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Monday, 5 March 2007 • Issue No. 1030 • Price 30 Yemeni Riyals • Founded in 1991 by Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf www.yementimes.com

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Readers' Voice

Last edition's question:
Do you think 2007 going to be a bad year for Yemeni journalists?

This edition's question:
Do you think that Libya and Iran really back Al-Houthi-led rebellion in Sa'ada governorate?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Go to our website at: yementimes.com/#poll and have your voice heard

Parliament prevented from investigating violations

By: Saddam Al-Ashmori

IBB, March 4 – A fact-finding parliamentary committee was unable to reach Al-Ghashen district's Ra'ash village to investigate human rights violations committed against villagers by Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed Mansour and his son.

According to HOOD lawyer Abdulrahman Barman, the local authority in Ibb governorate prevented the committee from entering the area. Further, Sheikh Mansour created military barracks and checkpoints involving more than 200 soldiers and 10 armored vehicles to prevent locals from going in or out of the area.

Barman noted that more than 28 Al-Soufa villagers were arrested as they were returning from the demonstration camp, but they were released after mediation efforts. Regardless, some still are staging a sit-in before the Ibb governorate building.

Parliament agreed to form the fact-finding committee after locals from Ra'ash and Al-Soufa staged a Feb. 12 sit-in before its building, demanding investigation of Sheikh Mansour's violations against them for many years.

The demonstrators raised banners reading: "Al-Gashen's sons seek refuge in Yemen!" "We don't ask for the impossi-

ble!" "We don't need more slavery!" and "Yes to freedom!"

In addition to investigating the sheikh, the locals also requested rescinding his immunity. They previously had asked President Ali Abdullah Saleh to intervene immediately to stop the forced and continued evacuation from their homes.

The villagers also provided media outlets examples of their suffering, mentioning blackmailing and other violations against them.

In its statement, the National Organization for Defending Human Rights and Freedoms, also known as HOOD, called on the speaker of Parliament and its members to discuss the Ra'ash issue and investigate the violations against them by forming a fact-finding committee.

HOOD's statement further noted that such violations run counter to Islamic norms, together with other legal and constitutional principles. The statement also pointed out that Sheikh Mansour's militia attacked villagers who camped for seven days in a deserted area approximately an hour's walk from their village. They sought to make a political statement to protest the sheikh's continual mistreatment and violations against them, implying that they couldn't bear it any longer and asking concerned authorities to curb such violations.

Court tries 36 suspects on terror charges

By: Yasser Al-Mayasi

SANA'A, March 4 — The State Security Specialized Penal Court on Sunday began trying 36 suspects accused of forming a terrorist gang, plotting to disrupt national security and stability and carry out offensives against public institutions between February and October 2006.

The prosecutor charged the terrorist suspects, ranging from No. 1 to 34, with being involved in an armed band plotting vandalism acts with the aim of disturbing security and stability and exposing lives to risk. He added that the terrorists planned to attack foreign guests at the Shahrani and Hadda hotels, located in southwest Sana'a, as well as Yemeni businessmen.

Additionally, the suspects are accused of bombing natural gas installations in Marib and Hadramout governorates using missiles and car bombs, which killed guard Mohammed Saleh Al-Makhzomi and damaged the two oil installations.

In the hearing, Prosecution said the suspects opened fire on and hurled grenades at police to escape arrest. The court confirmed that six fugitives remain. Some of the gang members had been obeying suspect No. 29, Fawaz Al-Rabe'i, who was killed by security authorities in Sana'a.

The court noted that investigation



The suspects accused of forming a terrorist gang, plotting to disrupt national security and stability and carry out offensives against public institutions between February and October 2006.

reports mention that the terrorists had machine-guns, explosives and hand grenades, as well as jihadist handouts on how to use explosives and Al-Qaeda organization slogans.

The suspects denied all charges attributed to them, while three urged the court to refer them to a court-appointed medical examiner after allegedly being beaten and tortured in prison. Other suspects demanded the

court allow them to meet their defense attorneys and appoint advocates for those without.

The court allowed some of the suspects to meet with their attorneys, as well as obtain photocopies of their case files in order to defend themselves. The judge also ordered the suspects referred to the examiner in order to prepare reports for the upcoming hearing.

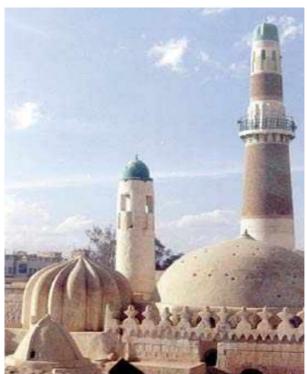
Amid confrontations civilians seek food

By: Mohammed bin Sallam

SA'ADA, March 4 — Sources at Al-Sallam Saudi Hospital in Sa'ada reported that the hospital has received and recorded 104 deaths and 479 injured among military men between Jan. 28 and Feb. 28, while other victims were transferred to hospitals in Sana'a, Al-Jawf, Amran and Hajjah.

Tribal sources also reveal that armed confrontations between the Yemeni government and Al-Houthi loyalists are aflame in many areas of Sa'ada, which continue to be under a complete media blackout.

The same sources also noted that armed groups arrived in the governorate's largest market, Souq Al-Talh, to buy essential foodstuffs and medicine for themselves and their families,



Al-Hadi mosque one of the unique tourist attractions threatened because of the war in Sa'adah. The mosque was established late at the end of the third century of Hejira, when al-Imam al-Hadi saw, according to historians, at one night a light twinkling at that place, in the center of Sa'ada.

who are besieged in mountainous caves and valleys while escaping the government's violence. However, they were unable to buy anything due to high price increases and the presence of soldiers who clashed with them.

Continued on page 2

Dust storm hovers over Sana'a

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, March 4 — A large-scale dust storm coming from the Arabian desert's Al-Rub Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter) reached Yemen a couple of days ago and is still quite visible today on Sana'a's skies according to locals.

The Civil Aviation & Meteorology Authority's Yemen Meteorological Service warned citizens with breathing problems about the current weather, advising them to stay indoors until the storm subsides. Long-distance drivers also should take care on roads, as vision has decreased to less than 500 meters ahead, the authority added.

Abdulqadir Al-Sahli a specialist at the authority explained that the dust storm occurred due to the changing season, often characterized by sustained high winds on the earth's surface, which often are associated with wind storms. He added that dust storms are a natural event in this part of the world.

Although, this storm has been classified by local weather experts as relatively mild, yet it affects people who have asthma or allergies to dust. High change in pressure gradient from the valleys to mountain areas cause the storm to become stronger picking up dirt and small pieces of garbage and plastic bags.

Continued on page 2



Sana'a as it is shrouded by dust: Green belts at the outskirts of cities can help significantly in reducing dust storm impact. Inset: whirls of dust erupt from time to time, adding to the already harsh condition.

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In brief

SANA'A

Yemen holds talks with Arab Fund
March 2 — The Yemeni government and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development are due to hold joint talks on technical and financial topics concerned with implementing the second phase of establishing the New Sana'a International Airport and the second gas power station in Marib governorate. The talks are scheduled to take place in Sana'a during the days to come. Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Abdulkarim Al-Arhabi said the fund played an integral role in strengthening ties between Yemen and Kuwait.

Top students awarded

March 3 — The Iqra Charitable Society awarded on Wednesday as many as 56 top high school graduates, from different Yemeni governorates, who scored over 90 percent in the third secondary grade exams of the educational year 2005 – 2006. The awarding ceremony took place at the Studies and Researches Center. It was attended by MP Najib Ghanim and other education officials.

Children Parliament holds fourth session

March 4 — In cooperation with UNICEF, the Children Parliament is due to hold its fourth session March 12 – 14, according to a statement released by the Democratic School, which is part of the parliament. During its session, the parliament is to question the ministries and local and international organizations concerned with childcare and protection. The session entitled "For child-free jails", is expected to discuss a recent report on the state of Yemen children.

Al-Dhale'

Historic Bridge restored

March 4 — Local authorities in Damt District, Al-Dhale' governorate, took charge of Amer Bin Abdulwahab's historic bridge after it was restored by the Social Fund of Development (SFD), which funded the \$200 thousand worth project. The project implementation was supervised by specialized engineers from the Fund and the General Antiquities Authority. The restoration phase, which lasted for one year, included reconstructing the damaged part and painting walls of the bridge.

ABYAN

Abyan teachers get hardship allowance

March 4 — The Abyan Education Office approved the final payrolls in light of which it will pay hardship allowances to teachers working in the governorate's schools. The Education Office General Manager Ali Mohammed Fadhl said that his office approved the payrolls regarding the hardship allowances accrued to education workers from September 2006 to February 2007. According to Fadhl, workers who will get hardship allowances number 8710 out of a total number of 9882 after dropping the names of those who don't work, the retired and the dead from the registers.

HODEIDA

Citizen arrested on charge of links with Al-Houthi

March 4 — Security authorities in Al-Dhoha district, Hodeida governorate, arrested a citizen, who was charged with recruiting many youths belonging to Aal Al-Beit (the profits descendants) to support Al-Houthi-led rebellion. According to local sources, a police vehicle drove to the Nabi Jauf's house and arrested the citizen, who the authorities say has attended courses at a Sa'ada religious center. The man was observed to have been exercising odd rituals in the district in an attempt to influence youths with his thoughts

IBB

MP's son denies abduction rumours

March 4 — The MP Mohammed Bin Mohammed Mansour, the son of Mohammed Mansour Sheikh of Al-Ja'ashen District, denied news saying that his father abducted up to 22 citizens from Al-Sifa area after being summoned by his guards. The MP said such stories are unauthentic and baseless. This comes after one of the displaced locals, who returned to their homes, said that Mansour's guards opened fire on the citizens to intimidate them and force them from their homes. The Sheikh's guards have set up checkpoints on the road connecting Al-Sifa district with Ibb city.

Malaysian PM leaves Yemen

SANA'A, March 3 — Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, left Yemen after a three-day visit in which he met with various Yemeni officials.

He discussed with the Yemeni officials ways of enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries, especially in the field of economy and trade.

During his talks with the Yemeni Prime Minister, Abdul-Qader Bajammal, the two sides pledged to further strengthen cooperation between their two countries in various fields.

Abdullah told reporters in a press conference, held Wednesday in Sana'a, that Yemen and Malaysia agreed to create a joint committee to facilitate bilateral trade, and to address trade and investment issues between the two countries.

He said that the committee will monitor the activity of projects pursuant to agreements signed between the private sectors of both countries.

"The committee is to be held at the ministerial level and would recommend to their respective governments measures on expansion and diversification of trade between the two countries," he added.

He said the committee would be chaired by the trade and industry min-



Malaysian PM Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

isters of both countries and would meet regularly, with the first meeting to be held in Malaysia.

The Malaysian PM also attended a business forum for Malaysia and Yemeni businessmen on Wednesday. He said a total of 410 businessmen attended the forum, 62 of whom were Malaysian.

During the forum, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Sal Group of Colleges, Malaysia, and the Sana'a Community College, to exchange expertise in the field of education, training, and stu-

dents.

Abdullah noted that Yemen is Malaysia's fifth largest export market in the West Asian region. "The business communities of both sides should make use of Yemen's strategic location in West Asia," he said, adding that the rate of investment between the two countries clearly needs a boost.

"There is now minimal cross-flow between our countries. At the moment, Yemeni companies in Malaysia have invested in sectors such as audio parts, equipment, commodities, trading, and container warehousing. On our part, Malaysian companies have mostly invested in the mining and quarrying sectors in Yemen," he added.

According to Abdullah, a total of 93 one-to-one business meetings were held with products being promoted, included building materials, food and beverages, timber products and palm oil derivatives, and services including education, highway construction, infrastructure, oil and gas, power transmission, and tourism.

He said that sales worth RM1.6 million of products and services were secured, comprising foods and beverages (RM200,000), building materials (RM190,000), timber products (RM215,000) and an ICT Security System (RM1 million).

Supreme Court to resolve sales tax issue

SANA'A, March 4 — Secretary General of the capital's Commerce Chamber, Mohammed Kawkaban, assured that the trade sector rejects the sales tax law in its current form, and insisted that its application should be delayed until the required amendments are made.

Kawkaban also maintained that the sector will continue its appeal procedures against the illegitimacy of the sales tax. He further indicated that they are satisfied with the Supreme Court's proceeds and the government's readiness to plead for its law after three years of delay.

He further denied that the Commerce Chamber's Union has called for the shutting down of shops or demonstrating, and noted that the congregation of merchants in the court last Tuesday was not planned, and that they afterwards real-

ized the consequences behind the law application.

For his part, Commerce Chamber member Mohammed Salah assured that businessmen are adhering to the Cabinet's resolution concerning the adjournment of the tax law application until the coming year.

The businessmen agreed earlier to pay four percent added tax in Yemen's outlets and to reconsider the law in a way that fits in with society's interests.

Further, the union decided to go on their trail and negotiate with the government, confirming that they would resign unless they reach a solution with the government or win the case.

The Supreme Court held a session chaired by Judge Essam Al-Samawi on Tuesday, Feb. 27, to look into the case

raised by the commerce chambers with regard to the sales tax. Lawyer Abdulkarim Al-Ba'dani, representing the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and Lawyers Hassan Muji and Mohammed Naji Alaw from the chambers, attended the session.

The court heard the pleas of the government and the comments of the defendant, and decided to give the government additional time to submit further appeals during the next session, due to be held on Tuesday, Mar. 6.

The government and opposition together have taken a poor course, together with the commercial side, and this has passively affected commercial activities, causing prices of consumer goods to rise, thus affecting people's incomes and giving rise to complaints among Yemen's poorer classes.

Yemen contributes to Ozone protection

SANA'A, March 4 — Yemen is seeking to help protect the Ozone layer from depletion by boosting agriculture which depends on Methyl Bromide alternatives.

According to the head of the Ozone Unit at the General Authority for Environment Protection, Faisal Nasser, the risks of ultraviolet rays include the increased probability of skin cancer. The possibility of this harm increases with the continuing depletion of the Ozone layer. Scientists believe that when the Ozone layer depletes by one

percent, the potential for contracting skin cancer increases by two percent.

Nasser indicated that chemical materials used by factories, including sponge factories, together with CFCs are considered to be among the primary causes adding to the probable risks.

He further noted that Yemeni investors maintain an appropriate level of environmental awareness and further stated that investors in sponge production have replaced those materials used by others which affect Ozone layer and have done so without any

help from the United Nations Development Program.

Nasser further asserted that it is our duty to praise such people who contribute to the protection of the Ozone layer and environmental health, as they replace harmful materials, whether those used in agriculture or in industry.

Sa'ada governorate ranks first within Yemen for using Methyl Bromide alternatives which help to protect the Ozone layer. This situation was achieved after many farmers received training from the Ozone Unit.

200 teachers protest their unpaid salaries

SAYOUN, March 3 — About two hundred teachers staged a sit-in in front of the Education Office in Seiyun, Hadramout governorate, on Saturday demanding their unpaid salaries which were already five months overdue.

The teachers have been teaching since November 2006 following a presidential decree to employ more teachers in order to cover the shortage of teachers in Hadramout Valley districts.

However, the Ministry of Education has not accepted and registered them as it is unable to contain them, and so they have not been officially recognized as government

employees.

Last week, a group of teachers met the Manager of the Ministry of Public Services in Mukalla to discuss the issue, but he didn't respond to their demands, asking them to go to those who sent them out to schools to give them the money due for their services.

According to the furious teachers, the Ministry of Education Office in Hadramout refused to give them either the money they were owed or to complete the procedure for engaging their services.

The Manager of the Education Office in Seiyun, pledged to give the teachers their pay by last November, but when the teachers went to the

manager, he told them that he had no money.

The teachers have formed a committee and traveled to Sana'a. The committee went to the Ministry of Finance and talked with its officials in order to allocate a budget for the teachers. Their demands have not yet been met.

They said that the strike will continue until the committee returns on Saturday.

The ongoing strike has affected the process of teaching in the district. Some students are not receiving any lessons, as the other teachers who didn't join the strike can't teach all of the classes.

Turkish delegation leaves Sana'a

SANA'A, March 4 — The Turkish delegation left Sana'a on Sunday after a four-day visit to Yemen. A meeting was held with them on Saturday. The meeting was co-chaired by the chief of the Coastguard Authority, Brigadier General Ali Rasa'a and the chief of the foreign relations Section in the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Rajab Gontikan. The two sides signed memos of understanding aimed at strengthening security cooperation between the two countries especially in the fields of training, qualification and coastguarding. The memos focused on developing and extending

the current coordination and cooperation between Yemen and Turkey in the field of combating terrorism and organized crime.

This visit is considered a continuation of a previous visit in 2004 where Yemeni-Turkish security ties were officiated through the signing of agreements regarding security cooperation between the two countries.

As to whether it is a plan for new cooperation in different domains, the deputy of the Turkish embassy in Yemen, Umut Topsoglu said "In this period, we focused on the security coop-

eration between the two countries and mechanisms of reinforcing and extending this cooperation".

The Yemeni Interior Minister Rashad al-Alimi highlighted in the session the development of deep rooted ties between Yemen and Turkey in different domains. "The meeting ended positively in reinforcing the ongoing cooperation between Yemen and Turkey in all security spheres," he said.

The Turkish Interior Minister, Abdulkadir Aksu invited al-Alimi to visit Turkey for further expansion of common cooperation and coordination.

Child killed in tribal fighting

SANA'A, March 4 — Armed clashes between Sheikh Yasser Al-Awadhi tribesmen from Al-Beidha governorate and Al-Musali sheikh from Sanhan, part of Sana'a governorate, took place last Thursday after security was unable to mediate between the two parties. However, confrontations didn't last for long because several dignitaries intervened to resolve the problem. The conflict was because of a large land dispute around 26.4 square kilometers, when an 11 years old child from Al-Awadhi tribe was killed in the armed clashes, the other tribe swore revenge and demanded either the head of the tribe's death, sheikh Taha Al-Musali or the disputed land. As he returned home from school on Sunday, Feb. 19, the boy was killed in front of his family's house by a sheikh from Sanhan and his escorts in a way running counter to all human norms and tribal customs.

Sheikh Al-Musli arrived at a local hospital in Sana'a because of injuries in both arms and one leg and was heavily guarded by security and his bodyguards for fear of revenge. After being guarded for around 7 days he left to his village under sever security measures.

The confrontations occurred at the capital city's southern entrance and both parties used small arms. According to eyewitnesses, security forces didn't interfere in the fighting. The Awadhi tribe gave security one week, starting from Thursday, Feb. 22, to catch those accused of killing him.

A statement issued by Al-Beidha



The deceased child Taha Al-Awadhi

tribes denounced the crime and asked the Interior Ministry to arrest those who committed it and refer them to judiciary within one week; otherwise, Al-Awadhi tribe will deal with the issue and avenge the child's innocent blood.

However a confidential source to Yemen Times told that security has taken most of the influential people of both tribes including the mediators into custody in order to stop the issue from escalating. Security promised to refer the case to court and enforcing the rule of law.

The Yemeni Child Parliament on Sunday denounced the child's murder at the hands of influential individuals, further requesting concerned authorities hold accountable those responsible and refer them to judiciary soon. The parliament also assured that it will stand against all such practices and crimes.

Continued from page 1

Confrontations continue

Locals in areas where battles are ongoing are suffering a lack in necessary foodstuffs due to the government siege.

According to 26September.net, an organ of the Yemeni armed forces, the visits to the market was an attempt by Houthi to escape the government siege around them. The prevention of access to foodstuffs is an attempt to corner them in certain areas and prevent foodstuffs and medicine from getting to them.

Houthi are employing guerrilla war tactics against the Yemeni army in various areas in Sa'ada, Hajjah and Amran, while the army is replying with mortars and air attacks, together with tanks.

An official with the Sa'ada local council denied reports by Tehran Radio and other media outlets mentioning that 416 soldiers were killed and hundreds more injured during the recent confrontations with Al-Houthi loyalists.

Earlier this week, the same source told 26September.net that such reports are baseless and the number is exaggerated, indicating that the dead among security and armed forces are less than the alleged number. The individual further requested media outlets verify any information before publishing it, especially if from unreliable sources.

Future Stream, which is supported by the General People's Congress, organized a symposium last Thursday in Sana'a to discuss the current crisis in Sa'ada. Joint Meeting Parties representatives didn't attend.

At the event, Sana'a University political science professor Mohammed Al-Dhahri noted that the culture that governs the two warring parties is one of revenge between brothers and relatives, while this same culture is more tolerant of foreigners.

Al-Dhahri further pointed out that Yemeni political forces portray themselves as infallible, with the government overstating opposition mistakes and vice versa. "Yemeni culture isn't keeping pace with development, modernization or political stability; rather, it's a culture that pushes the other," he asserted.

According to him, most of the time, Yemenis attempt to resolve their problems by crossing red lines and resorting to violence. He concluded by requesting a deep and thorough study of the Houthi problem to understand the real causes of the crisis.

Tariq Al-Shami, head of the GPC's media department, recounted the Sa'ada events since they first occurred in 2004.

He further noted, "Houthi are receiving foreign support from Iran and this topic was discussed with an Iranian national security official. During the meeting, we raised the matter clearly and their justifications were that the support comes from religious institutions in Iran, but not from the political regime."

Al-Shami added that while Yahya Al-Houthi previously stated that the loyalists are receiving no foreign support, it's clear that Houthi are receiving financial support from Libya.

Adel Shuga' of Future Stream commented, "We still suffer consequences from the 1994 war. It's natural that people turn the

pages of the past and embark on development and create economic and political stability." He further warned that the situation in Yemen may turn into a field for settling regional accounts.

In a letter sent to the Yemen Times, the Iranian Embassy in Sana'a denied Al-Shami's remarks at the symposium. It further denied news reports by Al-Motamar.net, Al-Thawra.net and other web sites, as well as reports by Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper on March 2 concerning the visit of an Iranian national security team to Yemen.

It added, "The embassy considers such allegations irresponsible. This goes against the cooperative spirit between the two countries and the views of both Yemeni and Iranian leaderships."

Ali Larjani, head of the Iranian National Security Council who also is in charge of Iran's nuclear dossier, visited Yemen June 7 and 8, 2006, announcing that his visit aimed to enhance and expand cooperation between the two nations.

In further Houthi news, 26September.net reported that Minister of Justice Adnan Al-Jifri received an official letter from Parliament concerning its resolution to rescind immunity for Member of Parliament Yahya Al-Houthi. The source further assured that the letter was referred to Attorney General Abdullah Al-Uifi to prepare a file demanding his extradition to Yemen by Interpol.

A relative of Yahya Al-Houthi complained to the Yemen Times that security forces broke into Yahya Al-Houthi's house in Sana'a last Wednesday and took his eldest son, 18-year-old Alawi, to an unspecified location and further, that authorities aren't permitting his relatives to visit him. He asked human rights organizations to force the Yemeni government to free the youth because he's underage and did nothing except being the son of an opponent currently outside of Yemen.

Yemeni Socialist Party Secretary-General Yassin Sa'eed Noman pointed out that the Sa'ada issue is an opportunity for the current regime's instability and inability to treat the nation's situation in a right manner.

Addressing Socialist leaderships and staff in Al-Dhale' governorate, Noman noted that the authorities' interpretation of the problem with Houthi — describing them as belonging to the 12th doctrine — is wrong thinking and ignores the nature of problems ensuing from Yemen's political reality.

He asked the authorities to explain why they differ with Houthi and why they are trying to improvise justifications for their failure to treat Yemeni society's dire economic, social and political issues.

Noman also warned of drifting into a sectarian religious conflict, asserting, "They want to lead the Arab mind to issues involving sectarian conflict in order to forget about the other real problems, such as facing poverty, dictatorship and corruption."

He further assured that he refuses dividing Arab and Islamic society on sectarian grounds, maintaining, "This isn't our project because it weakens us and shifts our focus from our true field of struggle to another one serving backward Arab regimes."

Dust storm

Such dust storms can last three to four hours, or up to two to three days, depending on the situation. Dust storms of this type often occur in late winter to early spring when there's an extreme pressure gradient. They often worsen in late morning and are more intense in the late afternoon. If a dust storm lasts more than a day, its intensity tends to weaken throughout the night.

According to U.S. weather specialist Gene Moore, a dust storm essentially is

caused by strong winds traveling over dry, arid land with little vegetation, picking up tiny particles like sand, dust and other debris.

Areas of land become susceptible to erosion by high winds when the ground becomes bare, which can be caused by poor land management either involving agriculture or overgrazing.

Dust and debris carried by the wind form a large cloud or wall of dust that sweeps across the landscape with the wind.

Ahmadinejad and Saudi king reject sectarian strife

By: Souhail Karam

RIYADH (Reuters) — Sunni and Shi'ite heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed on Saturday to fight the spread of sectarian strife that threatens to spill over from their neighbour Iraq, the Saudi foreign minister said.

Saudi King Abdullah held talks with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who was on his first official trip to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi official said earlier the kingdom would seek Iran's help to ease sectarian tensions in Iraq erupting into full-blown civil war.

Killings by Sunni and Shi'ite death squads in Iraq and the political crisis in Lebanon dividing Sunni and Shi'ite parties have led to fears of sectarian conflict in the Middle East. Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran are among the most influential nations of their respective branches of Islam.

"The two parties have agreed to stop any attempt aimed at spreading sectarian strife in the region," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal told reporters.

"The two leaders stressed that the greatest threat against the Muslim nation are attempts to spread strife between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims," the official Saudi agency SPA said.

Ahmadinejad and King Abdullah also voiced support for Iraq's government, its national unity and the "equality of its citizens".

Ahmadinejad voiced support for Saudi efforts to ease tensions in



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (C) arrives at Riyadh airport March 3, 2007. Ahmadinejad arrived in Saudi Arabia on Saturday on his first official trip to the U.S. ally for talks expected to cover the crises in Lebanon and Iraq and Tehran's nuclear programme. REUTERS

Lebanon, and the two leaders called on all parts to cooperate with these efforts, the agency said.

The agency made no reference to Iran's nuclear programme, which Iranian state media had said was expected to be discussed. SPA said Ahmadinejad left Riyadh after the talks.

Saudi Arabia has led a diplomatic drive in recent months to counterbalance what is regarded as Iran's growing influence in Iraq,

Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

While Saudi Arabia is a key U.S. ally in the Middle East, Iran is a fierce opponent of Western influence in the region.

The United States is pushing for the United Nations to impose tougher sanctions on Iran over its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, a process which can make fuel for either atomic bombs or nuclear power plants.

Battle for influence

The West suspects Iran's nuclear energy programme aims to develop weapons, an accusation Tehran denies.

U.S.-allied Arab governments also fear Iran is gaining influence in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Iraq, where Saudi Arabia blames Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias for sectarian killings.

Riyadh wanted to press Iran to exert pressure on Hezbollah, a Shi'ite group backed by Iran and Syria, to put an end to a political standoff in Lebanon, the Saudi official said.

Diplomats said Iran wanted to address these concerns before an Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia later this month.

"Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have taken up the role of an alliance speaking in the name of the Arab world ... So Iran is making sure its views and positions on Arab issues are heard at summits," a Saudi-based Western diplomat said.

Saudi and Iranian officials have met several times in recent weeks to mediate between Lebanon's Hezbollah-led opposition and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's U.S. and Saudi-backed government.

But their talks, as well as Saudi contacts with Washington and Paris and Iranian talks with its closest regional ally, Syria, appear to have made little headway. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria have accepted Iraq's invitation to a regional conference in March on easing tensions in Iraq.

Maliki warns insurgents of wider crackdown

By: Dean Yates and Ahmed Rasheed

BAGHDAD (Reuters) — Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Sunday told insurgents fighting his U.S.-backed government to accept an olive branch or face a security crackdown that will cover "every inch" of Iraq.

The U.S. military said it was preparing to set up a security outpost in the Shi'ite militia stronghold of Sadr City "in the very near future" in what will be a test of Iraqi and U.S. determination to tackle one of the toughest areas of Baghdad.

Maliki also said he might announce a long-awaited cabinet reshuffle within two weeks. He is expected to replace under-performing ministers in a revamp he has promised for months.

Speaking at a conference aimed at speeding up reconciliation among Iraq's warring factions, Maliki said political consensus could be achieved only if Iraq was stable.

Maliki has been pleased with the early results of a U.S.-backed security crackdown in Baghdad called Operation Imposing Law. The offensive has reduced sectarian death squad killings although car bombings are still common.

"We do not need to implement security measures except against those who reject the language of reconciliation

and dialogue, those who insist on restoring the past," Maliki said, in a reference to Sunni Arab insurgents loyal to Saddam Hussein.

"We present in our hand a green olive branch, and in the other hand we present the law ... Operation Imposing Law started in Baghdad, it will cover every inch of Iraq."

Shi'ite officials have said his government could collapse if the crackdown fails to put a brake on sectarian violence that threatens to plunge Iraq into full-scale civil war. U.S. commanders say it will take months to see concrete results.

Taking on militias

Maliki, a Shi'ite, has pledged to tackle Shi'ite militias as vigorously as Sunni insurgents, although some Sunni leaders are sceptical and accuse him of being half-hearted in attempts to placate minority Sunni Arabs who were dominant under Saddam.

The prime minister did not say if insurgents who stopped fighting would be given an amnesty.

An Iraqi police source said security forces were beginning to set up checkpoints around the edge of Sadr City, a stronghold of the Mehdi Army, a militia loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al Sadr who is a key political ally of Maliki.

How the plan is implemented in Sadr



Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki addresses the Iraqi Reconciliation Conference in Baghdad on March 4. REUTERS

City is being closely watched as a test of Maliki's determination to be even-handed.

U.S. military spokesman Captain Curtis Kellogg said a Joint Security Station with Iraqi and U.S. forces would be established in Sadr City soon.

"The plans are in the works to have that in there in the very near future so we have some people working in and out of there," he said when asked about reports of operations in Sadr City on Sunday. A Reuters photographer who lives in the area said he had seen or heard of no unusual military activity.

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Envoys of Ivory Coast foes agree new peace plan

By: Mathieu Bonkoungou

OUAGADOUGOU, March 3 (Reuters)

—Negotiators for Ivory Coast's president and his rebel opponents agreed a new peace plan on Saturday to reunite the divided West African state and hold elections after talks in neighbouring Burkina Faso.

They said President Laurent Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro, leader of the New Forces rebels who seized the northern half of the world's top cocoa grower in a brief 2002-2003 civil war, would sign the deal on Sunday in Burkina's capital Ouagadougou.

"We have initialled it to confirm to our superiors that this text conforms with our discussions," said rebel representative Louis Dacoury-Tabley, who is minister for solidarity and war victims in a transition government created under a U.N.-backed peace plan which has so far failed to reunite the country.

The international community has welcomed the talks, which began on Feb. 5 at Gbagbo's instigation and are perceived as a home-grown effort to restore peace.

Presidential spokesman Desire Tagro, representing Gbagbo at the negotiations, said the deal would be signed in the presence of Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaore who brokered the talks as head of the Economic Community of West African States.

"The discussions involved practical and direct solutions to the problems currently facing Ivory Coast, which must remove the obstacles to resolving essential questions like identification, disarmament and the conduct of fair

elections," Compaore said at a ceremony where Dacoury-Tabley and Tagro initialled the text.

Previous deals

A string of international peace deals, including the U.N.-backed peace plan which foresees long-delayed elections by the end of October, have foundered as government, rebel and opposition sides squabble over how they should be implemented.

The Ivorian press has been rife with speculation that any deal in Ouagadougou would appoint Soro as prime minister, replacing central banker Charles Konan Banny who was named by the U.N.-backed plan to oversee disarmament and hold elections.

Little official information about the content of the negotiations has been made public and there has been no confirmation of how it would address the post of premier.

Soro was expected to meet the heads of the main opposition parties in Abidjan later on Saturday to discuss the outcome of the talks before returning to Ouagadougou "for the closure of direct dialogue" a statement from the rebels said.

Though fighting during the civil war was brief, the former haven of peace in conflict-prone West Africa has seen poverty spread while the political crisis endures. The former French colony has been destabilised by frequent rioting and protests.

More than 11,000 peacekeepers, both U.N. and French troops, patrol a buffer zone to keep the Ivorian government and rebel forces apart.

Eritrea says did not seize tourists

By: Andrew Heavens

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) — Eritrea dismissed as "baseless fabrication" on Sunday accusations by an Ethiopian official that Eritrean forces kidnapped a group of tourists, including Britons and Ethiopians, in a remote part of Ethiopia.

The Britons, believed to include diplomats from the British embassy in Addis Ababa, went missing last week in the remote and inhospitable Afar area in the northeast of Ethiopia.

Ethiopian police later said 13 Ethiopians who worked for them as drivers and translators were also taken.

Ismael Ali Sero, the head of the Afar administration region told Reuters on Saturday that the kidnapers came from Arat military training camp in Eritrea and burnt vehicles and two homes before taking

the group back to Eritrea.

Eritrean Information Minister Ali Abdu said on Sunday Asmara had nothing to do with it and accused Ethiopia of staging the incident for its own ends in its long-running dispute with its arch-foe.

"It is a baseless fabrication. It has nothing to do with Eritrea. It happened inside Ethiopia," he told Reuters in Nairobi by telephone.

"The Ethiopian regime is trying to exploit it for political prostitution. They always blow up bombs and accuse Eritrea. It is an Ethiopian staged drama."

Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a war in 1998-2000 and still dispute their border. Asmara routinely denies accusations of infiltration.

Ethiopians found

The state-run Ethiopian News Agency said Ethiopian security officials

reported that five of the Ethiopians had been found, picked up by security forces patrolling the Eritrean border.

"According to the official, five of the 13 Ethiopians abducted by armed men last Thursday have joined Ethiopian security forces in the area after they reached the Eritrean border by walking a three-four hour distance from Hamedilla," it said late on Saturday, quoting an unnamed security source.

Hamedilla is a salt market town from where the tourists were taken in the middle of the night as they slept, Sero said.

The British government could not comment on the reports that hostages were being held by Eritrea. But it said it had sent a team of Foreign Office officials to Ethiopia to step up diplomatic efforts to free the missing people it said were embassy staff or their relatives.

A small delegation of British embassy staff flew to the city of Mekele, which has the closest airport to the area where they went missing. Ethiopia said its federal security forces were also combing the area.

Afar, one of Ethiopia's poorest regions, was also the site of a low-level rebellion against the government in the 1990s by separatists calling for an Afar state on territory straddling Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.

A separate group of seven French tourists had also gone missing on Thursday. The French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said in a statement on Sunday they were safe.

"They are now in Mekele where a representative of our embassy was able to meet them. We are continuing to check that no other French citizen is in the zone concerned," he said.



An Ethiopian policeman (L) provides protection for foreign tourists as they visit Dallol sulphur springs in Afar depression in this file photo taken on Jan. 29. Britain sent a six-strong team of senior Foreign Office officials to Ethiopia on Saturday to step up diplomatic efforts to free foreigners feared kidnapped in a remote area of the Horn of Africa country. REUTERS

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Psychiatric patients in Yemen: Victims of low social awareness and government neglect

By: Fatima Al-Ajel
fatimafnfr@yahoo.com

Considered a shameful condition, psychiatric patients in Yemeni society still are looked down upon, even when, in many instances, such psychological and psychiatric cases are the result of a combination of various social conditions, genetic defects and/or physiological or mental imbalances. Going to a psychiatric hospital socially stigmatizes a Yemeni family's name, especially if the patient is a woman. However, regardless of this, some families are forced to admit a member after exhausting visits to local doctors and holistic centers.

Yemeni society still has limited knowledge of psychiatric disorders and conditions. Families will refuse to provide their last name when they go to psychiatric hospitals. "When we ask them for complete patient information for the file, they refuse in order to avoid the social windfall. We speak to them and try to convince them that this condition is like any other disease requiring complete and careful hospital treatment and check-ups. We tell them anyone can become a victim of such disorders," Dr. Abdulwasa' Al-Wasa'i, manager of Al-Amel Psychiatric Hospital, commented.

In talking with psychiatrists and psychologists about the background of psychiatric patients, they say some are intelligent, politically-minded, educated men and women, mothers and fathers, etc. They often have endured extreme levels of stress, lacked social or familial support and suffered a myriad of events until they lose their hold on reality, their sanity and the ability to function normally.

One such example is a patient who was at the top of his secondary school in 1988. His scholarship was taken away, but he continued to study and entered the faculty of agriculture at the university. Again, he was at the top of his class and again, his scholarship was awarded to someone else. At that point, he no longer could bear it, so he lost his hold on his sanity and is now a patient at the hospital, according to Al-Wasa'i.

The Yemeni government plays a major role in the ongoing neglect of such patients and persistent lack of social awareness. Al-Amel Psychiatric Hospital is considered the Arab Board of Medical Specializations regional center in psychotherapy medicine and the only hospital in Yemen, aside from two small hospitals. While it was completely neglected prior to 1991, the Yemeni government now subsidizes approximately 30 percent of the hospital's annual costs.



Psychiatric patients suffer society's lack of awareness and continue suffering even after they are well enough to integrate into society because both society and their families categorically reject them as "crazy."

"Most psych patients were sent to the central prison or lived on the streets. At some point, there was a psychiatric care center at Al-Jumhuri Hospital that was able to care for these patients, but administrative mismanagement of the center obligated the administration to convert the needed space into a surgical center. So once again, psychiatric patients were back on the streets and their cause worsened," Al-Wasa'i explained.

"Most psych patients were sent to the central prison or to live on the streets."

Just like males, female psychiatric patients also were sent to the central prison and faced the worst humiliations. For example, in 1991, Yemeni society was rocked by the scandal of two mentally retarded inmates who were impregnated while incarcerated.

This incident brought together philanthropists, executives, cooperating local councils and the Islah Party to jointly decide to build a

Care Center for Mentally Retarded Women. By 2002, the center had expanded to become a psychiatric hospital for women with outpatient clinics for men. However, while it now beds some 200 patients, roughly 160 are for men and only 40 are for women.

As a charity-based facility, Al-Amel Psychiatric Hospital lacks sufficient funds to improve its performance. Seventy percent of support comes from philanthropists, while 30 percent is from the government. President Ali Abdullah Saleh attended the hospital's grand opening in 2002 and ordered 30 percent support for the hospital at the time, however. "In reality, we only receive 15 percent from official coffers," Al-Wasa'i replied regarding how the hospital covers all of its needs.

Social awareness

Thankfully, awareness is spreading among some Yemeni families who do send their afflicted family member to the hospital regardless of their social peers' negative attitudes. Taiz University student Misk Ahmad Al-Magrami came from Taiz with her brother to treat their mother at the hospital. "Some of our neighbors will call her crazy, especially those who are uneducated. They laugh when they see us leaving, knowing that we're going to Sana'a for treatment.

They think she's incurable, but we ignore them. Contrary to those, other neighbors are a good source of support and say that we should take her to the hospital even if there's only a 1 percent chance of a cure," Al-Magrami explained.

However, many patients are confined to the hospital for years. Once they get better, they find they can't return to society because they either don't have any family or their families refuse to live with them. Victimized as patients, such individuals suffer due to society's lack of awareness and continue suffering even after they are well enough to integrate into society because both society and their families categorically reject them as "crazy."

According to their condition, some patients require only a few days of continuous treatment and then are well enough to go home. Walking in the hospital garden, Fatima Al-Ryimi approached with a smile and greetings. She explained, "I became ill about four years ago after facing many social problems and stress. I suffered a crisis about a month ago, so my sons brought me here. Today, they're coming to take me back to my village."

Since its grand opening, Al-Amel Psychiatric Hospital receives many patients. However the hospital has housed 11 inpatients who either are anonymously named, such as Ms. S., Ms. L. and Ms. X., or rejected by their family and society. Some patients come from the central prison, while others are taken off the streets. "As you know, women are the most exposed to rape and illegal treatment," Al-Wasa'i noted.

Psychosis in Yemen

Psychiatrist Ibrahim Al-Sharifi summarizes the reasons for psychiatric disorders in Yemeni society, basically consisting of three elements: genetic, biological and environmental/psychological. Daily social conditions, their related problems, and the stress they can create are among the main reasons for psychiatric disorders in Yemen.

When it comes to improving a patient's health, those who have the support of spouses, children, parents and other relatives respond more readily to medical treatment than those who are single or have no family.

Mohammed Amar, a psychologist at the hospital, considers qat another reason Yemeni patients sink back into a crisis. "A patient returns to his family after treatment and is drawn back into chewing qat, neglecting the

Treatment and rehabilitation center

Treatment and rehabilitation are essential elements of the hospital's activities. For example, treating delusional disorder mostly consists of medication and psychotherapy, which is a type of counseling. Delusional disorder is highly resistant to treatment by medication alone.

Many activities were held throughout 2006, with approximately 335 patients attending illiteracy eradication courses and other activities.

Huda Hamoud Mohammed, the hospital's rehabilitation center trainer, explained the center's role in developing patients' skills via handcraft activities. The center receives at least four patients per day. "Some patients have been here since the hospital opened and have become professional handcrafters, in a sense. They like to spend most of their time at the center. This helps them assimilate their environment and helps manage their illness as well."

Fatima Al-Thaeri, one of many patients considered "crazy," is one such patient who has been at Al-Amel Psychiatric Hospital since its opening. Her family brought her to the hospital nine years ago and never returned for a visit or to take her home. Because of this, Mohammed says Al-Thaeri now considers the hospital her home and spends most of her days at the center. When asked why she's in the hospital, she replies that she has a liver disease and will be back with her family in a few days.

Al-Thaeri's response to her condition is to escape from reality, especially after her family's rejection of her and the disorder with which they refuse to live. However, this belies such patients' usefulness, as they participate in hospital work such as cleaning their rooms, tending the garden and helping nurses with their duties. "They like to share in the hospital activities," Mohammed notes.

Bringing about social awareness

Khalid Al-Abasi, the hospital's chief of general relations and media, explained that he prepared to launch a plan for a media strategy to raise social awareness; however, lack of facilities in Yemen defies its implementation at the moment. "We want to publish monthly magazines reflecting patients' activities at the hospital and spread social awareness, which would correct the negative concepts about psychiatric patients."



Some patients consider the hospital their home and spend most of their time at the center, the center's trainer Huda Mohammed states.

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Islamic Pop Music in Turkey

Combining Rock Music with an Islamic Message

In Turkey today, traditional Islamic music is giving way to the hard rock sound of "Yesil Pop". But along with the normal rock beat and guitar riffs, comes not a message of sex and drugs, but rather praising God. Dorian Jones reports

The growing modern Islamic music movement has been dubbed by the Turkish media Yesil or "green pop". With some albums selling more than a million copies the music easily outstrips popular western music. Feridun Ozdemir, with his shoulder length black hair, and tight fitting

jeans looks like your typical rock star. His records are among most successful in the Yesil pop genre. I met Ozdemir at Marmara FM, one of Istanbul's most popular radio stations. Istanbul has more than dozen stations solely dedicated to "Yesil Pop". Ozdemir presents a daily drive time program, with over half a million listeners. He says combining

rock music with an Islamic message came to him easily.

There are no women singers
"I had very good friends in the rock music scene, and I loved the sound. But I grew up loving religious music and its message too. Because my instrument is the guitar I thought if I was to make music I would bring these two together and it happened very naturally."

At Yildirim record shop, which is close to Istanbul University where many of its customers study, business is brisk. The jam-packed shelves of CDs and cassettes give a small insight into the range of Islamic pop music. It draws on a wide range of

influences from rock to reggae to dance, but unlike its secular Turkish pop counterpart there are no women singers. Owner of the shop is Hasan Turker. He is also a distributor for more than a dozen Yesil pop bands. Turker says the rise of Yesil reflects major changes in Turkish society. "In Turkey in the 80's there were very few people interested in contemporary Islamic music. But everything changed in the mid 90's when there was this explosion. The mid 90's were very important with the opening up of many TV and radio stations, which started playing Turkish pop music.

At the same time you saw the first successes of a pro-Islamic political party, which had a big influence on many people, especially the young. So the 90's created the culture for the rise of this music, now it has become so big, I am now approached every day by new bands."

A whole music industry has grown up within a few years to support the new genre. Yesil pop videos are as highly produced as their Turkish secular counterparts, but without the images of sexily dressed women usually seen on Turkish television. Islamic media too has exploded on to the scene, with TV and radio stations broadcasting the music.

Turkey's two parallel lives
Political analyst and commentator Nuray Mert says Turkey is a society developing along two different paths: "Turkey is divided into roughly two parallel lives, with everything what music you listen, who is your neighbour, which part of city you live, and there is no interrelation between these two parallel lifestyles, each treat each other like foreigners." Such is the division in Turkey few secular people are even aware of the music. Assistant Professor Songul

Ata of Istanbul Technical University, is one of the few secular people to have studied the Yesil pop phenomena.

Ata says its success is a reaction to the explosion in western culture in Turkey and a desire by many to protect their identity. But she is concerned about the message the music carries.

"I think this is dangerous because it's, 'My God, you know everything,' all the time, and they repeat many times 'God is great, and they sing about paradise. This kind of fatalism is not good for the people. People don't think of science. Only God knows everything."

Islamic zeitgeist

But Feridun Ozdemir dismisses such concerns, arguing like any other rock music it is just reflecting the times, in a way young people can relate to.

"At the root of rock music is shouting and crying; that is how you express yourself with the music, the rhythms. But traditional religious music is very soft. But in the world we live in today, there is war, countries are being invaded there all

these killings... I want to express myself through shouting and crying, which I think young people can relate to. That's why I want to represent my faith through the music of today."

At Ozdemir's latest Istanbul concert, the hall is packed. Most of the audience is in their teens and early twenties and most are men. Ozdemir's performance is loud and roar-cast, with him pounding the stage, as you would expect from any rock star.

But strangely the fans sat quietly in their seats and applauded quietly after each song. But while the reaction was restrained, the love and enthusiasm for the music was not. Student Cem Gun cannot get enough of Yesil Pop.

"It has meaning it is based on traditional Islamic ideals and lyrics and it is combined with rhythms, so I love this sound. What the music says, what is behind it makes it so important and so different from the normal Turkish pop and western music you hear. This music is made by people like us for us, it is our music and I love it."

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The lyrics of Ozdemir's band speak not of sex and drugs, but of God and true faith (photo: Ferudunozdemir.com)

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Words of Wisdom



In the Third World today, the rulers have no fixed budgets or allocations, even when these exist on paper. The rulers simply spend as they please. Actually, the only limiting element is the lack of funds or the general poverty of the country. Here in Yemen, this problem exists in a shameless way. Just a couple of weeks ago, a number of government palaces built by foreign aid were simply given away to the top president's men.

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

OUR
OPINION

For a beautiful city

Our capital city is experiencing a makeover these days. Led by Governor Yahya Al-Shuaibi, a campaign to beautify the city and remove traces of construction and other disturbing scenes is yielding its first fruits as I write. The campaign includes removing chaotic markets and construction, expanding the city's green areas and holding environmental awareness events. These were highlighted at the National Environmental Day celebrated last week.

Sana'a is a beautiful city that has improved noticeably during the past few years, becoming cleaner and more attractive. However, construction violations still are visible and regular. Not only do some individuals fail to remove the traces of their construction from the main road, which causes problems for traffic and pedestrians, government workers, while doing their digging and infrastructure development, also cause a lot of mess due to lack of organization and time sensitivity.

A new law has been publicized via official media about trucks carrying garbage or construction materials. The law restricts movement of such containers to nighttime and then only with a licence. If a driver violates this, he will be fined YR 10,000. To encourage traffic officers and citizens to report such violations, anyone reporting a violation of this law will be awarded YR 5,000.

There seems to be a vision for how the capital city could be. Government offices and the municipality are trying to improve the way the city looks and it's time citizens also took the initiative.

The financial rewards published in official newspapers are a way to encourage citizens; however, there must be internal motivation by citizens themselves. Yemenis mostly are careless about their environment and the place in which they live.

There was a project in Qatar called "Green Doha," wherein school students were encouraged via extracurricular activities to plant trees and clean up their neighborhoods. The project's most recent activity was to cooperate with traffic officers to distribute flower saplings to citizens on the streets in order to encourage a sense of greenery and plantation. It would be a good idea to start a similar initiative in Yemen.

Even if limited to the capital city to start with, a number of saplings could be given to citizens, who in turn could plant them somewhere in their homes or neighborhoods or even their workplaces or schools. This way, Yemenis would be encouraged to appreciate nature and help protect it.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf
Editor-in-Chief

Yemen's Arab role and conflict management in the area

By: Dr. Wahiba Fare'

It is without doubt that Yemen has played an important role regionally and internationally following to its reunification. It has assumed a number of roles that enhance the trust in Yemen to become a partner in issues that concern the area, especially in its Arab surroundings.

Further, the international events following September 11 have led to changing political roles and the Yemeni diplomatic work has expanded. After the Gulf War and civil war of 1994, some observers thought Yemen's role will be confined to restoring the Yemeni house from inside and its engagement in political and economic reforms would lead it out the international and Arab club.

However, Yemen came out those crises with more power and became one of the countries to adopt democracy and multiparty politics and secure the internal situation even before international terrorism came out, pressuring all countries in the area to implement political reforms.

Towards the end of the past century, Yemen adopted many resolutions with more reforms and turned to neighboring countries as an economic and political partner. These steps included preparing the Yemeni economy to keep pace with Gulf economies. Further, Yemen exerted efforts to achieve reconciliation between different parties in Somalia, together with its balanced attitude of Palestinian elections.

Yemen's efforts are underway to join the World Trade Organization to safeguard its attainments resulting from the bilateral agreements with European countries. This step was preceded by a package of reforms in laws to raise development performance and enhance and revitalize partnership with the private sector.

Additionally, Yemen overcame a number of political problems, especially with neighboring countries and

approved of arbitration on Hunish Islands with Eritrea. It also marked the borders with Oman and Saudi Arabia via peaceful dialogue and away from armed clashes. Yemen is affected by clashes in the Horn of Africa, Yemen received thousands of refugees under human and moral obligations and this led Yemen to develop its relations with organizations interested in this human rights.

Yemen's role was not confined to dialoguing with neighbors over borders and resolving them, but it followed a high diplomacy to find solutions from a national, Arab and human aspects. The Yemeni diplomacy extended to include the whole Arab world with firm attitudes.

Yemen stood by Palestinian people and presented many initiatives and it also adopted and defended their case in all international conferences. Though short of resources, Yemen provided more support than countries that surpass it in resources.

It also backed the Iraqi people to avoid the military attack and the international coalition's resolutions, being fully aware of the risks ensuing from the intervention of foreign countries. Further, it was against the war resolutions and dominance and occupation and warned of risks of dividing Iraqi people and the intervention in its internal problems. Not only this, but the Yemeni leadership tried to resolve pending problems in Somalia with dialogue between warring parties and asked the Arab League to set up a fund to support Somalia's reconstruction. It also played an important role in the Syrian-Lebanese issue and called for dialogue in Darfur's and supported the Sudanese government to dominate the whole Sudanese land.

Yemen's initiative, announced by President Saleh, to reform the Arab League was of high importance, particularly when it synchronized with the reforms calls of the international blocks. When the Arab League's system was in need for modernizations as a base for building a joint Arab work

mechanism, Yemen called for making reforms to the system. This move prompted other Arab countries to raise comments over the league and its performance together with its charter and it resulted in amendments to some articles in the league's charter and further establishing an Arab Parliament. The Parliament held its first round in December 2005 and the initiative also led to activation of Arab Foreign Minister's periodic meetings and updating some work mechanisms.

Yemen, with efforts exerted at the present time, has turned to the initiative-supplier attitude and this has earned Yemen the appreciation and respect of the international community. This attitude encouraged all parties to consider Yemen a neutral party and thus Yemen was to shoulder regional and international burden. It exerted efforts to spread peace and reconciliation between neighboring countries which resulted in Sana'a Congregation Summit including four countries: Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. The congregation helped serve the stability and security in the area and fight terrorism. This is Yemen over the past 15 years of democracy that adopted democracy and political reforms via national and unforced wish.

Internal and external factors helped the development and democratic transformation in Yemen and they are based on the national unity. The democratic influence Yemen exercises in the area is a strong one and it has no likeness, being based on democracy that creates development. This democracy is not to be imitated as it existed under certain conditions and it was made under Yemen's wish and not forced by others, and for the sake of Yemeni people.

Dr. Wahiba Fare' is a Yemeni professor and president of Queen Arwa University. She is also head of the National Center for Vocational Education. She was previously minister of Human Rights.

SILVER LINING

Barren political parties & change drive

It is really good that our political parties hold regular conferences every three or four years to name leaders for them. But, unfortunately most of these conferences produce no concrete results or hope of change for the people. The forth conference of the Islamist Islah party is a crystal example of the fruitlessness of our political drive.



By: Mohammed Al-Qadhi

The political parties which repeatedly call upon the regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to respect democracy and peaceful transfer of power, including Islah, have violated their own rules of democracy. Islah has undermined the hope of many people that new blood will start running in the party and a new leadership will emerge. The party abused its regulations when it decided with a consensus to renew the term of office for Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmer, naming him as a head of the party for a fourth consecutive term. It is not only this man who remains in his position, the rest of the party stagnates as other old faces stay in the same place but are given different titles.

The old guards in these political parties are, just like heads of states, afraid of any change that might sweep them away and put them on the shelf. They keep criticizing regimes of prolonging their stay in power by hook or crook, but they forget about themselves and that what they do is similarly anti-democratic.

Since the first conference of Islah in 1994, the world has seen upheavals and drastic changes; we have seen many prime ministers and heads of states coming and going but the leadership of Islah remains the same. This is not the case of the Islah party alone but also of most of the political parties in Yemen, except the Unionist Nasserite Party which last year brought in a completely new leadership. In its last conference in Aden, PGC members were hopeful of change but the President forced them into electing Abdulqader Bajamal who was the candidate of the President rather than the conferees. The rules of democracy were not respected again.

All in all, our emerging democracy will not prosper unless it is exercised well at the grass roots level. Change will become potential and likely when we see the old guards and the fossilized leaders of these parties leave their position democratically. The leaders of these parties should not ask for a change of president in the ruling party, if they are not able to practice it in their own parties. Don't you think so guys?!

Mohammed Al-Qadhi (mhalqadhi@hotmail.com) is a Yemeni journalist and columnist.

Understanding obstacles to democracy and dialogue in Arab countries

By: Dr. Mohamed Al-Qahiri

Chaos, immobilism and rent are opposed factors to the conditions of economic prosperity and democracy. Given its traditionalism, the dominant coalition despises minorities, women, intellectuals and artists. That explains other obstacles to the democracy and dialogue in the society. In similar situa-

tions modern Medias cannot play a major role. In fact these Medias represent a communicational revolution not an informational revolution; the last requires philosophical and thought maturity and not only a speedy communication. And advanced Medias are two edges arm; they can more likely convey the traditional information and thoughts than carry modern thought or contribute generalising and establishing dialogue culture.

One can consider the obstacles to democracy and dialogue in Arab countries by applying behavioural theories and models of modern analysis. In a research of mine I applied game theory's principles to the case of Arab societies. I have found that some results apply to the deal in Arab countries. In Yemen, we have first three groups as players: (i) tribal sheikhs; (ii) military officials; and (iii) religious group. Although these groups represent a minority of population they have the greatest political influence in the current structure of societies. Often these groups form dominating coalitions upon politics. The main characteristic of these groups is traditionalism. So, from here we design them by traditional coalitions. The players share roles in a way that sheikhs and officials fulfil military tasks (coercion apparatus) of the coalition and religious group fulfil the ideological task (propaganda apparatus). At the end the performances of both apparatus are implicated in the traditional ultimate goal of intimidation and submission.

Historically, religious groups played the role of ideological apparatus of the traditional coalition. But in the periods the nationalist and socialist thoughts appeared, the nationalist and/or socialist intellectuals replaced the religious

group playing the role of ideological apparatus of the coalition in power. Such coalition can be classified as a nationalist or patriotic. But even in the period of such coalition the situations of chaos and immobilism followed. And generally the period was short and regimes returned to the arena of traditional domination under tribal, military or religious leadership. There is another case where big farmers and/or business men replaced tribal sheikhs; the coalition in place took a deformed liberal pattern which depended on external support. It did not serve the conditions of prosperity and democracy.

Of course, the traditional coalition in power used to integrate some intellectuals, business men, technocrats, etc. to the administrative, partisan and Medias apparatus of the power. But the integration was often done according to a sharing formula. The formula implies that these modern groups accept to serve as a façade without influence in decision making of the coalition. In counterpart of that role they obtain rent from secondary sources (posts, business monopoly, corruption, bribes, etc.). While sheikhs, officials and religious groups keep for themselves the leadership of the coalition, the decision making and the main sources of rent linked to the state budget (oil income, credit and aid funds, centralisation of public revenues and expenditures, sharing and intermediation in foreign bargaining, etc.)

The domination of the traditional coalition has two results. The first is the domination of traditional politics that rule out the material and cultural conditions of democracy. Often the progress of democracy takes one of

two routes. Either the progress of an economical (say capitalist) class whose interests depend on the conditions for economical and social integration in which individualism rise in detriment of tribal and religious aptitudes and allegiances; or, by another way, in which the modern groups can dominate politically thanks to a maturity of philosophical and enlightening culture (Marxist or social democracy) that set new values opposed to the traditional ones. But the traditional domination excludes these two ways.

The second result is that the power of the traditional coalition and the rent extortion are long lasting despite the internal cyclical conflicts like coups d'état or brief disputes between the coalition's components. The political change resulting from cyclical conflicts is in one hand only a change of the leader group among the three of the coalition and in the other hand a change of the kind of the rent. In the real world, it follows from these changes two alternative cases: either chaos or immobilism.

We observe that when sheikhs or military group is the leader of the coalition the situation gets into the chaos (in the sense of disorder or lawless state). While when the religious group is the leader the situation is led to an absolute immobilism. Chaos is explained by the fact that sheiks or military officials seek a material and large rent destined to wasting and ostentatious consumption. The chaos (wars, kidnapping for examples) is preferred since it permits pillage, confiscation, robbery, ransom and corruption. In addition, this group has a trivial culture and is incapable to use ideological mobilization as a mean to involve people's support and to con-

rol the chaos. Contrarily, the group may not worry at all about chaos since it possesses coercion tools. With those tools it can prevent chaos from reaching its power and leave that chaos risking the destruction of the society. At the end, the generalisation of chaos ruins the conditions for economic progress and democracy which benefit to modern groups outside the coalition. By contrast, when religious group becomes the leader of the coalition, we have the alternative case of immobilism. Immobilism may be explained by the fact that religious group seeks a symbolic rent like the domination of its ideological vision. This entails that people listen and respect the group's discourse. So the group worries about chaos and has propensity to control and regulate the situation. In addition, thanks to its deep culture (even thought traditional) the group makes good and intensive use of ideological discourse as a cheaper mean to involve people following its vision. Hence it imposes and stabilizes its power and ideology. And as a price of that, the group may live far from ostentatious consumption and even in austere conditions. The regimes of such groups are generally likely to maintain subsistence economy and closed society vis-à-vis the external world. But, subsistence economy, hard regulation and the army of propaganda's agents lead to the oppression of liberties, to cut off information resources and thus lead to immobilism in thinking, economics and politics. So modern social groups and democracy would not evolve as needed.

Dr. Mohamed Al-Qahiri has a Ph. D. in Economics, and is a lecturer at Sana'a University.



By Samer

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Fax: +967 (1) 268-276

P.O. Box 2579, Sana'a, Yemen

E-mail: editor@yementimes.com

Advertisement: ads@yementimes.com

Letters: letters@yementimes.com

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Nadia Abdulaziz Al-Sakkaf

Head of News Dept.
Mohamed bin Sallam

Head of Design Dept.
Ramzy Alawi Al-Saqqaf

Editorial Staff

Al-Ajel, Fatima

Al-Ariqi, Amel

Al-Ghabri, Ismail

Al-Jabri, Mohammed

Al-Khawlani, Adel

Al-Mayasi, Yasser

Al-Omari, Moneer

Al-Saqqaf, Raidan

Khidhr, Mohammed

Shadad, Nisreen

Copy Editor

Dana Patterson

Interns

Al-Najjar, Jamal

Dahish, Al-Miqdad

Offices

Aden Bureau:

Ridhwan Alawi Ahmed

Tel: +967 (2) 347-057, 346596

Fax: +967 (2) 347056

Email: ytaden@y.net.ye

Taiz Bureau:

Imad Ahmed Abdullah

Tel: +967 (4) 217-156,

Telefax: +967 (4) 217157

P.O.Box: 5086, Taiz

Email: yttaz@y.net.ye

Hadramout Correspondent:

Saeed Al-Batati

Mobile (+967) 77383733

Email: albatati88@yahoo.com

Fax: +967 (05) 360303

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Yemen Press Review

By: Adel Al-Khawlani



Al-Shawha Weekly, Organ of the Islah Party
Saturday, March 3

Main Headlines

- Chairman of the Islah Shoura Council: Developing Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) tops our agenda
- Illegal migration to Yemen claims lives of 250 Somalis since the beginning of 2007
- Entire Lunar Eclipse due on Saturday's night while cosmologist Al-Shagadha expects two eclipses in 2007
- 14 died from Malaria and 1584 infected cases in Aden by the end of 2006
- Abyan Education Office due to pay hardship allowance to 8710 education workers



Al-Methaq Weekly, Mouthpiece of General People Congress
Monday, Feb. 26

Main Headlines

- Terrorist gangs are under siege and won't escape law and its just application
- Sana'a Congregation leaders discuss economic and security dossiers, situations in the Horn of Africa and development of work mechanisms
- Yemeni Vice President confirms good implementation of Ibb investment projects
- Armed forces defeat Sa'ada terrorist gangs, who refuse to stop their blind rebellion
- Bajammal calls for exchange of professional players at the national and Arab levels to develop sporting games
- Government sets complete vision for anti-corruption mechanism contained in President's Saleh platform
- Hadramout governor calls on provincial offices of political parties to participate in a periodic meeting with

- authorities
- During its Fourth General Conference, Islah Party elects leadership in away leading to a brilliant future for the party
- Interior Ministry demands Al-Yadoumi, a leading member of the Islah Party, to apologize to security apparatuses for insult
- Al-Saleh Social Foundation for Development and Yemeni women distribute aids to 4,000 families
- UN Human Rights Council views Yemen's achievements



Al-Thawra State-Run Daily
Thursday, March 1

Main Headlines

- President Saleh and Malaysian Prime Minister discuss areas of mutual cooperation, and regional and international developments
- Saleh congratulates Bosnia & Herzegovina and Bulgaria on the occasion of their national days
- Justice Ministry prepares a file to repatriate terrorist Yahya Al-Houthi following withdrawal of his immunity
- Receiving a letter from Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, Saleh praises brotherly ties between Yemen and Saudi Arabia
- With a majority of 188 votes of MPs, Parliament rescinds diplomatic immunity of terrorist Yahya Al-Houthi
- Yemen and Malaysia agree to establish a joint economic forum to develop cooperation areas
- Syria declares its support for Yemen to confront terrorist elements

The newspaper's editorial says that MPs, belonging to different political parties, voted on Wednesday for rescinding the parliamentary immunity of the terrorist Yahya Al-Houthi, who is currently residing in Germany. The Parliament's determination to take such a procedure was commended by the government, which said the stand reflects MPs' understanding and awareness about the necessity of unifying official and opposition efforts in

dealing with national issues. Irrespective of the different viewpoints on some political and party issues as differences are a normal phenomenon in any democratic community, terrorism necessitates joint efforts of the political forces in the country since its impacts reach everyone. All the necessities require the ruling party and the opposition, as well as all the social groups to stand by the government in any step it takes toward construction and achievement. The joint efforts in dealing with national issues, such as Al-Houthi-led rebellion, will help develop the social sense and understanding of partnership and interaction with processes of Yemen's comprehensive development.



Al-Ayyam Independent Daily
Saturday, March 3

Main Headlines

- Many Abyan sheikhs, tribal leaders and local council members appeal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh to order the government to help them in searching for an Abyan scholar, Ali Ahmad Nasser Mansour, who disappeared in Sudan
- In an interview with Al-Ayyam daily, Sheikh Ahmad Bin Fareed Al-Awlaqi condemns harassments and assaults by influential persons against the famous writer Ahmad Omar Bin Fareed
- The trial of Saleh Ali Abdulhaq, suspected of killing Atef Haider, is due on March 5
- Former Secretary-General of Yemen Artists and Writers Union Mohamed Hussein Haitham passes away Friday at age 49
- A Swiss court acquits five Yemenis, an Iraqi and a Somali from terrorism and Al-Qaeda support charges
- Al-Shami: An Iranian official admits Iranian religious group's support for Al-Houthi-led rebellion
- UN Higher Commissioner for Refugees grants international protection cards to Iraqis in Yemen
- Three people killed in a Sana'a gunfire
- Before leaving Hadramout,

Malaysian Prime Minister declares, "Hadramout had been a point of historic connection with the world"



Al-Shumou Independent Weekly
Saturday, March 3

Main Headlines

- Army beats rebellion, controls mountains between Saqain area and Sa'ada
- As Muslim Brothers, we reject rebellion regardless of its causes, says Akef, Muslim Brothers' Guide
- Talat Muslim describes stance of Yemeni opposition as encouraging rebellion
- Al-Horani: All the Yemeni people must be involved in confronting rebellion
- Jaloul: Rebellion is geographically and socially limited.
- Al-Shami urges JMP to review its attitude toward rebellion
- President of Yemeni Teachers Syndicate accuses Education Ministry of marginalizing inspectors' role



Al-Tajamu Weekly, affiliated with the Yemeni Unionist Congregation Party (YUCP)
Monday, Feb. 26

Main Headlines

- Islah Party holds Fourth General Conference in tensed atmospheres while President Saleh orders heightened security
- YUCP praises effort of the Democratic Front for Palestinian Liberation, marks Kuwait's National Independence Day
- Government loses millions of dollars due to smuggling of international calls
- Sa'ada continued fighting threatens human catastrophe
- Spanish Embassy pursues Nancky's condition in Al-Mansoura hospital while the inmate's family is bound to arrive in Aden to visit their relative

- who has served more than 8 years in jail
- Yemeni families spend 1 percent of income on education, 12 percent on qat, report says



26 September Weekly, Organ of the Yemeni Armed Forces

Main Headlines

- Mosque preachers condemn acts of terror and vandalism in Sa'ada, call for unified national efforts to confront sedition
- UN Higher Commissioner for Refugees grants international protection cards to more than 11 thousand Iraqis in Yemen
- Yemen calls for containing Al-Aqsa excavation works in the Arab Parliament's Agenda
- A Sa'ada source denies news that 416 soldiers have died in the fighting while clashes with terrorists are ending
- Finance Minister: Islah Party's Fourth General Conference contained a lot of conflicting viewpoints and visions
- An international drug gang due to stand trial Wednesday at Al-Ghaidah Court in Al-Mahra governorate, 17 Pakistanis to be investigated

- National Museum in Sana'a resumes receiving visitors at night and weekends
- 1500 Yemeni students finish first semester exams in the Saudi cities of Riyadh and Jeddah
- Vice President directs Central Organization for Control and Audit (COCA) to give top priority to President Saleh's platform
- World Youth Council awards President Saleh order of merit, acknowledging his role in serving world youth and peace issues.



Addustoor Independent Weekly
Monday, Feb. 26

Main Headlines

- Al-Sarraf discloses concepts, which Zionism and Zoroastrianism misunderstand
- Yemenis question what is the motive behind Libya's support for terrorist movements in Yemen
- Al-Shami evidences Iran's involvement in transferring Sa'ada into a ground for settling regional scores
- Government sources, "Yemen won't allow Libya and Iran to pay harm to Saudi Arabia via its territory
- Army and security forces besiege Sa'ada terrorists' hideout

Time to admit failure

By: Danny Rubinstein

It may already be too late for Israelis and Palestinians to be able to reach an agreement using the present format. The methods attempted by the sides thus far, and which for a moment seemed as if they were about to succeed, have failed. The peace process that began with the shake-up created by the first intifada almost 20 years ago has apparently reached the end of the road.

Many Palestinians, and many Israelis as well, estimate that the present period is among the worst in the history of the conflict in this land. The violent struggle between Fatah and Hamas is not good for Israel. Palestinian spokesmen reject out of hand any attempt to describe their situation as a civil war. Some say it is "a war of organizations", which is a more accurate description. Whatever the case, after the extensive coverage of the meeting between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), two weeks ago, one of the Palestinian journalists declared that it is now clear to him that on one subject there is no difference of opinion among the rival Palestinian groups: They all agree that the State of Israel does not want peace.

The result of the Olmert-Abu Mazen meeting served the Palestinian spokesmen as excellent proof of that. There was no release of Palestinian prisoners. There was no easing of restrictions at the checkpoints. There were, rather, an announcement (which was prominently publicized in the Arab media) of the establishment of a new settlement in the northern Jordan Valley, and a military raid on Ramallah in which Arab non-combatants were killed.

In hindsight, we can point to one of the reasons for the painful failure of the peace process. The method of working toward an arrangement in stages, without a decision being made a priori on the final goal, did not work. The problem was not in the stages, but in where they were meant to be heading. Therefore, in every stage of the diplomatic process, each side tried to improve its positions, in anticipation of both the next stage and the final goal that suited it.

Take, for example, the issue of Jerusalem. Because there was no agreement in principle as to what the final status of Jerusalem should be, successive Israeli governments made every effort to reinforce the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem. The

Palestinians, for their part, tried to block this and to establish a political presence of their own in the city. Israeli governments built Jewish neighbourhoods in the east of the city and expelled Arabs by denying them their right to live in the city. The PA demonstrated opposition. They called it "ethnic cleansing". They operated national institutions such as the Orient House, and late PA chair Yasser Arafat called for a million shehds to march on Jerusalem.

The result was that, on the issue of Jerusalem, as on other issues, instead of there being progress toward a compromise, there was a retreat. The conflict only deepened. Thus the period that followed the agreement about the stages of the diplomatic process turned out to be even worse than the period when there was no agreement at all.

The conclusion is clear. We must first of all decide between us on all the goals of the final-status agreement, and only then conduct negotiations over how to achieve them. We should agree, first of all, for example, that a Palestinian capital will be established in East Jerusalem, and only afterward should we conduct negotiations over how that will be accomplished, in light of the conditions and the reality that exists in the city. Such a diplomatic course may not suit the ideological leadership of Hamas, but it certainly does suit most of the Hamas electorate, who are prepared for an agreement, but have rejected the previous diplomatic path of the Oslo Accords and the present one of the road map.

Hamas leader Khaled Meshal said a few days ago that his movement is not blocking any diplomatic path -- for the simple reason that such a path does not even exist at present. He is right. In order for such a path to exist, there has to be much more than concern on the Israeli side for the Palestinian "fabric of life" (the catchphrase of the Israeli defence establishment for the easing of restrictions) and promises to dismantle settlement outposts. We have to agree on the end of the process, in which a Palestinian state will be established within amended borders of the 1967 cease-fire lines, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Without that there will be nothing.

Danny Rubinstein is the Arab Affairs editor for Ha'aretz. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at www.commonground-news.org.

Four into two

By: M. J. Akbar

DO YOU know what Quattrocchi means in Italian? Four eyes. I have this from an extremely reliable source. Actually, the source isn't that exciting, but the information is correct.

And what does Ottavio indicate?

The eighth. The Eighth Man with Four Eyes. This sounds as mysterious as something out of The Da Vinci Code, but let us just agree that even if Ottavio Quattrocchi, the Italian businessman accused in Bofors payoffs, had eight eyes instead of four he could not possibly have foreseen that he would be picked up in February 2007 by the Argentinean police in a barely-known province called Misiones in pursuit of an Interpol "red corner notice number A-44/2/1997".

He could be forgiven if he had begun to believe that he was now safe from the arm of Indian law, his money out of the freeze of British bank accounts. He has been sitting for years in his comfortable home in Milan, talking to media when he chose to do so, and no one from the Italian police ever interfered with his peace.

Doesn't Italy come under the jurisdiction of Interpol, or does Italy make an exception for specially favoured sons? If the warrant could lead to detention in Latin America, then what was Scotland Yard doing when the ageing Quattrocchi withdrew funds that had been frozen in his British bank accounts? Why did the Argentineans, who must be as indifferent to Indian politics as we are to the shenanigans in Buenos Aires, break the silent code that protected Quattrocchi from Interpol for so long? Was there someone in Delhi who tipped the Argentineans off?

These are grave matters, and let someone more competent than me search for answers.

There is always something amusing in the gravest of events, and I am not talking about the "Four Eyes" name.

My sympathies are with the police officer in the Central Bureau of Investigation who was told to cook up a reason for the mysterious 17-day delay between Quattrocchi's arrest and the release of the news by CBI. We know now that the matter went up, but obviously, to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, where it lay for 17 days before a decision could be taken on what to do. One option that was surely considered was whether the arrest could remain a secret, and the thirty-day period, during which a demand for extradition had to be made, be permitted to lapse. The vibrant Indian media had been fooled for 17 days; why not another 13? The risk of course was that if the story broke while Parliament was in session, and the government was found culpable of protecting as highly wanted a man as Quattrocchi, the session would have come to a halt. Dr Singh also surely knew that his personal credibility was on the line. He opted for transparency.

But how then to explain those 17 non-transparent days? I can see a CBI officer scratching his head very hard as he came up with two reasons. The first was that it took time to identify Quattrocchi. But these are days of a telephone and the Internet. A photograph can be transmitted instantly. Try again. The second round of head-scratching must have removed all traces of dandruff. Ah: the CBI could not find anyone to translate from the Spanish.

Narasimha Raoji! Where are you when we need you? There was a time when an Indian prime minister used to be fluent in Spanish, and now we cannot find someone competent to do a simple translation -- not in Delhi, not in our mission in Argentina, not in the foreign office, not even in the language departments of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Questions of course will be raised in Parliament; and decibel levels could hit the ceiling. The government has surely formulated all the answers. The home minister, Shivraj Patil, or even the Prime Minister, will certainly assure the House that every effort will be made to bring

Quattrocchi to trial in Delhi. The Opposition will milk Bofors again, as it has done often enough in the past. Somnath Chatterjee, now in the Speaker's chair, might even suffer from a twinge of nostalgia for the good old days when he used to thunder with increasing levels of moral indignation at Rajiv Gandhi. This will be the nth Parliament session to echo with the Bofors boom.

Unavoidable, I suppose, but I hope that Bofors does not obscure or even drive away a far more important issue, particularly since this is a Budget session. The country is angry about economic policy, and in particular about prices. Economic reform was launched by Narasimha Rao, continued by Atal Behari Vajpayee and pursued by Dr Manmohan Singh. The policy itself has acquired support across party lines, but there is a fundamental problem with its consequences that no one has had either the will or the time to address.

All change, or progress, tends to displace some section of the economic chain. Cotton factories, for instance, made the weaver either irrelevant or marginal. This is inevitable. The answer is not to stop new machinery in cotton mills, but to create a new economy around the displaced so that reasonably prosperous communities do not sink into impoverishment and despair. Democracy, as well as humanity, demands concern for the dispossessed. There is no trace of such concern in the much-vaunted economic reform. Voices are beginning to rise, as the poor begin to understand that the haves are driven by profits and share prices, not by notions of social justice. Anger from the forests is taking the form of Naxalite violence; anxiety from farmlands is turning into angry demonstrations against Special Economic Zones; the threat to food-sellers from the capital-driven malls is driving an agitation in Chennai. The fires are burning separately, but if Delhi continues to show an obstinate indifference, flame could touch flame to create a conflagration.

M. J. Akbar is Editor-in-Chief of the Asian Age and Deccan Chronicle newspapers. He can be reached at mj-akbar@asianage.com. Source: www.khaleejtimes.com



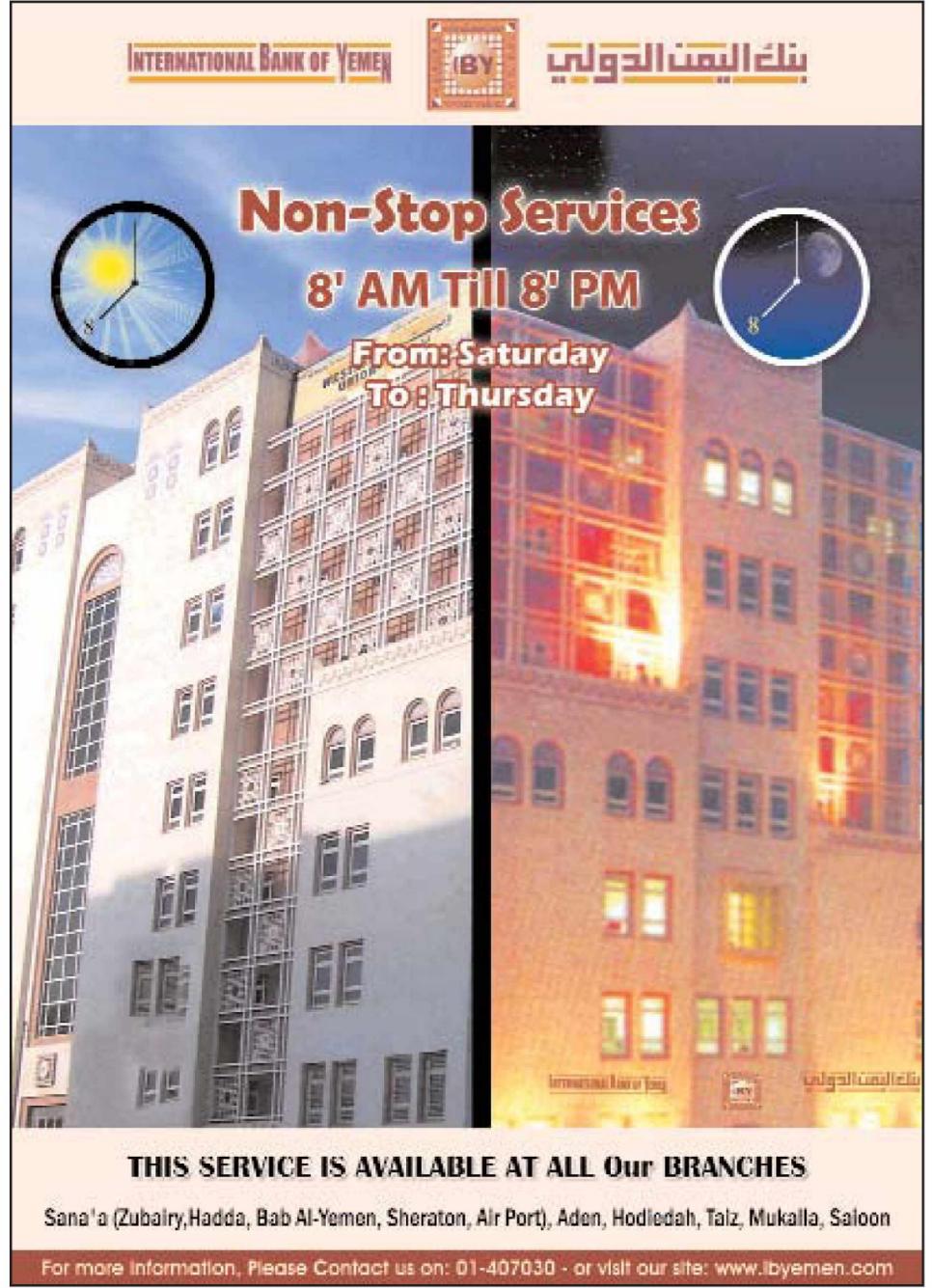
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Is psoriasis infectious?

By: Almigdad Dahesh Mojali
dahesh95@yahoo.com

Most Yemenis instinctively are disgusted and try to avoid being with those who suffer any type of skin disease, without any previous knowledge about whether the disease is infectious or not. As with any other skin disease, many citizens think psoriasis is infectious, but it isn't. Although it's good to avoid patients and to be careful, others sometimes increase such patients' ordeal and cause many additional troubles for them.

Individuals with psoriasis also may feel self-conscious about their appearance and have a poor self-image that stems from fear of public rejection.

Psoriasis is a common chronic disease, but it isn't infectious. Dermatologist and allergist Dr. Mohammed Al-Shami explains, "I don't know why people judge psoriasis as an infectious disease. Psoriasis isn't infectious; rather, it's a common, chronic, scaly rash affecting those of all ages. The most common ages for psoriasis to first appear are in the late teens and in the 50s. It affects men and women equally, although in children, girls more commonly are affected than boys."

Medical studies reveal that psoriasis has been shown to affect health-related quality of life to an extent similar to the effects of other chronic diseases such as depression, heart attack, hypertension, congestive heart failure or type 2 diabetes.

Depending on the severity and location of outbreaks, individuals may experience significant physical discomfort and some disability. Itching and pain can interfere with basic functions such as caring for oneself, walking or sleeping. Infected areas on hands and feet can prevent individuals from working at certain occupations, playing some sports and caring for their family members or the home.

Individuals with psoriasis also may feel self-conscious about their appearance and have a poor self-image that stems from fear of public rejection and psychosexual concerns. Psychological distress can lead to significant depression and social isolation.

"People must be careful to avoid diseases, but such carefulness, which sometimes is associated with disgusting behavior toward psoriasis sufferers, sometimes may increase their ordeal and lead to bigger troubles," Al-Shami noted.

Mohammed Al-Yarimi, 26, from Ibb describes, "I became infected by psoriasis four years ago. When it began, people started deserting me and stopped accompanying me. I went to the doctor and he told me it isn't infectious. I wanted to inform people that the disease wouldn't infect them, but I refrained because I knew they wouldn't believe me. Because the disease is chronic, I spent about two years apart from other people and friends because I reached a point where I didn't want to accompany them."

He added, "Just imagine sitting among people who are disgusted by you. Could you bear that?"

The brother of 24-year-old E.S. from Dhamar expressed, "When she became infected by psoriasis, her friends spread the news and many others began spreading it too. Her fiancé heard it and broke their engagement after five months. We knew the disease wasn't infectious and she started recovering, but we were really ashamed of people."

One man requesting anonymity recalled, "A month after my wedding, I discovered that my wife had psoriasis. I knew that when her medicine finished,



Psoriasis is one of the most difficult skin diseases to treat due to its numerous and various types and causes.

she didn't have money to buy more. She was so frightened and afraid that I might divorce her. In the beginning, I deserted her for a month, but when I learned that psoriasis isn't infectious, I went back to her."

However, Ameen Al-Maswari, 35, from Sana'a has a different experience. "I was infected by psoriasis, so I went to a doctor. Although I didn't use the medicine he gave me, I recovered after six months." He added, "I didn't feel shy around people and they weren't disgusted at me."

According to Al-Shami, psoriasis is an immune-mediated disease, affecting the skin and joints, commonly causing red scaly patches to appear on the skin. Such scaly patches, called psoriatic plaques or lesions, are areas of excessive skin production and inflammation. Skin rapidly accumulates at these sites and takes on a silvery-white appearance. Plaques

Studies prove that like most diseases, psoriasis is influenced by inherited characteristics where those with a family history of the condition tend to develop it earlier in life than those without a family history.

frequently occur at the elbows and knees, but can affect any area, including the scalp and genitals. Psoriasis isn't contagious.

The disorder is a chronic recurring condition varying in severity from minor localized patches to complete body coverage. Additionally, fingernails and toenails frequently are affected and this is called psoriatic nail dystrophy. Psoriasis also can cause joint inflammation, which is known as psoriatic arthritis. Ten to 15 percent of those with psoriasis have psoriatic arthritis.

Psoriasis is probably one of the longest known human illnesses and simultaneously, one of the most misjudged and misunderstood. More recently, psoriasis frequently was described as a variety of leprosy. It became known as Willan's lepra in the late 18th century when English dermatologists Robert Willan and Thomas Bateman differentiated it from other skin diseases.

While it may have been visually, and later semantically, confused with leprosy, it wasn't until 1841 that the condition finally was named psoriasis by Viennese dermatologist Ferdinand von Hebra. The name is derived from the Greek word psora, meaning to itch. Psoriasis was further differentiated into specific types during the 20th century.

To date, specialists don't know what causes psoriasis exactly, although they know most of its risk factors. "What causes psoriasis isn't fully understood, but I can say that the immune system is involved and appears to be overactive in a way that causes inflammation. This also causes growth of extra blood vessels within the skin, causing the red color, and increased turnover of skin cells, which causes scaling and thickening of the skin," Al-Shami explained.

Although the exact causes of psoriasis aren't known, many risk factors highly contribute to its infection, including stress and excessive alcohol consumption. Moreover, studies prove that like most diseases, psoriasis is influenced by inherited characteristics where those with a family history of the condition tend to develop it earlier in life than those without a family history.

Additionally, Al-Shami clarified that pregnancy also may have an effect on the severity of psoriasis; noting that it usually improves with the potential for worsening after the baby's birth, but the reverse also can occur. However, he stressed that psoriasis doesn't affect the unborn child.

No studies or statistics are available in Yemen to show the actual number of psoriasis sufferers, but many Yemeni

dermatologists confirm that those with psoriasis may suffer from depression and loss of self-esteem. As such, quality of life is an important factor in evaluating the severity of the disease.

Psoriasis has many types, whose causes and treatments differ from one to the other. "Actually, there are many types of psoriasis. The most common type among Yemenis is plaque psoriasis. It is considered a persistent or chronic type, which can be treated with medication, but it's difficult to clear up completely with topical treatments alone. It involves large flat plaques of psoriasis with the typical silvery scale. These plaques may fuse together to involve very extensive areas of skin, particularly on the torso and limbs," Al-Shami explained.

More recently, psoriasis frequently was described as a variety of leprosy.

He continued, "Another type is guttate psoriasis, which is multiple tiny areas of psoriasis that tend to affect most of the body. Lesions are usually around the torso, upper arms and thighs. The face, ears and scalp also are commonly affected, but lesions in these areas may be very faint and quickly disappear."

"Psoriasis can affect the palms and soles where they become very dry and thick with some cracking," Al-Shami added, "In brief, psoriasis can affect most body parts, but it has many types and causes according to the part of the body it affects."

Umm Abdulrahman Al-Hababi, 38, notes, "I've had psoriasis on my arms and scalp for about five years. I went to many doctors, but I find the recovery progress very slow, although I take my medicine on time and persistently."

Al-Shami stresses, "Indeed, until now, there's no cure for psoriasis, but it's possible for most patients to control the disease."

"Psoriasis is one of the most difficult skin diseases to treat due to its numerous and various types and causes, but there are many recommendations and ways that can help treat it," dermatologist and allergist Dr. Nabeel Abdu Sa'eed says.

"A psoriasis patient should be exposed to sunshine, which may clear up the condition. Also, the patient can soak in warm water with bath oil and use some cream like Vaseline or emulsifying ointment to soften the skin and prevent it from becoming sore," Sa'eed added.

Neurological disorders affect millions globally, WHO reports

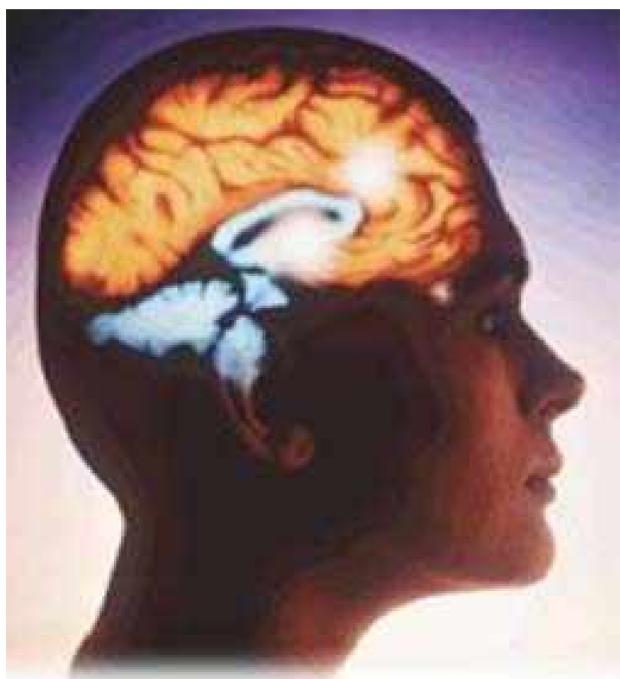
Neurological disorders ranging from epilepsy to Alzheimer's, strokes to headaches, as well as brain injuries, neuroinfections, Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, affect up to one billion people worldwide, says a new report from the World Health Organization.

According to the report published last week under the title, "Neurological disorders: Public health challenges," one billion people are affected worldwide. For example, 50 million people have epilepsy; 62 million are affected by cerebrovascular disease; 326 million suffer migraines and 24 million are affected by Alzheimer's and other types of dementia globally. Neurological disorders affect those in all countries, irrespective of age, gender, education or income.

The WHO report distinguishes neurological disorders from mental disorders, the first of which are diseases of the central and peripheral nervous system; in other words, the brain, spinal cord, cranial nerves, peripheral nerves, nerve roots, autonomic nervous system, neuromuscular junction and muscles.

Such disorders include epilepsy, Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, cerebrovascular diseases including strokes, migraines and other headache disorders, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, neuroinfections, brain tumors, traumatic nervous system disorders such as brain trauma and neurological disorders resulting from malnutrition.

On the other hand, mental disorders are "psychiatric illnesses" or diseases appearing primarily as abnormalities of thought, feeling or behavior and producing either distress or impaired function.



Neurological disorders affect one billion people globally.

A study published in the June 2005 European Journal of Neurology revealed that an estimated 6.8 million people die annually because of neurological disorders. In Europe, the economic cost of neurological diseases was estimated at approximately \$139 billion in 2004.

Access to appropriate care is difficult for many of those with neurological disorders, as well as their families and caregivers. For this reason, WHO advocates integrating neurological care into primary health

care because for many, primary health care is the only access to medical care that they have. In these settings, doctors can use low-technology interventions. Community-based rehabilitation is also an option.

"Despite the fact that highly effective, low-cost treatments are available, as many as nine out of 10 people suffering epilepsy in Africa go untreated. Health systems must be strengthened to deliver better care for those with neurological disorders," says WHO Director-General, Dr.

Margaret Chan.

The reasons for non-availability of treatment include inadequate health delivery systems, lack of trained personnel, absence of essential drugs and prevalence of traditional beliefs and practices. "In order to reduce the impact of neurological disorders, innovative approaches involving strong partnerships must be put in place," says professor Johan Aarli, president of the World Federation of Neurology and a member of the group that wrote the report.

As the global population ages, the impact of neurological disorders will be felt both in developed and developing countries. Rita Levi-Montalcini, winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine, commented, "The burden of neurological disorders is reaching a significant proportion in countries with a growing percentage of the population over 65 years."

The WHO report recommends a series of simple but effective actions, arguing for greater commitment by decision makers, increased social and professional awareness, strategies that address stigma and discrimination, national capacity building and international collaboration.

Use of helmets by motorcyclists and seatbelts in motor vehicles can prevent traumatic brain injury. Immunization against meningitis as well as early identification and treatment of malaria are additional examples of concrete actions to reduce the burden of neurological disorders.

WHO developed the new report in partnership with key nongovernmental organizations in the field of neurological disorders, as well as organizations caring for those affected by these conditions. It further benefited from contributions by experts and reviewers from all regions of the world.

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Yemeni youths exceed to pioneer

By: Nisreen Shadad

The Health and Culture Center held a celebration under the auspices of Abdulaziz Al-Maqaleh, presidential advisor and director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research, to honor the winners in the annual Souad Al-Sabah literature and science competition on Feb.25.

Hani Saleh received the first scientific award, which is approximately \$3,000, and Fahd Al-Qasimi received the first cultural award, which is also \$3,000.

Al-Maqaleh congratulated all innovative individuals and most importantly, Al-Sabah, an innovative Kuwaiti woman interested in creative Arab youths. "Today is a pleasing day for both Yemen and Kuwait. Yemen is honored because two of its sons received first prize in Al-Sabah's competition and Kuwait is honored as well because it is celebrating its national day," he noted.

"Today is a day for both Yemen and Kuwait," declared Miteeb Al-Usaimi of the Kuwait Council.

Al-Sabah owns one of the Arab world's pioneer publishing houses, which is dedicated to publishing scientific and historical works with the intention of distributing such information more widely in the Arab world. Moreover, it excels in publishing exclusive works on literature, history and social issues.

Since 1988, Al-Sabah Publishing House has granted eight culture awards annually to encourage creative Arabs. Four are called Souad Al-Sabah awards for intellectual and artistic creativity, while the other four are named Al-Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak for scientific creativity.

"Although Yemen is absent to some extent from international cultural events, it has a lot of innovative youths who not only win, but they exceed to pioneer," noted Nizar Ghanim, general trustee of the Health and Culture Center.

Saleh's scientific research, "The History of Pharmacy" and Al-Qasimi's novel, "Dislodged Horizon," were presented with the works of many candi-



(From the right) Al-Qasimi, the winner of the first culture award, thanked all attendees, especially Ghanim, the general trustee of the Health and Culture Center, Al-Maqaleh, the director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research, and Al-Usaimi, from the Kuwait Council.

dates from Arab nations to the arbitration committee composed of critics, professors and poets to choose the best. The works were given to them namelessly in order to have a more fair competition.

Al-Qasimi's novel is about a Yemeni youth struggling to improve himself. As Al-Qasimi says, the character represents hundreds of youths' issues in Yemen and the problems they face during the journey of their lives. It also discusses the controversy between cities and the village, as well as qat and education.

"I feel that being addicted to qat causes them to lose their ambitions, as well as their education. They usually are satisfied to finish high school. In my novel, I tried my best to be objective and represent the reality we actually face," he explains.

Al-Qasimi took a year to write the novel, commenting, "I wrote this novel irregularly, so it took a long time." However, he carried the ambitious seeds of his family, noting, "Although my parents aren't educated, they are so ambitious."

He adds, "We're like raw material and using such materials means building the future. Youths also need to awaken the giant inside of them. I promise all

Yemenis that creativity's wick flames and it'll never give up. I dream of obtaining the international award."

Al-Qasimi is a teacher at the Ibb branch of the Science and Technology University. Having received a bachelor's degree in mathematics, he adds, "I'm now preparing for my master's in computer information systems."

The author, who likes to write poetry and novels, says, "I believe that if each person uses every minute of his or her life and lives 70 years, they actually will have used only 10 percent of their intellectual potential, so we all need to awaken the giant inside of us."

He continues, "While studying in school, I contributed to children's magazines and several of my poems and stories were published. The most recent award I received was a poetic award for a poem published in Saudi Arabia's Al-Masa'a magazine. Numerous stories also were published in newspapers. I came to Sana'a to complete my studies."

With a diploma in programming, Saleh worked at Aden Refinery Company while studying and notes, "You may wonder about my research topic because it's a far cry from my specialty."

Regarding why he chose this topic, he explains, "Research topics actually are limited to four topics, three of which require specializing in medicine, so I felt there was only one topic I had the chance to do and that was the history of pharmacy."

He continued, "I began my research, but since I have no background in research methodologies, I depended upon a book called, 'How to conduct research or make a study,' written by Ahmed Shalabi. It helped me a lot regarding the methods I had to follow."

Despite the fact that it was his first research, Saleh received the Al-Sabah scientific award. "Previously, I conducted a simple study about stealing Yemeni songs. Although it was so simple, it helped me in how to organize my thoughts."

The competition presented a challenge for Saleh regarding whether to participate or not. "After two years, I won't have the chance to participate in this competition

because it's for those under age 30," he noted.

"I concentrated on my research for five months. I didn't encounter any difficulty obtaining resources because I found a lot in Aden. I also traveled to Sana'a for more information and it really did help," he explains.

However, one difficulty Saleh faced while conducting his research was contradicting sources. "Each book gave me different information; therefore, I tried my best to understand and comprehend the ideas in each. Consequently, I wrote about both of them and made one outweigh the other, according to the information I received."

The real motive that pushed him to participate was the chance to prove himself. "Whenever I made something, I found a lot of people praising me, but I want to know the actual means that I own. I'd like to be sure and know if I am as good as people claim." The need to be more independent and have a feeling of self-esteem also pushed him to take up the challenge.

Saleh adds, "Souad [Al-Sabah] is someone dear to me and she's like my mother because she embraced me. My mother died when I was 7 years old and my dad died when I was 15. I'm the eldest, so I worked to support my family. What prevents me from completing my studies is the spending university requires."

Al-Sabah was born in 1942 in Kuwait as a member of the ruling family. She graduated from Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science in 1973 and obtained a doctorate in economics from the U.K.'s Sari Guilford University in 1981.

She later returned to Kuwait and established the Souad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House. She has published several books of poetry and established a literary prize that carries her name. She also has written hundreds of economic and political essays, as well as popular articles in several Arabic local and international newspapers and magazines. Her poetry has been translated into many languages, including English.

Al-Sabah is director of the Kuwait Stock Exchange and a member of the Higher Council for Education, the executive committee of the World Muslim Women's Organization for Southeast Asia, and the Arab Intellect Forum's board of trustees and its executive committee.

She's also a founding member of the Arab Cultural Establishment, the Arab Human Rights Organization's executive committee and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development.

Al-Sabah's poetry has captured the attention of popular artists as well as university researchers in many countries. Her literary publications include Wamdatt Bakira (Early blinks) and Lahathat min Umri (Moments of my life, 1961). Her scientific works in English include Development Planning in an Oil Economy and the Role of the Woman (1983) and Kuwait: Anatomy of a Crisis Economy (1984).

Literary Corner

By: Abu Al-Kalima Al-Tayybah

Yemeni Annals (Hawliat Yamaniyah) (XI)

Subject Book: Yemeni Annals (Hawliat Yamaniyah)

[1224 – 1316 AH (1809 – 1898 AD)]

Author: Muhsin Bin Ahmed Al-Harazi et al

Checked and Edited by Abdullah Mohammed Al-Hibshi

Language: Arabic

Publisher: Ministry of Information and Culture

Year Published: 1400 AH/1980 AD

No. of Pages: 661

1309 AH (1891 – 1892 AD): Things get tough for the Ottomans as rebellions and lawlessness prevails in many parts of the country. Caravans are held up and robbed. The Turks even find it rough in the cities as well to the point that curfews are imposed for the first time, which is a new phenomenon to Yemen altogether. In this context, on the lighter side, the author relates a story on the lighter side. In the City of Sana'a, there was a wedding and usually at mid-evening hours, a party from the groom's side goes to fetch the bride from her home. This party of accompaniment was made up of some eight persons dressed up in battle gear as a guard of honor. A Turkish patrol met up with this party and because of the difficulties faced by the Turks in general, the inability to speak Arabic and with the members of the party being armed, the Turks suspected them to be thieves from outside of Sana'a. Efforts to explain the truth to the Turks failed and they took them to one of their bases. The party members managed to convince the Turks to let them explain to a commanding officer. It was only when it was close to dawn that one did come, who spoke Arabic, and the party was worried that the bride's family would be insulted by the delay of the party and would demand to have their honor restored. Luckily the attending Turkish Officer who came did speak Arabic and was somewhat understanding. The party was released from arrest and it took them some time to make the bride's family believe them. In the meantime, at the groom's family neighborhood, his family and their guests were worried that perhaps something had happened to their emissaries and because of the curfew, could not even try to search for their bridal party, which they never thought was under arrest, but rather thought them to have faced trouble at the bride's house and this were worried that the whole wedding ceremony was going to be a total waste of time and expense, and perhaps the beginning of a long dispute between the two clans. Then the author comments about this "new yasak" or curfew, in his somewhat naive, but admonishingly critical manner, "just imagine if one wants to get something from the store at night (for preparing dinner, or for an essential good), this would be now unthinkable on account of this ridiculous curfew". The author contends that there was a large pilgrimage party to Mecca from Yemen and "good health, without any sickness and there was not any 'blockade' by the foreigners of the sea, so thank God for such good tidings." However the Turks were facing awesome difficulties with many of their troops returning wounded from battles in Anis, Amran and other places of Hashid territory.

1310 (1892 – 1893 AD): Many Turkish troops arrive to Sana'a sick on their horses and mules. The Sultan sent an inspector to inspect "the truth about Yemen, and the hearts of the Turkish commanders, big or small were frightened. The inspector just took it easy and it "was not clear what he was really going to do". In the month of Rajab (7th Month of the Hegira Calendar, the people of Sana'a were ordered to go out to construct and repair roads "in all the four directions, East, West, Yemen and Levant (i.e., in the direction of South and North, in reference to Sana'a) and all the people of the outlying districts were also asked to build and fix their roads within their borders completely until the beasts and cannons could pass through it without any hindrance." They all continued as such with each area bringing out a hundred of its folk every day, "even Bani Bahoul, with their remoteness from the road South, they were forced to come out and all the tribes were in full compliance of these orders without any defiance from anyone". The Turks never stopped constructing this year, according to the author and constructed a fortress atop Mount Nuqum, where the lookout tower was. They also widened the gates, and as the author says, Even when the gates were removed, the tribesmen would not dare come into the city, whereas before, they would even come into the city by climbing over its walls, but when the Government has a club – even an oppressive one – this kept them at bay". This year was a year of good rain with the rain continuing to fall for a month from the start of February to the end of the month. Then a committee of inspectors arrived from Istanbul and there were conflicts between the Turkish Commander Marshall Faithy and the Inspectors, with conflicting reports going to Istanbul from both of them.

1311 AH (1893 – 1894 AD): The author goes on the light side again, reporting on the efforts of the Turks to stop the use of the powdered tobacco, "burtugan", which the addicts thereof would usually put on the inside of the lower lips and closed all the stores and places where the powder was ground or sold, except that of a Christian trader, who was called the "Italian" and this was a great abomination, according to the author, because the "Italian" was reportedly doing a lot of evil things, to the point that the "samsara" or inn or warehouse was attracting people, "some of whom would come and throw stones. This year was a bad year for the pilgrims to Mecca with a plague spreading and "because of the demand for graves, the cost rose to Seven Riyals and to Nine Riyals. Going back to the Inspectors, the author comments that there was no benefit obtained from them and they "just were friction makers between the Turks and Arabs. They set up a council which they called the 'gomison' (i.e., commission) for looking into any oppressions, with the membership of the foreigners of the sea, so thank God for such good tidings." However the Turks were facing awesome difficulties with many of their troops returning wounded from battles in Anis, Amran and other places of Hashid territory.

We end the book by continuing with 1311 up to 1316 AH next week, God willing.



Saleh, the winner of the first scientific award, awarded Suad Al-Sabah a certificate of honor, handed over to the Kuwait Council.

The image of women in Yemeni proverbs

By: Yemen Times Staff

"Shawr al-mara al-sayb saba'a masayb."

"A woman's right opinion is worth seven crises."

There are many Yemeni proverbs about the position of women. Most give women inferior status and very few give them self-esteem. This series aims to discuss Yemeni society's projection about women's status, as well as how cultural and social factors affect mechanisms that perpetuate women's under-representation in managing and controlling power levers.

Since Yemen is an Islamic country and Islam plays a vital role in shaping its people's perspectives, it's essential to gauge to what extent Islam affects their understanding about the status of women. Most important is how Yemenis interpret the religion to justify their individual interests.

Talal Saif, a worker for hire, agrees with the above proverb and considers women the source of all problems. "Most problems in our lives are because of women. Although Islam is against this proverb, I

agree with it according to the reality in which I live."

Kiosk owner Arif Al-Shara'bi asserts, "A woman's mind is half that of a man, so she doesn't have the ability to make decisions like men."

Housewife Maryam Saleh has experienced such discrimination and is really dissatisfied with the situation. "When stating my opinion, the men laugh at me and ignore it. When it turns out to be right, they never say it was mine; rather, they claim it was their opinion. However, being wrong means a shame upon me forever."

Even if consulted, she adds, "They consult me on simple things, but never trust me on big issues."

Yemenis sometimes know a lot about Islamic instruction, but they still use some Qur'anic verses to satisfy their individual interests. "Although my husband is a religious man, he doesn't follow Islamic instruction on this point. The Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) used to ask his wives and take into account their opinions. For example, when his companions disobeyed him, he consulted Um Salaam and then followed her advice," Saleh notes.

"Yemeni men actually don't take women's opinions seriously. Yes, they consult them, but in the end, they consid-

er their opinions much better. If discovering that her opinion was better, some will admit it, but most deny it," says Hana'a Al-Rahabi, coordinator at the Culture Center for Foreigners' Call, a center for informing foreigners about Islam.

The center's assistant director, Abdulaziz Atiq, vehemently criticizes such proverbs and those who use Islamic instructions for individual purposes. "Women have fully mature minds, which makes them responsible for their sins. They are given the intelligence to choose between the way to paradise and the way to hell. They also are given the ability to choose whoever they want to represent them if they aren't free to go to the courts. The Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) gives them the responsibility to lead the house in their husband's absence. If quarrelling with their husband about an Islamic rule regarding any issue, they can implement Allah's desire, thus disobeying their husband, whom they are to obey. None of this could be fulfilled if women had immature minds," Atiq stated.

He continued, "It really is nonsense to say that a woman's right opinion is worth seven crises. Not all women's opinions are wrong. The best example is that they hold the opinion that obeying Allah is good, so should we consider this wrong?"



The image of a Yemeni woman, by Mohammed al-Yamani

The Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) once was angry because his companions didn't urgently execute what he asked of them. His wife told him that they were stunned by the terms of Al-Hudaybiyah Pact, so she advised him to do it and then they would follow. He did so according to her opinion and they indeed followed."

Atiq concludes, "If a woman's right opinion being worth seven crises is a traditional heritage, then we must consider that the Prophet Mohammed's order to take half of our religion from his wife Aisha is wrong. It's generalization, which is considered randomization. I could say that this statement is said by an ignorant individual, but if he's a man of knowledge, then he's an innovator. Both the ignorant and the innovator are bad attributes. No wise person would accept them. Religiously speaking, both are sins."

Al-Rahabi agrees that there's misconception and misinterpretation of Islamic instruction. "I think misunderstanding and misinterpreting Qur'anic verses, as well as the Hadith, play a vital role in such concepts since some are used to belittle women's opinions."

Saba Bank clerk in international management Sulaiman Al-Jarassani points out that many Yemeni men use verses of the Qur'an or the Hadith simply to belittle women and make them keep silent. However, he doesn't accept the proverb because it's illogical. "It contradicts itself. How can the consultation be right and at the same time, be considered as seven crises?"

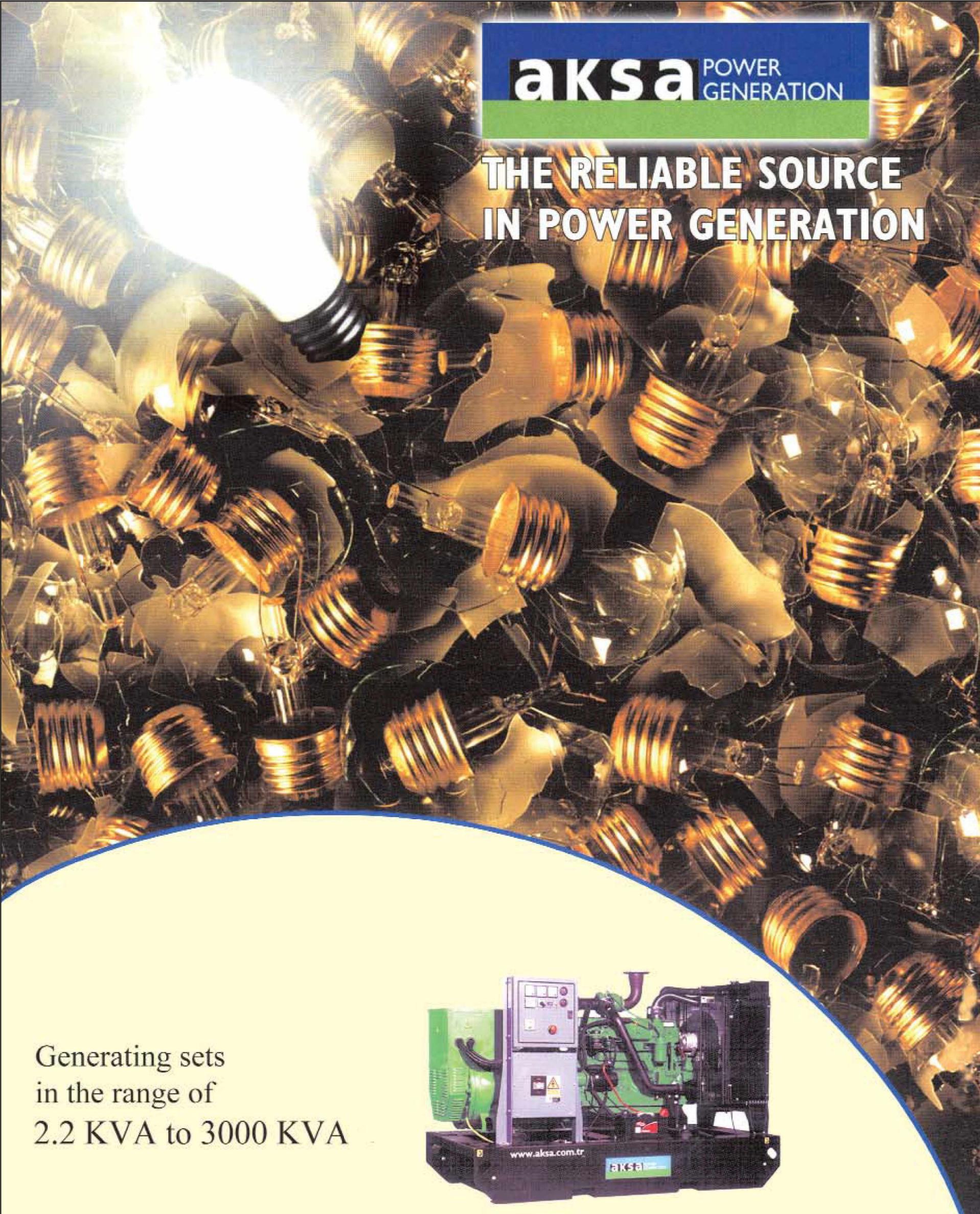
He adds, "My mother and my elder sisters educated me until I reached this level, so they are behind my success. For me, I trust women's opinions and most importantly, their education."

"Surely, there are stories behind such proverbs; however, the story ends and the proverb remains because it's easily circulated," Folklore House director Arwa Othman notes. "It's known that Yemeni cultural heritage mostly belittles women's intellect. Whenever ignorance

is widespread, you can observe more backwardness, as well as underdevelopment, and then women usually become the ones upon whom people hang their mistakes and their frustrations," she adds. "People claim that women are the cause behind every problem, but I don't know why. In our society, powerful women are the only ones who have the power to impose their opinions upon men," notes Asrar Al-Jaradi, a student at the Science and Technology University.

Ilham Yasir from Syria criticized the Yemeni proverb, asserting that such a proverb essentially is wrong, especially in Islam. "If it's true, then why did the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) ask his companions before his death to seek answers about Islam from his wife Aisha. Why did he trust a woman, if women – as men claim – have less ability to think or criticize?" she asked.

"We can judge someone's opinion as wrong – even as a crisis – according to its contradiction of Islamic principles and rules. Additionally, not only do we consider women's opinions wrong, but also men's, if they contradict Allah's decrees," Atiq concluded.

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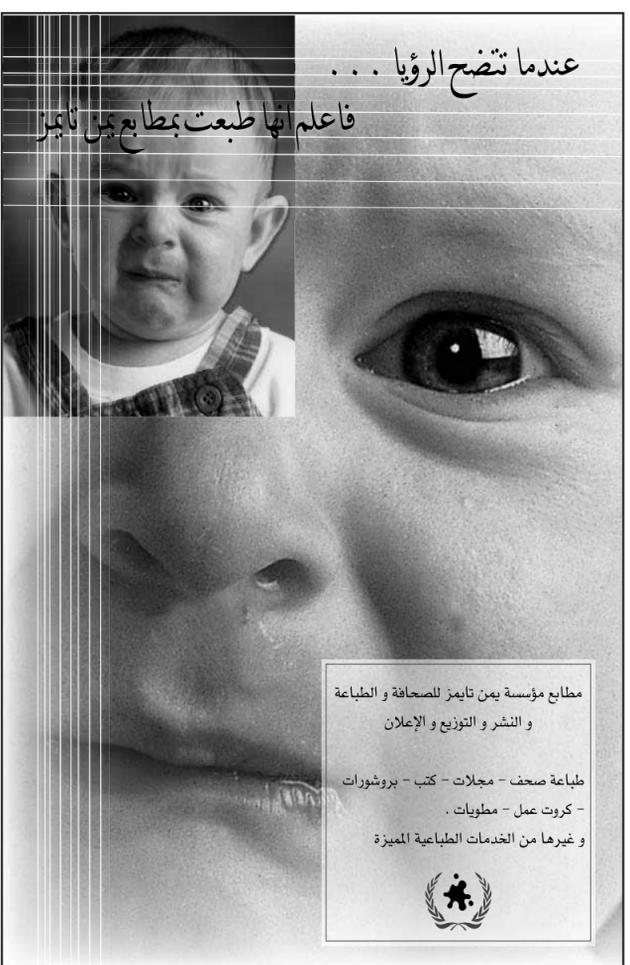
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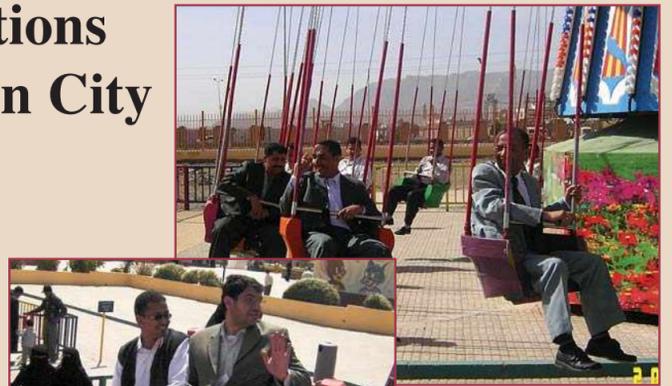
Yemen Times starts its 16th anniversary celebrations

A fun day for Yemen Times staff and friends at Fun City

Yemen Times launched its celebrations of the 16th anniversary in an unconventional way this year. Over 250 people of Yemen Times staff and friends gathered at Fun City to enjoy their time under the theme of "one family", as the celebration included the whole family. As the pictures tell, everyone had a great time.



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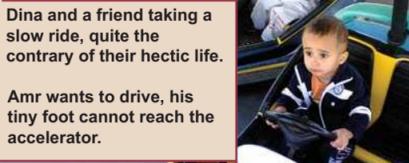
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Nasri (right) looks drained after he had tried all the games in the amusement park. Ameen is no less tired.



Amr wants to drive, his tiny foot cannot reach the accelerator.



This tiny roller coaster is not ment for grown-ups, but who cares!



Children had their share of fun, too.



Abdulmajeed was the only rider of this train for a long time.



Ayah and mother had much fun that day, quite unusual for both.



A happy pose for the camera before the nauseating feelings take over.

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