, the farmers of Wadi Al-Udayn went back to their traditional technique of lighting smoldering fires around the trees to smoke out most of the caterpillars. It doesn't kill them all, but it is an effective and time-tested method of pest control. It is just as well that the farmers don't spray pesticides on the coffee fruit because, unlike other coffee-producing countries where coffee husks are discarded, Yemen uses the husks to make *qishr*.

I returned home with about 20 kilos (nearly 45 pounds) of carefully bagged and labeled green coffee beans. Each sample was roasted and evaluated at several formal tastings that I arranged with coffee roasters near San Francisco. It was at this point I began to appreciate why Yemeni coffee is—with the single exception of Jamaican Blue Mountain—the world's most expensive, commanding a price that can be 30 to 50 percent higher than that of more common specialty coffees.

Coffee buyers in the United States judge green beans first by appearance, and then by roasting and "cupping," which involves brewing individual cups, smelling and tasting. With a surprisingly loud, even aggressive, slurping sound, professional tasters sip lukewarm coffee from soup spoons. The idea is to spray the inside of the mouth with fine particles of coffee and plenty of air without actually swallowing any. The coffee is then spat out, and the taster moves on to the next sample.

International praise

Jim Reynolds, coffee buyer and taster at Peet's Coffee & Tea in Berkeley, California was enthusiastic in his praise of Yemeni coffee. "It is very provincial.... a treasure from the earth. Rich, full-bodied, green, nutty, woody, yet inconsistent and unpredictable. Very pronounced tastes: fruity, chocolatey, winery, exotic and complex. Subtleties of flavor are often on a subconscious level—not quite there, if you know what I mean. As in a good friendship, a bit of mystery remains, and this is what makes Yemeni coffee so great." In the blind sampling, Jim was partial to the Matar and Ahjeri beans.

Importers and roasters Bob Fulmer and Helen Nicholas from Royal Coffee in Emeryville, California explained that "in the specialty coffee trade, Yemeni is as special as it can get. Yemeni coffee is the wild card of the coffee business. It has a lot of varietal character and this makes it difficult to

maintain consistency, but it is well worth the effort."

While the samples were being roasted, I asked Bob what he looked for in a good Yemeni coffee. He explained that the first step involves detecting any problems or faults. A faintly metallic smell, or a musty, vinegary ferment is the tell-tale aroma of a coffee packed wet or dried improperly. Then he looks for "fruitiness."

"A good Yemeni coffee has a soft blueberry back-taste or flavor," Bob told me. "It is not in the first taste of the coffee, but the second or aftertaste. Deep, thick, rich and full of fruit." With your mouth full of coffee, it helps to exhale through your nose to pick up this subtle but unmistakable blueberry quality. Bob and Helen thought the Udayni variety had great body and excellent blueberry notes.

At the Universal Cafe in San Francisco, owner and coffee roaster Bob Voorhees transformed the last lot of my green beans into the finished product. These beans were special to me because they came from the emerald mountains of Osab, where Shaykh Abu Hasan Al-Shadhili was said to have first learned the secret of drinking coffee. Bob, however, was unaware of the centuries of lore embodied in the beans he was about to commit to the flames.

"Yemeni coffee doesn't roast evenly because of the irregular bean size," Bob said as he pre-heated the roaster. "The coffee loses about 20 percent of bean weight during the roasting, and I like to maintain the temperature at around 400 degrees [200°C]." Bob poured the beans into the roaster, and soon they began to give off a fresh, woody aroma. The beans start off with an 11-percent moisture content, he explained, and after about nine minutes they begin to pop, as the expansion of internal gases puffs each bean to nearly twice its original size. When the time arrived, I could hardly detect the soft sound of the popping above the roar of the roasting machine and the sound of cascading beans.

"This is where it gets tricky," Bob said as he raised the temperature to 450 degrees (233°C) in order to make the beans, in his word, "sizzle." With great dexterity he sniffed at small samples and adjusted the heat while closely examining the color of the beans. At the decisive moment he threw back a lever. Nine kilos of perfectly roasted *bunn Osabi* Yemeni coffee spilled out onto a revolving cooling tray and we were enveloped in a wonderful cloud of fragrant steam. The air was filled with the rich, oily smell of coffee, pungent, sweet and smoky. Once the beans had cooled slightly, Bob ground up a handful of them and produced two espressos. For me, just the smell of that freshly ground coffee from Osab was enough to produce an instant state of *kayf*.

"To the memory of Shaykh Abu Hasan Al-Shadhili," I said, lifting my cup.

Bob took a sip, paused, and then took another sip. He was quiet for a few moments before confessing that he was devoted to a particular type of aged coffee from the west coast of Sumatra. But those fabled beans from Osab were starting to work their magic and, with each small sip, I could see his loyalty crumbling.

"Not bad.... Not bad at all," he finally concluded. "You know, I think I really can taste those blueberries."

Eric Hansen is the author of Motoring with Mohammed: Journeys to Yemen and the Red Sea (Houghton Mifflin, 1991). He lives in Sacramento, California.



Matari coffee trees in the Bani Matar valley in the outskirts of Sana'a, where the locals grow both *qat* and coffee in the same planes.

it first came to be cultivated in Yemen. *Coffea arabica*, classified by Linnaeus in 1737, is indigenous to the high-land mountain forests of southwestern Ethiopia, especially the districts of Gamo-Gofa, Sidamo and Kefa, or Kaffa—whose name sounds intriguingly close to the common Arabic word for coffee, *qahwah*, though most scholars agree there is no documented connection between the two. In those regions, coffee can still be found growing wild beneath forest shade trees.

It is this wild coffee that has been harvested since ancient times, but it is generally agreed that formal cultivation of coffee in terraced fields started in Yemen in the 1300's. There is a surplus of colorful anecdotes and legends regarding the discovery of coffee as a food and beverage. One fable credits the angel Gabriel with showing King Solomon how to brew a decent cup. Another account tells how, in 850, an Abyssinian goatherd by the name of Khaldi found his goats dancing wildly after eating ripe coffee berries.

Having tasted ripe coffee fruit myself, I think the most plausible explanation is that people originally ate the sweet white flesh of the berry and then discarded the

gious debate over the merits and legality, under Islamic law, of the beverage that was sweeping Ottoman society, the Abd Al-Qadir manuscript is the oldest existing document about the history, preparation, use, virtues, and benefits of coffee drinking. Once coffee had become established in Makkah and Madinah, it wasn't long before pilgrims and traders disseminated it to the far corners of the Islamic world. From there, coffee also came to Europe in the 17th century through Venice, Marseilles, Amsterdam, London and Vienna.

As a result, Yemen's coffee export business boomed during the first Ottoman occupation, which lasted from 1536 to 1636. As the beverage gained popularity, the port of Al-Mukha enjoyed an increasingly powerful monopoly as the world's only source of *bunn* until the 18th century.

It was a pilgrim, Baba Budan, who, on his way home from Makkah to southern India, around 1600, took with him *Coffea arabica* seeds from Yemen. Almost a century later, the Dutch carried the plant from southern India to their colonies in Java. Commercial coffee cultivation soon spread throughout the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). The French took



**ESP DATA CLERK Position # 0808 CPF - Massila (B14)
For Yemeni Nationals Only**

Job Duties:

The incumbent shall:

- Inputs and updates ESP equipment information into ESP run-file database (NEMS) including:
 - Equipment run and pull data
 - Update Field Service Report into NEMS
 - ESP Repair shop work order data
 - Failure analysis data
 - Inventory condition coding and classification.
- Responsible for entering and, when required, editing reservations for ESP equipment into SAP and tracking staged equipment in NEMS.
- Responsible for entering New Inventory Items in NEMS (Receipts) and updating PO tracking sheet.
- Responsible for updating and tracking well related information, such as active wells, capture site ID and related motor HP.
- Produces and processes documentation for moving equipment to and from ESP Repair shop to and from Inventory.
- Responsible for tracking and auditing inventory of ESP equipment that is pending inspection and repair at the ESP Repair shop.
- Maintains filing system for all ESP Repair shop work orders, VSD Amp charts and inventory movement forms.
- Assist with compiling ESP component failure data. Ensures ESP dismantle and failure analysis reports are properly formatted.
- Monitors run and pull reports submitted by ESP Maintenance for accuracy.
- Responsible for reviewing vendor Bi-weekly status report for accuracy and reconcile variances.
- Miscellaneous duties such as, lab requisitions & corresponding with logistics personnel and ESP maintenance to reconcile variances and resolve outstanding issues.
- If required to drive shall know and understand CNPY "Safe Driving Practice".
- Know and understand the Responsible Care Ethics. Will follow the Responsible Care standards as applicable to their role within the Organization.
- Knows and understands Process Safety Management. Supports the PSM initiative as applicable to their role within the Organization.

Minimum Requirements:

- Minimum of Grade 12 diploma.
- Degree or diploma in Business Administration or Computer Science preferred
- 1 to 2 years related Experience in extracting data and compiling reports & Two years material/logistic coordination would be beneficial.
- Excellent organizational skills
- Familiar with inventory control techniques and materials management software such as SAP
- Good knowledge of English.

- ◆ To Apply for this Job please apply to: recruiting_gemsana@nexeninc.com
- ◆ Applications should be submitted NO later than Oct. 3rd, 2010. Faxed applications will not be considered.
- ◆ Make sure that you mention the job title you are applying for in the email subject.
- ◆ Only short listed candidates will be contacted.

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Responsive Governance Project (RGP)

Vacancy Announcement

Counterpart International is looking to hire Yemeni national staff for the following positions:



Founded in 1965, Counterpart International is a diverse, non-profit, international development organization dedicated to helping people in need in the areas of civil society, food security, private enterprise, environmental resource management, humanitarian relief, and healthcare. Counterpart does this by building the capacity of local partner nongovernmental organizations, lenders, businesses, governments and other institutions to solve their own self-defined economic, ecological, political, and social problems in ways that are sustainable, practical, and independent. Counterpart International will be implementing The Yemen Responsive Governance Project (RGP) which is a USAID-funded three year project that works to strengthen government institutions and improve the delivery of public services while encouraging more citizen participation in the political process.

POSITION TITLE: Communications and Outreach Manager

DIVISION: Civil Society

LOCATION: Yemen

EXPECTED START DATE: ASAP

RESPONSIBLE TO: Responsive Governance Program Deputy Chief of Party and/or M & E Director

Duties & Responsibilities:

- Provide technical knowledge about media and media development to RGP staff and relevant RGP NGO partners;
- Propose and oversee administrative and logistical aspects related to media and promotional activities;
- Implement training and technical assistance for relevant media agencies to increase their institutional capacity, policy awareness and service delivery;
- Develop publications and tools that promote best-practices for media organizations in Yemen;
- Work with the M&E Director to develop media-specific project monitoring & evaluation, reporting and communication;
- Develop strong organizational relationships and partnerships with local and national media professionals;
- Assist in the preparation of project reports as required;
- Contribute to the development of the Media Strategy by carrying out the research, compiling and analyzing relevant data;
- Provide technical assistance on the production of materials and oversee the qualitative aspect of

production such as quality control of translations;

- Monitor all media and public outreach activities for the RGP and report to the Deputy Chief of Party;
- Ensure that all materials are delivered to the target recipients in a timely manner;
- Maintain good relations with the different Government bodies, chiefs of tribes, local councils and other community leaders.
- Contribute to the overall RGP planning, development and work plan drafting;
- As requested, assist in facilitating and/or participating fully in meetings and working groups;
- Keep informed on civil society issues and developments in Yemen;
- Work with other RGP teams to develop outreach sub-grants.
- Manage the outreach sub-grants for local CSO in collaboration with the grants manager and the DCoP - Operations.
- Perform other tasks as assigned by the RGP DCOP.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- BA in Social Science, Political Science, Public Policy, Communications/Journalism or any related field;
- Minimum of 3-5 years experience with development programs working with CSOs, media, government, and private-sector institutions;
- Minimum of 2 years experience working in Yemen with an understanding of the current capacity of Yemen media agencies;
- Technical expertise in the areas of capacity building and policy formulation with a focus on public policy and media;
- Excellent report writing ability.

***All applicants must demonstrate the following specified skills and abilities:**

- Excellent spoken and written English and Arabic;
- Willingness to perform other duties and work irregular hours;
- Demonstrated competency with computer software especially Microsoft Office;
- Excellent communication and organizational skills;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including patience, initiative, diplomacy, willingness to listen and respect for colleagues;
- Must be capable of working individually and with a team;
- Willingness to enhance knowledge through training and personal initiative;
- Strong time management skills;
- Willingness to be flexible in responding to organizational needs.

POSITION TITLE: Grants and Contracts Manager

DIVISION: Civil Society

LOCATION: Yemen

EXPECTED START DATE: ASAP

REPORTS TO: The Deputy Chief of Party – Operations

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Through close collaboration with the Deputy Chief of Party – Operations and other program teams, the Grants and Contracts Manager will:
- Create and recommend administrative and contract and grant procedures to the Deputy Chief of Party –

Operations and implement policies as approved.

- Ensure compliance with applicable Yemeni/ USAID laws and regulations governing grant and contractual activities
- Manage the reporting, accountability and internal controls for all grants and contracts
- Prepare and submit reports
- Oversee and participate in grant-monitoring activities
- Negotiate contracts and agreements with both international and local partners
- Assist and advise the DCoP-Operations and/or program staff in preparing grants and contracts for signatures

Qualifications:

- Masters degree in relevant field such as accounting, economics, business administration or other related field.
- 5+ years working with grants and contracts including at least 2 years working on US Government programs, preferably in the Middle East
- Experience with USAID funded programs and demonstrated knowledge of USG grants rules and regulations.
- Experience working with civil society, governance, transparency and advocacy programs desirable
- Excellent communication, problem-solving, teamwork and leadership skills
- Fluency in English and Arabic is REQUIRED
- Solid computer skills in MS Word, Excel and other related software
- Ability to work both independently and as an effective team member in a culturally sensitive environment.

“Counterpart International strongly believes in equal opportunity for all, without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, sex, veteran status, age, marital status, disability or any other protected personal characteristic.”

TO APPLY: Individuals interested in working with Counterpart International on one of these projects, should send their resumes and salary requirements to RGP@counterpart.org. Deadline for the application is September 24, 2010.

Words of Wisdom



In the final analysis, it is in the hands of the people in charge of this country to make our transformation towards democracy real and meaningful. It would be unfortunate if the change in Yemen remains merely a show or something superficial. Our politicians need to believe in preparing for the 21st century. To do that, they have to internalize some new values.

Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf,
(1951 - 1999)
Founder of Yemen Times

The Mideast's quiet peacemaker

By: Rannie Amiri
Counterpunch

There are few Arab governments that would accord Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a warm welcome. One has been Syria, the other Iraq. A kindly reception was conferred only by certain parties in Baghdad though, and the same is likely to hold true when he visits Lebanon later this month. That made the Iranian leader's Sunday trip to Qatar—a rare Sunni Arab ally—all the more telling. It was Ahmadinejad's sixth visit to the Persian Gulf state in five years, but it spoke less of him than the quiet, effective diplomacy for which his host, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, is renowned.

In a climate of heightened rhetoric in the Persian Gulf over Iran's nuclear ambitions and attendant fears of perceived expanding spheres of influence, the cool, even-handed approach adopted by Sheikh Hamad has not only been the exception, but emblematic of the way the emir has settled seemingly intractable regional disputes, often ones with sectarian overtones.

Qatar's friendly relations with Tehran are in stark contrast to those of the usual Middle East heavyweights—Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. On Ahmadinejad's latest visit, a defense cooperation agreement was inked between the two nations. The emir also officially backed last May's nuclear fuel-swap deal arranged by Turkey and Brazil and supports Iran's development of a peaceful nuclear energy program.

Successful mediation of conflicts by the emir, however, usually takes place far from the Gulf.

His efforts famously helped rescue Lebanon from the brink of civil war in 2008. At the time, Lebanon was in the midst of a tense 18-month political standoff, including the last six without a seated president.

Events came to a head in May of that year when Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's cabinet declared Hezbollah's telecommunications network illegal and attempted to have it dismantled (the same network that remained impenetrable to Israeli intelligence during the July 2006 war and was instrumen-

tal in Lebanon's defense).

After the cabinet decision, street battles broke out in Beirut and other parts of the county between supporters of the opposition March 8 Coalition (Hezbollah and Amal) and the ruling March 14 Coalition. At one point, Hezbollah briefly took control of West Beirut before returning authority to the Lebanese Army. More than 100 lives were lost in the clashes.

Under the aegis of the Arab League, Sheikh Hamad acted as intermediary between the rival coalitions, first in Beirut and thereafter at a National Dialogue Conference in Doha. The outcome was the signing of the Doha Accord on May 21. It led to the restoration of the prime minister's cabinet, formation of a national unity government, and the election of Gen. Michel Suleiman as president. Civil war had been averted.

With upcoming indictments by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon expected to finger Hezbollah elements in the February 2005 assassination of the late Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, concerns that violence could again erupt along sectarian lines prompted Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to pay a high-profile, joint visit to Beirut in late July.

Quietly slipping behind the scenes to again help defuse tensions was the Qatari emir. He even took time off from diplomacy in Beirut to go where the other two leaders dared not venture: southern Lebanon. Sheikh Hamad, a Sunni monarch of an oil-rich Persian Gulf nation, toured villages and towns in the war-ravaged Shia heartland. It was the first time a visiting Arab head-of-state had gone to the area.

The towns' residents, who witnessed most Arab rulers give tacit approval to the 2006 Israeli assault in the hopes that Hezbollah would be destroyed, carried signs reading "Thank you Qatar," waved the country's flag and displayed pictures of the emir.

Millions in aid have been spent by Qatar to help finance the reconstruction of four towns in southern Lebanon destroyed by Israeli shelling during the war. One was Bint Jbeil, a Hezbollah stronghold and among the hardest towns hit. While there, Sheikh Hamad inaugurated a hospital,

school, mosque and church.

Another conflict benefitting from his intervention has been the devastating six-year war between Zaidi Shia rebels, known as "Houthis," in northern Yemen's Sa'ada province and the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Zaidis assert they are fighting to end the socioeconomic marginalization and religious discrimination of their community while Saleh maintains their real intent is to restore the former Zaidi caliphate that existed in Yemen prior to the 1962 revolution.

The war has taken an exceptionally heavy toll on Sa'ada's poverty-stricken civilian population; hundreds of thousands displaced, overstretched refugee camps and growing child malnutrition all pointed to a full-blown humanitarian disaster (not helped, of course, by Saudi Arabia's reckless bombing campaign in November 2009 under the broad and specious pretext of stemming Iranian influence in northern Yemen).

A ceasefire deal negotiated by Doha in early 2008 fell apart by August 2009 after the government accused the Houthis of failing to abide by its terms. A sixth round of fighting ensued until yet another deal was struck in February 2010. The precarious truce nonetheless suffered from mutual recriminations of its violation, prompting Sheikh Hamad to fly to Sana'a in mid-July. Talks resumed based on the original peace treaty brokered by Qatar as a result.

The Emir of Qatar has proven his ability to successfully tackle difficult situations and reconcile conflicts that fellow Arab leaders not only failed to address, but usually exacerbated. His amicable relations with Iran, his good standing with fellow Sunnis and the trust he has earned among Shia make him the Middle East's ideal arbiter in mediating regional disputes, particularly those that require bridging political differences between the sects.

There are two Arab countries facing these issues now in desperate need of his diplomatic skills. Bahrain and Iraq eagerly await Sheikh Hamad's arrival.

Rannie Amiri is an independent Middle East commentator. He may be reached at: rhamiri[at]yahoo[dot]com.

COMMON SENSE

Who are the real enemies of the nation?

“Our Arab leaders have really fallen off their rockers!” said Mona, as she helped her son pack his school gear for the first day of school.

“How dare you call them leaders? They can't lead a pack of mules, let alone a nation of incalculable resources,” quipped Mahmud as he gathered his briefcase off to work.

Mona, broke in again: “That is really giving those leaders more than they are worth! Dad look at the mess they have made of this nation.” She always called her husband by what the kids often call him.

The mother then became more worried about getting the kids to school in due time for the morning line up than about the Arab political scene: “Look at the time, kids, you are getting late for school. How can you expect to take over the leadership of the Arab World without a solid education to bank on?”

“Mom!” Mahmud again broke the conversation, calling her what the kids called her: “Do not worry about that becoming an obstacle to political ascent. Most of the Arab leaders have trouble reading and writing, let alone understanding economic geography. Just listen to some of them try to make a speech. They are probably the laughing stock of international political forums as they stutter mixing up the past tense with the present and hardly realizing that the future for their nation simply spells: GLOOM!”

Mahmud tried to speed up having his breakfast, as he heard the sound of his car warming up outside: “Mona, what is making you so raunchy against our great lineup of Arab leaders. I was worried that the kids could pick up on our talk and echo what they heard in public. With our leaders worried more about remaining in power than looking out for the interest of the nation, their security apparatus might pick some unfavorable vibes from our kids. That could make their parents vulnerable to becoming candidates for unhealthy interrogations.”

That in itself is enough to raise the anger of any Arab citizen as all of the Arab people become the victims of political terror that makes the “terror” of Osama Bin Laden seem like child play!” said Mona.

Mahmud began to sense the bells of danger ringing in the horizon: “Be careful about statements like that! You know our leaders are making fortunes on declaring wars on the latter, although half of them haven't the faintest idea who Osama is working for? For them, Osama is the best news they have heard. With the West being jittery about the name of Osama, all of a sudden our leaders have become anti Osama freaks, just waiting for the next appearance of Aiman Al-Zawhiri, so they can scream that they are partners in the so called 'War on Terror'. For God's sake, these leaders have come to personify real terror in all its manifestations. You can't speak your mind anywhere without having to worry about the guy or gal next to you being an informer of the state security apparatus. Moreover, even our newspapers have been silenced by a labyrinth of laws and a quagmire of security machines that portray a venue of freedom that only applies to the lynch men of the security organs of Government, who have forgotten that their original mandate is to protect the citizens of the country from hostile assaults and other criminal infractions. So tell me Mona, when does one have time to worry about all the hostile criminal acts being inflicted on our fellow Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. In other words my dear Mona, the Arab leadership is a God send for the Zionist machine of the world, if not its very own creation!”

Mona, said: “Watch out before being accused of making up conspiracy theories, which has become an unending attack vehicle for those who seek to prevent anyone from getting to the truth of things happening in this world!”

Mahmud responded to that with ease: “Conspiracy theory or not, these are all inescapable facts we see on the ground. If you try to write up about the facts on the ground the International Zionist Establishment have people like “Mo” ready with slander and libel and all the concoctions to try to intimidate one to get into a useless tic for tat, to silence you from speaking about the horrors of the Zionist machine in the Holy Land and the horrors of the bogus “democracy” we enjoy in the Middle East”.

Mona continued to straighten her husband out: “Well Dad, you can be sure that the IZE has enough money to waste on silly tools like “Mo” and bizarre assassinations that run up into the millions, such as the Mossad hit earlier this year on a Hamas mid level leader in Dubai, who found Iran to be more worthwhile than most of the Arab leaders who have fallen into the traitor category as far as the national Arab interests are concerned, with or without Osama, showing them the way.”.

Hassan Al-Haifi has been a Yemeni political economist and journalist for more than 20 years. His blog may be read at: <http://com-senfromyem.blogspot.com>



By: Hassan Al-Haifi



OUR OPINION

Impressed by a brothel madam

Recently I came across a story that shook my confidence in knowing right from wrong. A friend from Pakistan who works as a volunteer doctor treating sex workers in Lahore told me this story which made me wonder.

Needless to say, Pakistan is one of the poorest and most complicated countries in the world. Many women end up working as sex workers just to earn a living. It was surprising to learn that, although Pakistan is a conservative Islamic country, brothels are run publicly under the government's nose provided the madams running the places are regular with their monthly fees. The case is somewhat similar in Yemen, but probably not as obvious.

My friend deals directly with brothels and has created a relationship with the madams to the extent that she carries out regular free checkups and awareness sessions for sex workers on HIV/AIDs and sexually transmitted diseases.

She hears horrifying stories from the women both about their lives before taking up this profession and their current lives. The women are always the victims of violence or abuse, whether by the male members of their families who drove them away, the madam's running the brothels, or the clients who come with all sorts of whims, complexes and diseases.

But one story was specifically interesting, about a certain madam who runs a brothel somewhat like a charity! Sex workers fight to become “enrolled” in her house and she always tries to convince the girls not to indulge on this path if they have alternatives. The traditional story is that madams mislead innocent girls, and trick them into becoming sex workers, but this madam tries to push the girls into other alternatives.

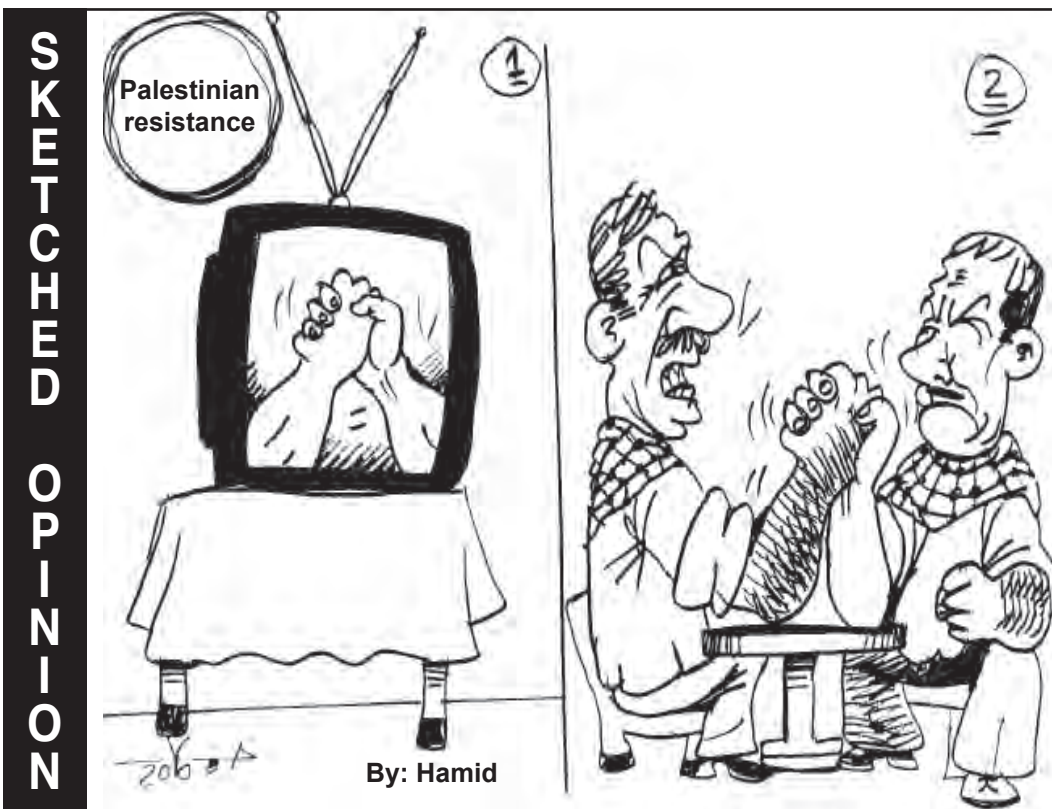
Moreover, this madam treats the girls with respect and gives them freedom. Unlike regular brothels where the girls are locked up and under guard, her girls are free to go whenever they want.

She also provides them with regular checkups and gives them days to rest if they “don't feel like working.” The most interesting fact is that the madam provides them with training courses where they can learn other income generating skills and encourages the girls to move on with their lives through earning money by more respectable means.

One last thing that really impressed me is that this madam encourages the girls to take regular clients. This means that her sex workers tend towards going with one or a few men, more like a mistress, rather than the usual case where a sex worker must go with every man who can pay. My friend told me that the madam teaches her girls to provide more than just sex to their clients, to listen to them and give them emotional comfort. This has had some positive results, and to my surprise some clients end up actually marrying their ‘mistresses’, and take them away from the brothel to a more respectable life.

This story confused my sense of right and wrong. Was this brothel madam someone I respected or was dismayed at? By running a house for sex, is she a good person or a bad person? Is there an absolute right and wrong? How do we judge?

Nadia Al-Sakkaf



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Human rights are key to the MDGs

By: Salil Shetty

Twelve-year-old Fauzia Al-'Amudi, married at the age of 11 to a 24-year-old man, was in labour for almost two days, in September 2009, before she was able to reach the nearest hospital, 100km away. With few affordable transport options available to a girl from a poor rural family, it was a long and painful journey.

Although she finally made it to the hospital, Fauzia Al-'Amudi died while giving birth.

Sadly, Fauzia Al-'Amudi's story is all too familiar in Yemen, a country with significantly higher maternal mortality rates than in most other countries in the region and in which women and girls face severe gender discrimination.

Continuing to confront threats from Al-Qaeda, Zaidi Shi'a rebels in the north, and address growing demands for secession from Southern Movement activists in the south, the country's health care system struggles to meet even the most basic needs. Women are hardest hit. They face discrimination, violence and a lack of education and support that directly affects one of the most fundamental of all human rights: the right to health.

Like the other members of the United Nations, the Yemen government committed to improving maternal health as one of its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. The MDGs represent an unprecedented promise to address global poverty, adopting eight targets addressing a range of issues from extreme poverty and health to education and living standards to be met by 2015.

But, a decade on, the fate of the MDGs is in doubt. The UN has issued a clear warning that many of the MDGs will not be met in time unless efforts are radically ramped up. Even by the most conservative estimates, more than a billion people are being left behind.

Amnesty International's work over the years has shown how discrimination and exclusion can often cause or exacerbate many of the problems the MDGs seek to address. In rich countries as well as developing ones, vulnerable people on the fringes of society are frequently subjected to violations of their right to adequate housing, health, water, sanitation, and education, among others. They are often left out of consultations about things that will affect them, or ignored when they try to make their voices heard. As Amnesty has also shown, equality and inclusion are essential for making things better.



Salil Shetty is Secretary General of Amnesty International

Ten years on, it is worthwhile to reflect upon where we are and where we need to go to meet the MDGs. The architects of the MDGs established the original targets as a starting point for progress. They always intended that states should set their own individual targets, adapted to their national contexts but within the MDG framework. This was left for states to do so voluntarily. Unfortunately, most countries have chosen not to act.

Some countries have adopted targets above the MDG level. For example, Latin American and the Caribbean countries have expanded their commitments on education to include secondary education. In Africa and South Asia, Kenya, South Africa and Sri Lanka adopted targets stronger than the MDGs for access to water and sanitation. Peru has taken steps towards addressing health barriers for poorer women and Nepal has explored improving maternal health care.

These countries have shown that it is possible to adapt the MDGs to address some of their most pressing needs and to bolster the rights of some of their most vulnerable people. The rest of the world should be working to do the same.

We have an opportunity to ensure that the political momentum around the MDGs can be used as a catalyst to bring about the far deeper and longer-term change that is necessary for people living in poverty.

But this can only be achieved if world leaders make a commitment at this month's MDG Summit to uphold the human rights of those who need the greatest support. Discrimination against women and exclusion of the marginal-

ized must be addressed in all MDG efforts, if they are to be effective.

To achieve this, all governments should make an honest assessment of their progress on the MDGs. They should work to end discrimination and promote equality and participation, ensuring that progress towards the MDGs is inclusive, aimed at ending discrimination, guaranteeing gender equality and prioritizing the most disadvantaged groups.

Finally, they should remember that the Millennium Declaration – from which the MDGs are drawn – promised to strive for the protection and promotion of all human rights, civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights, for all.

As the members of the United Nations gather this month to reflect upon the progress made on the MDGs, little has changed for the people of Yemen.

Yemen continues to work with international aid agencies to enable the provision of free healthcare for pregnant women, but the problem of accessing adequate healthcare for women in remote rural areas remains acute. For many, there is still no antenatal or emergency obstetrics care, the clinic is still too far away and lacking basic essentials. Exacerbating this situation, women and girls are denied equality with men under the law and in practice. This discrimination falls most heavily on rural women and girls. For the women of the village there is still little help, and little hope that things will improve any time soon. It is up to us to help change that.

Salil Shetty is Secretary General of Amnesty International

Veiled women bemoan persecution in Tunisia

A human rights group calls on government to allow women to dress as they like

David E. Miller
The Media Line

As the French Senate prepares to outlaw on Tuesday the wearing of the face-covering veil or Niqab in public, a Tunisian human rights group is reporting continued harassment of veiled women and bearded men by the Tunisian government.

According to the Committee for Defense of Veiled Women in Tunisia, in late August the Tunisian Political Police pressured the owner of a shoe factory in the coastal city of Nabeul to dismiss his veiled workers.

The report added that on September 3, 2010 uniformed police patrolled the weekly market of Nabeul, forcing women to sign statements relinquishing their veils and forcing men to shave their beards. The report claimed that this practice has become commonplace in the weekly market.

The legal basis for the police crackdown on veiled women is decree 108, a non-official law issued by President Habib Bourguiba in 1981. The decree banned the wearing of the Islamic headscarf or Hijab in public institutions, including universities and government

buildings.

"I personally don't recognize this decree as a law," Henda Harouni, a Tunisian human rights activist told The Media Line. "Allah tells us to cover ourselves. If they [the government] ask us not to cover, I don't have to comply."

Harouni said that government habitually argues that the Hijab is not a Tunisian garment but rather a foreign introduction, whereas the traditionally Tunisian Foulard, which reveals more hair, is socially acceptable.

"This is not a valid argument," Harouni says. "Why not ban the American blue jeans for the same reason?"

Harouni recounted the story of her teenage neighbor who she noticed unveiled in the market one day.

"My neighbor told me that she was walking next to a police station when two plain-clothes policemen asked her for her identity card," Harouni said. "They took her into the station, removed her headscarf, and made her sign a statement giving it up. The document she signed said that if she was caught wearing the veil again she would be punished."

Harouni says that since the incident her neighbor has not worn her veil, and is wary to discuss the matter openly.

Rasha Moumneh a Middle East researcher for Human Rights Watch said that Tunisian women were regularly harassed by police for wearing the veil.

"This practice is tied to the govern-

ment's political stance vis-à-vis Islamist political parties, like Al-Nahda," she told The Media Line. "Al-Nahda was very powerful in Tunisia in a certain point in time."

Al-Nahda, also known as the Renaissance Party, shares the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and is outlawed in Tunisia.

"The government has been trying to keep the Islamists in their 'proper place' and not let them raise their heads," Moumneh said. "In trying to maintain Tunisia's image as modern and progressive it has crushed the opposition."

Henda Harouni says that since she decided to wear the veil several years ago she has encountered no trouble with police, but has noticed the tension of veiled women on the streets of Tunis.

"At the beginning of last year you could see policemen paying more attention to veiled women in bus stops," she said. "You could tell that the women were ill at ease, fearing they would be questioned."

Harouni added that over the past decade more and more Tunisian women have decided to veil.

"In the early 1990's you almost didn't see veils on the streets," she said. "Now the media exposes Islam to society through TV programs which deal with religion and Islamic culture from all over the Arab world. Before, there were just the national Tunisian television stations that showed none of that."

What will it take to achieve the Millennium Development Goals?

For those living in poverty, the Millennium Development Goals have never been abstract or aspirational targets. They have offered a pathway to a better life — a life with access to adequate food and income; to basic education and health services; to clean water and sanitation; and to empowerment for women.

Put simply, achieving the MDGs is about a better life for billions of people. The Goals can be achieved, and there are a range of tried and tested policies which, adapted to national contexts, can ensure progress on them.

Drawing on studies from fifty countries to find out what has worked and what are common constraints on progress, UNDP completed an international assessment of where to focus to achieve the MDGs. Eight areas are identified.

First, the importance of country-led development is emphasized.

Development strategies need to be locally-owned and based on broad national consensus. It helps immensely when a country's institutions are responsive and accountable, and have the capacity to implement MDG policies and programmes.

Development partners can help by supporting planning which includes the perspectives of poor and marginalized people; and also by supporting the strengthening of the capacities needed to mobilise resources, make evidence-based policy decisions, and deliver services.

Second, more inclusive economic growth models are needed to drive MDG progress.

The evidence suggests that rapid reductions in poverty and hunger result from economic growth which is job-rich, and which has a specific focus on agriculture and rural development in countries where large numbers of people live on the land. A fair distribution of income, assets, and opportunities also helps.

In the developing world, 2.5 billion people depend on agriculture for their living. Boosting agricultural production can simultaneously reduce poverty and improve food security. To be more productive, farmers need better fertilizers and seeds, extension services, secure land rights, and access to markets.

Ghana offers a good example of what can work in this area. It has managed, through a nation-wide fertilizer subsidy programme, to increase its food production by forty per cent. That contributed to the nine per cent decline in hunger in Ghana between 2003 and 2005.

Boosting farm production also requires improvements in rural infrastructure. As well, the conclusion of the WTO Doha round in a way which works for poor people and countries would help.

Recent decades saw a sharp decline in the share of official development assistance going to the agricultural sector. The G8 agreement at L'Aquila last year to invest in Global Food Security, however, was a positive step away from that trend.

Third, opportunities for women and girls must be improved.

That would be a powerful driver of MDG progress across all the goals. The evidence shows that children born to women with some formal education are more likely to survive to their fifth birthday, receive adequate nutrition, and be immunized and enrolled in school.



In Viet Nam, the children of mothers with primary education have a mortality rate of 27 deaths per thousand live births, while for those whose mothers had no education, the rate is 66 per thousand.

Overall, the empowerment of women and girls must be a top priority. That should include measures which reduce the burden of domestic activities and offer broader economic and political empowerment.

Some countries are tackling the latter issue through the introduction of quotas for women's representation. One remarkable example is Rwanda, which has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in the world. More than fifty per cent of the members of the Chamber of Deputies, 35 per cent of the Senate, and 36 per cent of the Cabinet are women.

Fourth, targeted investments in health and education, in clean water and sanitation, and in the professionals who run these services are essential.

Rapid improvements in both education and health care have occurred where adequate public investment has accompanied the elimination of user fees. Countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Nepal, and Tanzania, for example, all experienced surges in primary school enrolment after the elimination of user fees.

New global partnerships have increased mass immunization, the distribution of bed nets, the availability of antiretroviral drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS, and skilled attendance at birth.

Vaccination against measles, for example, reached 700 million children globally between 2000 and 2008, reducing deaths by 68 per cent over the same period.

We know that such interventions work. Now we need a concerted effort to bring them to scale and ensure that the gains can be sustained, even in times of economic downturn.

Fifth, social protection and job creation need to be scaled up.

Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's Oportunidades cash transfer programmes increased both school enrolment and attendance rates, as well as reducing child labour. The successes in education were achieved with the help of cash incentives for the enrolment of children in school.

Rather than being seen as a drain on a nation's budget, social protection needs to be seen as a critical investment in building resilience to cope with present and future shocks and in maintaining hard won

development gains.

Sixth, access to energy needs to be expanded, as does the potential for low carbon development.

Expanding energy access has a multiplier effect on MDG attainment. It increases productivity; reduces smoke-related deaths; brings lighting to homes, schools and hospitals; and frees women and girls from time-consuming domestic chores like grinding grain.

Expanding access to energy in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal has created income-generating opportunities for women, while also reducing the time they spend on collecting firewood and water and on other domestic chores.

In a carbon-constrained age, growth based on reduced carbon footprints is also vital for all countries. To achieve that, a climate deal which generates significant funding for low-carbon energy and development solutions is essential — and must not be allowed to fall off the international list of priorities.

Seventh, improving domestic resource mobilisation is critical for accelerating MDG progress — including by improving tax collection and broadening tax bases.

Resources also need to be spent well. Countries should routinely evaluate and adjust their budgets to maximize the return on their investment of public monies.

Eighth, the international community does need to deliver on its commitments to provide development assistance, and improve the predictability and effectiveness of its aid.

Well-targeted aid can be a catalyst for meeting the MDGs, and for helping countries build the capacities and programmes they need to attract private investment and climate finance.

The shortfall between the development assistance projected for 2010 and what was promised at the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in 2005 amounts to around 0.05 per cent of the combined 2010 Gross National Income of developed countries. This gap can and should be filled, even in these challenging times. Some countries are living up to their commitments, but others are not.

It is important to celebrate MDG progress to date. Tanzania, for example, has been able to increase its primary school enrolment rate by well over ninety per cent since 1991; South Africa has cut in half the proportion of people without access to drinking water; and poverty rates in Egypt have fallen by half since 1999.

This is not the time to reduce our ambition and throw up our hands in despair at the obstacles to achieving the MDGs. The global recession, the food and fuel crises of recent years, and the challenges of climate change and of natural disasters generally have complicated the road to 2015. But they do not make the MDGs unobtainable, if we collectively determine that we want to achieve them.

Meeting the MDGs does mean a better life for poor and vulnerable people around the globe. The decisions our countries, communities, and organizations make now are critical to realizing the Goals.

Helen Clark is Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the former Prime Minister of New Zealand. This piece first appeared in This is Africa, a publication of the Financial Times Ltd.

Dubai petrol stations running out of gas

Government regulated oil prices are forcing Dubai companies to charge lower fees than they pay to import the gas.

Adam Gonn
The Media Line

Gas retailers in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates are finding it hard to deal with rising prices and government price controls.

Emarat, one of four gas retailers operating in Dubai, have run out of gas at some of its stations as the company struggles to meet its financial engagements, the Dubai-based newspaper Gulf News is reporting.

The price of gas is regulated by the UAE government, which despite a 26 percent price increase this year alone, has forced the company to sell gas at far lower cost than what Emarat must pay to import oil. Dubai does not have any oil refineries, unlike neighboring Abu Dha-

bi that has two refineries and can control all aspects of production.

In addition to Emarat, Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. (Adnoc), Enoc and Eppco also operate in Dubai. All of these companies must sell gas at approximately \$1.80 per gallon.

The government of the United Arab Emirates offers a \$0.33 per gallon subsidy on gas sales in the country, amounting to hundreds of millions dollars every year; however, in an effort to cut costs it decided earlier this year to scale back on such subsidies.

"It certainly is a problem across the Gulf," Caroline Bain, senior commodities editor with the Economist Intelligence Unit told The Media Line. "It's hard for retail companies to make a profit."

Dr. Manouchehr Takin, a petroleum analyst with the Centre for Global Energy Studies in London agreed with Bain.

"I haven't heard about this case but it's common in all countries where there is gas production and the government is trying to control the prices," Takin told

The Media Line.

While the United Arab Emirates is the seventh largest oil producer in the world and is estimated to have the world's fourth largest oil reserves, the oil is not spread equally across the seven kingdoms that make up the country.

When the United Arab Emirates was formed as independent country in 1971 the Al-Nahyan tribe, in what today is Abu Dhabi, being the largest tribe, was given that biggest cut when the internal borders were drawn. This has meant that the Al-Nahyans now control most of the country's oil reserves.

The relative lack of oil in Dubai is often regarded as one possible explanation for why the country started to diversify its economy away from oil much earlier than surrounding countries.

One example of this forward thinking was the establishment of national airline Emirates Airlines in 1985, which helped to market the city as a tourist and logistics hub. Abu Dhabi followed suit in 2003, when it established national airline Etihad Airways.

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JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Oxfam, an international NGO working with others to find lasting solutions to poverty and suffering, has been working in Yemen since 1983. Oxfam announces the following vacancies for its programme:

Livelihood / Food Security Programme Officer – Based in Sayoun

Starting gross salary per annum pro rata: \$20,274 USD
Contract Duration: 7 months

The role

In this key role you will have proven experience in livelihoods / food security programmes and proven understanding of disaster risk reduction (DRR). You will need to demonstrate strong project and people management skills, and will be able to network and link widely with CSOs and government bodies working on livelihoods/food security resilience. You will be capable of managing all elements of the project, from planning, monitoring, evaluation, including learning. You will oversee budget preparation and project monitoring, and will assist in fundraising and proposal writing for new initiatives.

What we're looking for

We are looking for someone with at least 4 years of demonstrable progressive experience in livelihoods / food security. You will be able to demonstrate outstanding analysis skills and will show excellent organisational skills. You will be able to translate strategies into actions that make a difference on the ground. Equally important will be your creative approach to problem solving and your influential communication skills in both Arabic and English, and your ability to gain the confidence, trust, and respect of everyone around you.

Livelihood / Food Security Project Officer – Based in Sayoun

Starting gross salary per annum pro rata: \$16,116 USD
Contract Duration: 7 months

The role

You will have a proven track record of contributing to overall project management including monitoring and evaluation. You will be able to provide intensive needs-based technical support to project partners, as well as an ability to monitor project activities on livelihood /food security, both technically and financially. You will undertake project budget preparation and monitoring, and will assist in fundraising and proposal writing for new initiatives.

What we're looking for

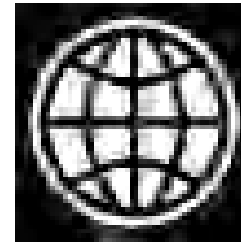
We are looking for someone with at least 2 years of experience working in livelihoods / food security programmes and proven understanding of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and local socio-economic development issues, institutions and communities. You will show sensitivity to gender and equity issues. The ideal candidate will have demonstrated communication skills and the ability to work well with others and as part of a team. You will have excellent oral and written communication skills in both English and Arabic, and will possess good computer skills.

To apply

If you believe that you have the qualifications and skills to excel in either of these positions, please send a copy of your CV and a cover letter, clearly stating the job you are applying for, to yemenjobs@oxfam.org.uk or send a fax to 01 450170.

Closing date for applications is **30th September 2010**

Please apply immediately as we will be interviewing suitable candidates before the closing date



Vacancy Advertisement

The World Bank Office in Sana'a is seeking a local **Short-Term Consultant** to work with its Education Team. Under the supervision of the WB Yemen Education Cluster Leader, the Consultant will provide technical support to the team including undertaking thematic research work, analyzing education data, drafting reports and memos, and supporting visiting missions.

Requirements and selection criteria:

- Advanced degree in Education, Economics, Public Policy or related fields and demonstrated ability to translate analytical/technical skills into operational results.
- A minimum of three (3) years of experience working on public policies, preferably in the education sector,
- Demonstrated knowledge in the use of economic, social and institutional research analytical tools.
- Excellent interpersonal communication skills, demonstrated ability to work cooperatively with counterparts, and ability to liaise tactfully as a member of a multicultural team.
- Excellent oral and writing communication skills in both Arabic and English are essential.

For full consideration, please send your CV with supporting documents before **September 30, 2010** to wbyemen@worldbank.org, clearly marking the position.

Vacancy Announcement

The Government of Yemen, through the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT), is initiating the process of formulating Yemen's first National Export Strategy (NES) in cooperation with the International Trade Center (ITC). Through this process, Yemen aims to produce a coherent, comprehensive, endorsed and prioritized National Export Strategy document complete with plan of action and implementation management framework.

The MoIT is seeking candidates for the following posts:

Strategy Navigator

The Navigator will act as the lead person in the strategy design process, which could take up to one year, and is in charge from the Yemeni side for the delivery of the final product – a relevant, realistic, written export strategy for Yemen.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Liaise with all of the relevant stakeholders, and obtain the engagement of public sector, private sector and civil society representatives;
- Participate in the setting up of the National Strategy Team, in consultation with stakeholders;
- Arrange for the logistical requirements of the National Strategy Team's consultations;
- Coordinate and lead the consultations of the National Strategy Team in a substantive and focused manner;
- Schedule and coordinate the tasks to be carried out by the National Strategy Team;
- Establish and manage the Specialized Teams that will be set up for priority sector and crosssector strategies;
- Manage and monitor the work in progress and ensure that the required outputs are satisfactorily completed on time (the Response Paper, Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Strategies, the NES document and associated Plan of Action, and the Management Framework);
- Take corrective action in cases of non-performance;
- Be responsible for quality control of the resulting NES;
- Create visibility for, and promote the NES, with national stakeholders throughout the process.

Qualifications and Competencies:

- Advanced degree in economics, international trade, business administration, or a related field;
- A minimum of 15 years of professional work experience in fields related to export development, trade policy, economic growth and development within Yemen;
- High levels of motivation and a drive to achieve results;
- The experience and skills to successfully lead and manage the National Strategy Team effectively;
- Facilitation and mediation skills, and comes across as an unbiased yet committed leader and manager;
- Excellent communication skills that motivate and inspire others;
- An analytical mind, and the ability to think critically to bring substance and coherence to the NES;
- The ability to listen to others, and to accept their viewpoints;
- The authority and willingness to make final decisions with respect to the focus and content of the strategy.

National Consultant

Duties and Responsibilities:

The National Consultant will work under the guidance of ITC's Export Strategy Section and in direct collaboration with the Navigator appointed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The Consultant's specific responsibilities will be:

- Become fully familiar with ITC's export strategy (ES) design process and methodology.
- Undertake a literature review of national programmes, plans, and policies germane to the domain of the NES for Yemen and prepare short summaries in English/Arabic as required.
- Collect information and transcribe the inputs, and conclusions, resulting from the consultations of stakeholders, including the Core Team, the National Strategy Team (NST), and specialized work groups throughout the ES design and management process.
- Conduct relevant research, based on ITC's methodology and provide inputs to the NST's consultations and the National Export Strategy document.

- Under the guidance of the Navigator, facilitate team consultation at specific points during the NES design exercise.
- Assist in the drafting of the Response Paper; sectoral, cross-sectoral, and national export strategy documents, the associated plans of action and implementation management framework.
- Ensure consistency and quality control, of all documents for review and the endorsement of NST, ITC's technical team, and other stakeholders such as donors and policy-makers.
- Translate relevant documents from Arabic to English and vice versa.
- Maintain regular contact with ITC's ES Section and submit brief monthly status reports highlighting progress made and challenges encountered.

Qualifications and Competencies:

The Consultant will:

- Have extensive, first-hand knowledge in trade- and export-related issues in Yemen.
- Have a post-graduate degree in a relevant discipline (economics, international trade and/or business administration).
- Have proven working experience with developing countries in the area of export development, economic development, commerce, or other related fields;
- Be familiar with Yemen's institutions and their activities;
- Have excellent communication skills and a good drafting ability, as well as the ability to present and explain technical issues at a non-technical level;
- Have good interpersonal skills and the ability to interact with senior representatives of both government and the private sector.

How To Apply:

Interested candidates who meet the above qualifications should send their CVs and Cover Letters to this email: focalpointif@gmail.com

Deadline for applications is 27th September 2010.

Only short listed candidates will be contacted for an interview.

Yemen's Flora

Pulicaria: Yemeni women's favorite flowering plant

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Scientifically known as pulicaria arabica, it is probably one of the very few plants around the world that is used in weddings and funerals, in domestic decoration and in both food and medical recipes. Known as 'khawa'a', Yemeni women usually tuck it with its yellow flowers under their ears or sometimes in the chest under the clothes to leave a fragrance on the skin.

It is usually planted in house yards or even on windowsills and rooftops as it does not require much space or care. Khawa'a usually grows in the cold areas of Lahj, Taiz and Hodeida governorates. The best type comes from Lahj because of its strong aroma. It is planted during spring time in the backyard or inside the house in pots.

The fascinating fact is that this plant's fragrance is stronger in the stems than in its leaves or flowers.

"We use it whenever anyone has a gas problem, it also removes stomach ache and as a urine inductive," said um Hisham, a mother of seven from Taiz who plants pulicaria on her kitchen windowsill.

According to traditional local medicine, Khawa'a is used as a warm drink to ease tension and to help relax. It is also used to remove excess water from the body as it activates kidney function. It is used to improve digestion and remove gas. When dried the ground leaves are used as an antiseptic for skin wounds. It is also used as a drink to cure parasitic worms and as a relaxant. A



type of pulicaria which is known as pulicaria undulate is also used to ease piles and stop bleeding. Another type known as pulicaria dysenterica is used to treat dysentery as the name suggests.

Pulicaria can grow up to 40 centimeters in height and resists drought and cold conditions. It contains volatile oils hence its aroma.

Khawa'a is used as a decorative piece in some dishes and beverages. It is used with curd and in some tomato sauces such as sahawiq. It is also used to give a special taste to tea just like mint. In Taiz it is also used as a special snack along with cheese, black pepper and basil.

Many Yemeni families use this plant to keep a pleasant fragrance in the home as well as to repel insects, especially mosquitos. Fatima Dawood, a residence in Sana'a who is originally from Lahj, remembers how her mom always used it in the house and on the window edges to keep the mosquitos and flies away. "Mom used to leave it between the bed sheets and clothes so that when we slept our pillows and sheets smelled nice."

For many Yemenis using khawa'a helps cheer them up and spread posi-



tive sentiments. Some families keep it in every room and use the dried plant to remove underarm odor.

Abu Nizar Al-Mikhlafla from the Asaq district in Taiz, remembers how when they were kids they used to climb the mountains after noon prayer in Ramadan in search for this plant and bring it

home to be used in the shafuot dish.

"We, the children of the village, used to compete on who will gather more khawa'a to bring back to our moms. After delivering the goods, we would return to the mountain and rest on the rocks waiting for the sunset and iftar time," he said.

4U

Using pulicaria to treat mouth infections

Boil 5 to 10 pulicaria leaves in a cup of water for 30 minutes to extract all the useful components. Strain and drink 20 ml of this extract, twice daily for a week. The symptoms of infection will be resolved in a week.

A tree root for oral hygiene



A bundle of 100 siwak sticks is usually sold for YR 3,500, but in Ramadan the price shoots up to YR 4,500.

By: Ismail Sheikh Abdoh
For the Yemen Times

Siwak sellers shout-out in the busy streets of Sana'a during Ramadan, and smile at people who walk by. They try to persuade them to buy what look like thick twigs.

The roots of the salvadora persica or arak shrub have been used as a toothbrush and to better oral hygiene for centuries. In his time, Prophet Mohammad is said to have guided his fel-

lows to the shrub to tell them about the cleaning method.

One Ramadan afternoon in Sana'a this year, Ghamdhan Al-Motawakkel stopped when he saw a young siwak seller shouting out, "Make them clean!"

"I wondered what it was," said Al-Motawakkel. "He reminded me that siwak was good for the gums and oral hygiene."

The need for a siwak stick increases in Ramadan when the mouth's smell changes because of fasting, according

to Al-Motawakkel.

Salvadora persica grows in Yemen, India, Pakistan and some parts of Africa. It is able to tolerate a very dry environment with an annual rainfall of less than 200 mm, according to the World Agroforestry Center, and thus grows in very arid environments. Highly salt tolerant, it can grow on coastal regions and inland saline soils.

It is used not only for cleaning one's teeth, but also has medicinal purposes, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. In

Tanzania for example, a salve derived from the roots can be rubbed on the face to cure headaches and other pains. In Yemen however, the root's main use is as a toothbrush.

This Ramadan, Mohammad Abdoh Gazy, Ahmed Harib, and Darweesh Al-Ashqar among others took care of Yemenis' oral hygiene during fasting. Gazy is a distributor of siwak in Sana'a. He buys his natural toothbrushes from Harib or Al-Ashqar, who source siwak from nearby governorates like Hodeida.

"Siwak prices are good, but in Ramadan I cannot get enough of it," said Gazy. "There are different kinds of siwak, but the most preferable kind in Sana'a is the wet and spicy one."

To meet increased demand for this natural tooth brush, Harib goes with a group of his workers every two days to find arak trees where he takes siwak from its roots.

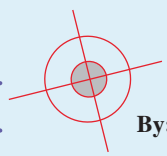
"Every trip is a fun trip," said Harib.

"We find arak trees in the valleys of Hodeida, like the Sheba, Benan, and Moor valleys," said Al-Ashqar.

Siwak is in demand throughout the whole year, but starting from Ramadan until Eid Al-Adha the demand increases, so sellers like Al-Ashqar add 25 percent to the total price.

"We export the semi-spicy siwak to Saudi Arabia," said Harib. "I don't deal with a specific buyer from there. I sell it mostly to individuals who say that they sell to companies there."

This month he sold on average 10 bundles a week to Saudi Arabia. One bundle contains 100 siwak sticks which are of different sizes but around the same length of 50cm.

HEALTH
WATCH

By: Dr. Siva



This weekly column is to disseminate health information to the readers in Yemen and outside. Dr. Siva is currently working at Aden Refinery Company Hospital. Life style diseases and cancer prevention are his special interests. Complementary medicine and naturopathy are his passions.

Eid Mubarak!

Ramadan is about to herald Eid al-Fitr, a three-day religious holiday marking the end of the holy month. Everyone's eagerly waiting for the festival of fast breaking. Aden beaches will be swarming with people and the roads teeming with high speeding cars. As a doctor, I have seen several deaths due to road accidents and drowning during Eid in the casualty department in the recent past. Let's not forget that amidst the enjoyment and fun we should not ignore some important health and safety precautions.



Drive safely

These defensive driving techniques can save your life:

- Sleep well before driving long distances.
- Buckle up before you turn on the ignition.
- Lock all doors especially when you travel with children.
- Stop every two or three hours.
- Focus on driving and not on music, texting or chatting.
- Move your eyes constantly up and down the road and to the sides.
- Look at the rear view mirrors. You should always know what is happening behind your vehicle and to the sides of your car.
- Keep a safe distance between the car in front and the cars on your sides.
- Keep 'space cushions' or places where you can go in order to avoid collisions.
- Be cautious while changing lanes.
- Don't overtake at wrong or risky situations. While overtaking, don't linger next to another vehicle. You should cross to the front as soon as possible.
- Make sure the other driver sees you. Use your headlights and tail lights in all driving situations, to attract the attention of the other driver. Rain and fog, too, are a time for headlights, as well as twilight. Be among the last to turn off lights in the morning and the first to turn them on in the evening—if not driving with lights on all the time.
- If another driver does not seem to have noticed you, and it looks as if he might hit you, blinking the headlights may help avoid an accident.
- Don't stop in freeways.
- Respect the weather.
- Park your car properly and remember to lock up.

Swim safely

Water accidents happen quickly. The most common reason for such mishaps is a lack of safety knowledge.

- Learn to swim.
- Ask about beach and surf conditions before swimming.
- Swim near a person who is good in swimming.
- Never swim alone.
- Don't dive into unknown waters or into shallow breaking waves.
- If you are unable to swim out of a strong current, signal for help.
- Rely on your swimming ability rather than a flotation device.
- Look for, read and obey all beach safety signs and symbols.
- Supervise children closely, even when lifeguards are present.
- If caught in a rip current, swim sideways until free; don't swim against the current's pull.
- Alcohol and swimming don't mix.
- Protect your head, neck, and spine while diving.
- Swim parallel to shore if you wish to swim long distances.
- Scuba dive only if trained and within the limits of your training.
- No glass containers at the beach -- broken glass and bare feet don't mix.
- No beach fires as residue and superheated sand can severely burn bare feet.
- Never turn your back to the ocean while swimming.
- Beware of jelly fish.
- If in doubt, just stay out!

Eat safely

Pack a bag full of goodies for travel. Raw fruits and vegetables, plenty of bottled or boxed juices and nuts are some delicious choices. Some other healthy food choices while traveling are energy bars, nuts and raisins, fruits and peanut butter crackers. Crates of bottled water are a must.

Avoid fast food, bags of chips, and canned drinks. These are full of bad fats and lots of calories. Eating junk food for a couple of days can leave you feeling fatigued and crabby, and give you a stomach ache.

Avoid excess sugar. High carbohydrate meals may improve your mood for a short time, but lots of sugar can also make you sleepy. That's not good if you are the driver.

Carefully choose your restaurant. Eat simple and fresh food, preferably hot. Avoid non vegetarian food as far as possible. Wash your hands well before you sit to eat.

Pack your First Aid kit

Fill your medical kit with a thermometer, prescription medications, sunscreen, pain / fever medications (e.g. ibuprofen), antihistamines (Xyzol or Cetzine), anti-diarrheal drugs (Imodium) antacid tablets (Gelusil), motion sickness medication (Stemetil), antibiotic cream (Fucidin, Mebo), antibacterial wipes and an adhesive plaster and dressings.

When traveling with children, take appropriate medications to handle any situation. If travelling with infants, take extra feeding bottles.

Carry insect repellent and use it frequently. Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when hiking or while visiting countries where malaria is prevalent. Sleep under mosquito netting in malaria-prone areas. Use sunscreen to protect yourself from sunburn. Wear a hat with a wide brim to protect your face and neck.

After you return from a trip and if you fall ill, be sure to tell your doctor that you were on vacation recently.

Hotel safety

Choose your hotel carefully. Stay only in familiar hotels. Keep valuables in the hotel vault. Remember to bolt your room from inside and fasten the door chain before you sleep. Keep the night lamp turned on in the room when you sleep.



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Fine art unites two lovers

By: Ibrahim Aljaadi
For the Yemen times

When Lubna started to draw with colored pencils as a child, some school teachers back in the village where she was brought up in Hadramout told her that "drawing was an evil act." But she persevered. She didn't look back.

In her village, sometimes she couldn't find art equipment, but she didn't give up. She persevered to become a fine artist. She participated in many competitions held at her school and was always awarded first-place.

Lubna Ahmed Saeed is now 20. Her passion for drawing enabled her to obtain a scholarship to the Jamal Qanem Institute for Fine Arts sponsored by GTZ. She dreams of achieving first place in a national competition.

"I advise all talented people in any field to work harder and harder to achieve their goals and don't give up," she told the Yemen Times. "It's important to have self-esteem and when you achieve your goal, don't do it for other people waiting for them to thank you. Just do what it takes and be proud of yourself."

It was at the institute that Lubna first met her future husband. Ahmed Sharaf, 24, is also a fine artist.

Ahmed doesn't remember exactly



Lubna and Ahmed met at the Jamal Qanem Institute for Fine Arts. They are now married. Both share a passion for fine art.

when he started to draw. According to him, he and his siblings spent most of their time drawing when they were young. When his siblings grew up, they didn't care about drawing anymore so Ahmed continued to draw alone.

When Ahmed was a child, he saved up part of his allowance to buy some tools for drawing. He only dreamt of becoming good at drawing.

He studied at the Jamal Qanem Institute for Fine Arts in Aden for three years. There, he started drawing in pastels and oil painting.



Painting by Ahmed Sharaf



Painting by Ahmed Sharaf



Painting by Ahmed Sharaf

Although Ahmed is very busy these days working for a human rights organization, he always tries to find some free time to practice oil painting.

"The Ministry of Education must make classes for drawing at schools. Also, there is no governmental sector to adopt or take care of talented people in general and talented drawers in particular," Ahmed said.

In the end, Ahmed says that it's not easy to become good at drawing, and that it doesn't come overnight but by hard-work and persistence.

"I believe that there are few efforts made by the Ministry of Education for drawing and talented students in this field," said Lubna. "They need to take much more care of them."



Drawing by Lubna Ahmad Saeed



Drawing by Lubna Ahmad Saeed



Drawing by Lubna Ahmad Saeed

The dazzling white mosque of Rada'

By: Mahmoud Assamiee

Visit Rada' in Al-Baida for the first time and you will spot a dazzling white mosque surrounded by a luscious green yard. Topped with eight domes, the mosque was once an important center of Islamic learning.

Located in the heart of the old city of Rada', the Amiriyya school and mosque was commissioned to be built by Sultan Amir Bin Abdul Wahab, who ruled Rada' and some of the southern parts of Yemen 420 years ago. Built in 910 AH, the mosque flourished for 13 years before its founder was killed by the founder of the Zaidi Imami rule in Sana'a in 923 AH.

After its founder's death, the mosque's intricate stucco carvings were covered with thick plaster to prevent it from distracting the mosque's visitors from prayer, but now after restoration work the mosque once again looks like it was intended by the sultan who built it.

Anwar Al-Nusairi, who looks after the building, and Yahya Al-Nusairi, the director of the Antique Office in Al-Baida took the Yemen Times on a tour of the mosque and former religious school.

The mosque's founder Amir Bin Abdul Wahab, was the grandson of the founder of the Tahiri dynasty, Sultan Tahir bin Al-Hussein, that ruled most parts of Yemen from 1453 to 1538 AD, during the time of the Abbasid caliphate.

Rada' was the sultan's favorite city. It was an agricultural area and the main source of the kingdom's wealth, according to Al-Nusairi. The ruler built many schools and mosques in Rada'. He also commissioned other schools in Taiz and Ibb, but they do not compare to the Amiriyya school as the sultan intended to make it unique.

Around a green yard, the ground floor was used as lodging for students who came from remote areas to study the Quran and other sciences, and for scholars. The students used to live in rooms that opened onto a communal area through crude pointed arches. There were also several old bathrooms to allow lodgers to shower.

The first floor was a mosque and the place of teaching. Around the mihrab or prayer niche, verses from the Quran are engraved in semicircles in the gypsum. These inscriptions are decorated with geometric shapes.

Around the top of the walls of the prayer hall appear the complete name and attributions of Sultan Amer bin Abdul Wahab, the founder of the building.

The visitor reads: "The construction of this building of the happy school was



YT photo by Mahmoud Assamiee

by orders from our lord and king, the owner of our decisions, the lamp of the sky, the moral, the caliph of the messenger of the Lords of Worlds, the reformer of life and religion, sultan son of the sultan, the victorious King Amer bin Abdul Wahab bin Da'ood bin Tahir, of the glorious victory. The blessed building was built in Rabi' Al-Awal from the months of 910 AH, peace and prayer be upon its owner."

Behind the prayer hall at the end of a gallery is a fountain, by which the sultan used to sit with religious scholars. Further down the gallery, the sultan used to hold private meetings with the scholars.

After the death of its founder, the school was threatened by the Zaidi rulers in Sana'a who accused the Tahiris of not following the right doctrine in Islam. They were Shiites and the Tahiris were Sunnis. The first imam who wanted to destroy the mosque was Imam Al-Mutahar bin Sharaf Addin who established the Imami rule. He destroyed part of the mosque's exterior after the end of the Tahiri dynasty.

Then Al-Mahdi Mohammad bin Ahmad bin Al-Hasan, the grandson of Al-Mutahar, wanted to destroy the whole building but scholars around him warned him against this act and reminded him that in the Quran it is written that destroying places of worship is a great sin. He nevertheless destroyed most of the building's balconies to honor his oath.

Next, those who attended the mosque decided that the elaborately decorated walls inside the worshipping hall distracted the attention of worshippers who, instead of focusing on prayer, would marvel at the inscriptions. They covered the whole mihrab with plaster and painted over it, most recently in

green.

Fortunately, they did not remove the inscriptions included in the mihrab, but covered them instead. One academic in charge of the building's restoration, told The Guardian in 2006 that the plaster had in fact preserved the artwork underneath. Despite protecting it, it took 14 years for a team to restore the wall to their original form, according to the guardian of the school Anwar Al-Nusairi.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the northern wall was threatening to collapse. German traveler Hermann Burchardt visited the area around that time and photographed and documented the impending danger to the school. Work in reconstructing the wall began a short time afterwards.

Later, the photos helped in the major protection and maintenance of the school that began in 1983. The domes were about to collapse and were badly damaged. The photos helped the team to reconstruct the original shape of the school and domes.

Up roar over maintenance

As the school was exposed to interference from people, especially religious ones who believed that the elaborate decoration or architectural design distracted the focus of worshippers, the practical maintenance of the school started in early 1980s after a directive from the president. The school was going to be a modern mosque on the inside without any adornment, according to Director of Al-Baida Antique Office, Yahya Al-Nusairi.

Since the beginning of maintenance work, the school has no longer been a place of worship. This angered the people of Rada' and they organized demonstrations protesting the main-

tenance and demanding it be stopped. Their anger was doubled because the maintenance work was being carried out by Dutch men and women, and people believed non-Muslims should be prohibited from entering a Muslim place of worship.

The mihrab's original carvings were uncovered. One of the domes had collapsed but was repaired and its old form and inscriptions restored. The southern gate of the school is also being reconstructed. All the maintenance work was carried out by Yemenis supervised by a specialized Dutch team, according to the guides for the Yemen Times.

Today, concrete buildings distort the views of the historical city, disturbing the visitors coming to look at the school. According to the General Director of Al-Baida Antique Office, Yahya Al-Nusairi, there is a plan to protect the old city and the school from modernization.

The plan includes completing maintenance work inside and outside the building, and diverting traffic away from the school to protect it against vibrations, said Al-Nusairi. There are also plans to renovate some of the surrounding modern buildings to reflect the historical style of the school. Al-Nusairi said that the cost of compensating people who own houses around the school has been put at YR 930 million, but that they do not yet have the funds to start negotiations.

Al-Nusairi asked the Yemeni president to take care of tourism as a basic source of national income by giving attention to historical places and monuments. He argued that tourism will not flourish in Yemen if its historical heritage is not protected.

"There will be no tourism if there are no antiques," he said.



YT photo by Mahmoud Assamiee



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A Million Shillings: Escape from Somalia

These intimate photos of refugees in search of a new life are intensely moving

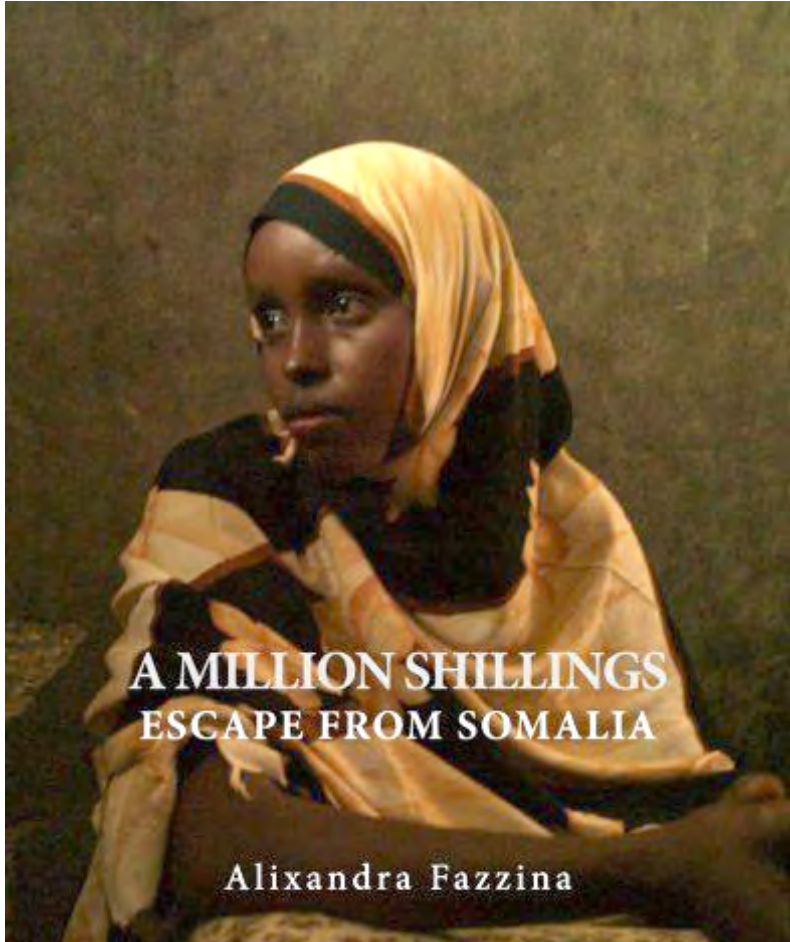
By: Sean O'Hagan
Guardian.co.uk: The Observer

Over the past 10 years, British photojournalist, Alixandra Fazzina has roamed Africa and the Middle East, chronicling the plight of the displaced. In July this year, the UN's High Commission for Refugees gave her the prestigious Nansen Refugee award for her extraordinary images of human suffering and resilience in Kosovo, Angola, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and beyond. (The prize of \$100,000 is donated to a cause of the winner's choice.)

In 2006, Fazzina started photographing refugees and migrants from civil war-torn Somalia, the uprooted people who risk all to cross the Gulf of Aden in search of a better life. The two-year project has now been turned into an epic, often sadly beautiful book, A Million Shillings: Escape From Somalia. Fazzina's original idea was to follow a single group of refugees from Somalia to Yemen, but that became untenable when she realised few people reach the other side. As it was, she faced extraordinary risks and came upon dreadful suffering, at one point leaving her camera on a beach to help drag survivors from a boat overloaded with dead bodies.

In his introduction, António Guterres, the UN high commissioner for refugees, describes the "conspicuous and gratuitous brutality towards the migrants and refugees making the trip". Torture is common and death – by burning, drowning or shooting – a regular occurrence. "A million shillings is not enough to buy decent treatment for the voyagers," he writes, "but it is enough to sustain impunity for the perpetrators of wholly unnecessary brutality."

A Million Shillings, though, is a book



Salima, 19, a Somali refugee in Yemen. Photograph: Alixandra Fazzina

that does not abide by the normal rules of reportage. Its narrative unfolds in an almost novelistic way, as Fazzina's camera tracks a journey that, for the few who survive, often ends in a kind of dismal limbo of uncertainty in a refugee camp in Yemen. Many of Fazzina's images of the everyday life there have an intimate and painterly quality: the muted blues and greens of the clothes, the stoicism of the faces, the abiding sense of futility that attends this kind of survival. Here, the photographs serve the story and you may find yourself lingering, as I did, over her

almost holy portraits of the displaced. Salima (pictured) was 19 when Fazzina met her in Yemen. She had lost her husband and baby son in the war in Mogadishu and was living in a so-called safe house, trying to raise \$25 through begging to pay the traffickers who will drive her across the desert to more uncertainty. At night, she passes out on a bare floor and dreams of home. This is a powerful and moving book that will make you think twice about the meaning of overused, meaningless terms like "refugee" and "asylum seeker".