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# YEMEN TIMES

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*Verdict in Limburg case to be issued next February*

## Limburg prosecutor's deficiency exposed

By MOHAMMED AL-QADHI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Sana'a Counter-Terrorism Appeal Court decided Saturday, December 25 to pass the verdict against 15 al-Qaeda suspects charged with terrorism operations on February 5, 2005. The court's judge announced the decision during the hearing session that lasted for six full hours.

The unique feature of this hearing was the apparent offensive of the defendant's lawyer Abdulaziz Al-Samawi against what he called 'groundless' accusations of the prosecutors. Crowds were seen impressed in the courtroom with the degree of preciseness of the lawyer in pinpointing what seemed to be information that violated logic.

Al-Samawi said that particularly one of the prosecutor's claims is illogical. "How could have the defendants carried 1.2 tons of explosives into a container that could barely carry 250 kg?" he asked hinting the weak justifications of the prosecution.

"Those suspects are mere scapegoats and are innocent of the charges presented," he said.

The heated debate between the pros-



Judge Saeed al-Qatta in the center of the panel during the hearing on Saturday. (Al-Ayyam photo)

ecutor and the defendants' advocates caught the attention of the audience, who were surprised to see Al-Samawi presented to the judge a 40-page appeal containing 25 reasons for the alleged groundlessness of the preliminary verdict against his clients.

Al-Samawi strongly demanding that they should be acquitted.

He said that his clients are "victims of the US arrogance under the pretext of what is called the war on terrorism." After a 2-hour break, the court listened to the appeals of some of the defendants including the suspected ring-leader Fawaz al-Rabee who admitted his connection and relationship with al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

Al-Rabee denied that he killed the soldier Hameed Khasroof, and hence protested the prosecution's demand to have his 10-year imprisonment sentence be intensified to death penalty. Al-Rabee and other three defendants claimed during their appeal that the confessions they made during interrogations were taken by force and that they were beaten up and tortured. Ibraheem Huwaidi said that he tried to commit suicide twice due to the psychological pressure and torture he faced at the intelligence prison.

At the end of the hearing, Judge Saeed al-Qatta decided that the verdict would be pronounced on February 25th, 2005.

During the earlier appeal hearings, the prosecution presented the evidences that made it appeal the primary court verdict and demand intensification of the jail sentence to death penalty against some of the suspects. The prosecutor said that the law does not differentiate between those people who forge official documents to hide from security or for any other reasons. He also said that the suspects' claim that their plan to assassinate the US ambassador was just a mere talk does not exempt them from punishment as long as they agreed to carry out a criminal act.



Suspect Fawaz al-Rabee seen here smiling during the trial as he admitted his connection to Osama bin Laden but denied killing soldier Hameed Khasroof. (Yemen Times photo)

The prosecution also refuted the appeals made by eight of the defendants during the last six hearings and described them as baseless. "It is not true that they made confessions under force and threat; they were completely free when giving such confessions. The primary court verdict was not based only on such confessions but on other evidences, testimonies of the witnesses, experts' reports and others," chief prosecutor Saeed al-Akil said. He demanded the court that verdicts against all defendants be intensified, based on the

evidences presented earlier as there is no reason to lessen the verdicts.

Some of the defendants expressed strong support al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden during the trial sessions.

During the last hearing the director of the legal department at the US embassy in Sana'a presented a request to the court supporting the lawsuit made against the defendants and in the name of the Hunt Oil Company whose helicopter was shot by some of the tried suspects.

Continued on page 2

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## More solidarity with Al-Khaiwani

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Journalist Abdulkareem Al-Khaiwani, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Shoura is now receiving more support from within the country and from abroad.

Demands to free him from prison have reached greater heights in the last few months, especially as the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) has been preparing a major offensive to press for his release.



Al-Khaiwani

**The YJS promises more action**

In fact, the YJS council has requested for the second time an appointment with the Minister of Justice to discuss issues concerning the ongoing imprisonment of Al-Khaiwani and the judicial process in his trial procedures. According to sahw.net, the first appointment had to be cancelled as the minister had to attend a session of the Higher Judicial Council chaired by President Saleh.

The council of the YJS is to hold a meeting next Saturday to discuss the general situation of the press in the country and also to go through the reports submitted by ad hoc committees on tasks conducted since last March,

especially concerning efforts to release Al-Khaiwani.

The YJS said that it may hold a prolonged sit-in that may lead to a strike during the coming days to pressurize the government to resume the trial of Al-Khaiwani, said Hamdi Al-Bukari, member of the YJS council and head of the Training and Profession Committee.

He said that YJS would conduct solidarity activities that would continue until a date for the appeal session is decided upon.

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## YJS condemns attack on Al-Zajil Chief Editor

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) registered a report from Al-Zajil weekly independent newspaper, which is temporarily issued twice a month.

The newspaper complains of the attack of its Editor-in-chief Sadiq Al-Jarrash who was assaulted by an unidentified group of gunmen on Monday evening Oct. 20.

The attackers were on a car with the plate No. 1642. They got out of their car immediately and used various tools to severely beat Al-Jarrash along with two of his bodyguards.

The taxi that was carrying Al-Jarrash was damaged by the attackers when on his way to the newspaper headquarters. Al-Jarrash was stabbed in his right hand

while fighting the attackers in Al-Mashhad Area.

Condemning the attack, the YJS call upon the Minister of Interior to order the concerned parties to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice in order to be punished for what they committed.

Such a horrifying incident sparked fear and concern among the press community.

## Workshop on personnel management

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

The Social Care Fund organized on Saturday 25th December a training program for around 26 of its employees on the "Personnel Management" that took place in the National Institute for Administration Sciences and will last for 5 days.

There are four academic lectures among which was that of Ms. Nawal

AL-Hadad who Told Yemen Times about the nature of the workshop.

She said: "The main goal of the training program is to develop the personnel management. The participants come from different places of governorates. In our training program we focus on how to develop the management particularly personnel management. We focus as well on the group work so that they can have a chance to

discuss freely the problems they face in their work and try to find out how to solve these problems."

She further added: "The participants are active and do pretty good even though they come from different levels. Some of them are managers and some are small staff with small jobs. We find that some problems have been solved by the fruitful discussions."

Continued from page 1

## Limburg prosecutor's deficiency exposed

Defendants previously denied their involvement in these operations. They said the confessions they made were taken by force and that they were subject to beating and torture. They disclosed that they reached an agreement with cleric Hamoud al-Hitar, head of the dialogue committee with extremists, to give up their fanatic views and take the path of tolerance.

"Please help us; we do not have any devastating ideas," Ibraheem Huawaidi told the judge while reading his appeal. He refuted all allegations made by the prosecution against him. "I do refute and deny all allegations about my involvement in an armed gang or attacking Western embassies or attempting assignment of the US embassy," he alleged.

On his part, Kasem al-Raimi requested that the court order the prosecution to bring evidence of its charges against him. The other five defendants refused to comment on the appeal of the prosecution without having advocacy.

When the judge offered the defendants to response to the accusations in

writing, they used the platform to openly send a political message saying that the trial was only to please the USA and they also denied all charges. They said that the whole trial is a mere scenario to satisfy the superpower adding that it is a shame to do so in a time 'the USA is committing massacres in Iraq and the Muslim world'.

After the hearing, which is considered one of the longest in the recent history of Yemen, some of those who attended said that the lawyers proved to a certain degree that the prosecutors lacked substantial evidence against the suspects. They also noted that lawyer Abdulaziz Al-Samawi was able to show that the prosecutor's accusations contradicted with logic. Among those contradictions was the prosecutor's claim that the defendants carried 1.2 tons of explosives in a fiberglass container that can hold a maximum of 250 kg.

The court had sentenced on August 28th one of the defendants to death while 14 others received prison terms of three to 10 years for being found guilty of forming an armed group and

carrying out attacks on Yemeni and Western targets. Hizam Mujali was sentenced to death for killing a security man named Hamid Khasroof at a security checkpoint.

Omar Saeed Hasan Jarallah, Fawzi al-Wajeeh, Mohammed Saeed Ali al-Amari, Fawzi Yahia al-Hababi, and Yasser Ali Salem (tried in absentia) received ten years in jail for bombing the French Tanker Limburg. The two brothers Fawaz al-Rabee and Abu Bakr al-Rabee were sentenced to 10 years in jail.

The other five militants (Ibraheem Mohammed al-Huawaidi, Aref Saleh Ali Mujali, Mohammed Abdullah al-Dailami, Abdulghani Ali Hussein Kaifan, and Kasem Yahia al-Raimi) were sentenced to five years in prison. The two defendants, Khaled Ahmad al-Jalob and Saleem Mohammed Ali al-Dailami, were sentenced to three years in prison for falsifying documents relating to the various attacks.

Yemen Times staff Hassan Al-Zaidi also contributed to the report.

## More solidarity with Al-Khaiwani

Al-Bukari expected that tents would be pitched in front of the Court of Appeals compound where journalists would be dwelling in relays.

In response to a question about the reaction of the YJS if the government refuses to look into their request, Al-Bukari said, "We hope they will meet our demands, which is within the context of the law."

He added, "Otherwise, we will accelerate our protest into strikes in all media establishments in the country."

Yet, he stated that it is neither in the state's interest nor in the country's to continue the ongoing 'unjustifiable attack on journalism, and gag mouths, turning Yemen into a vast prison'.

On the other hand the Writers Union of the Russian City St. Petersburg has sent a letter to the President of the Republic asking him to enhance press freedom standards and release detained pressmen and scholars "who have been thrown unfairly into prison."

The letter said the acts do not conform to the articles of Yemen's constitution and ethics. The letter indicated that detainees were subject to health problems and their safety could be jeopard-

ized. The Union specifically demanded the freeing of editor-in-chief of Al-Shura, Abdulkarim Al-Khaiwani, and all similar opinion prisoners.

### Support for Al-Khaiwani from Michigan

Meanwhile, the Yemeni community in Michigan, US, arranged last Sunday a solidarity festival with Al-Khaiwani who is detained in Sana'a Central Prison.

The festival was held at the headquarters of the Yemeni-American Cultural Center amid the presence of a number of Yemeni community leaders and journalists.

The festival would send letters to US NGOs and international human rights watchdogs to exert pressure on the Yemeni government to free Al-Khaiwani, said Ali Al-Faqih, member of the festival preparatory committee.

Activists expect the festival to start an intensive campaign to release Al-Khaiwani and invalidate the Court of First Instance sentence against him, especially as judicial inquiries have unveiled misconduct of the same judge

who issued the sentence. This may result in disciplinary action against him, and may have implications on the sentences he issued. "To continue the detention of Al-Khaiwani, we are only harming Yemen's reputation around the world," said Mohammed Ghaleb, one of the community leaders.

"Press freedom in Yemen is still subject to many restrictions and limitations that need to be lifted for the sake of Yemen and its people in and out of the country," he concluded.

Al-Khaiwani, editor of the opposition weekly Al-Shoura, began serving a one-year prison sentence on September 5. He was convicted of incitement, insulting the president, publishing false news, and causing tribal and sectarian discrimination. Al-Khaiwani was allegedly charged under both Yemen's Press Law and Penal Code.

Despite his appeal, Al-Khaiwani's appeal did not receive enough attention by the Appeals Court and his case has been stretching for months.

The court also suspended Al-Shoura for six months in the same verdict issued by the Court of First Instance in Sana'a.

## Students detained by political security

BY HASSAN AL-ZAIDI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Six students from Al Tu'aman Tribe, one of the tribes of Marib, are still being detained by the political security in Sana'a after the Jordanian authorities deported them in the fall of the current month.

The students were not considered to continue their studies at the Jordanian University under the pretext that they are a wandering tourist cell.

Relatives of the detainees sent a letter to President Saleh in which they appealed to him to seriously look into this matter as well as to order the concerned parties to release their children.

They claim that the students were given scholarships by the Yemeni government to study in Jordan and that they did not commit any mistake or any legal violations to receive such procedures.

A huge lunch reception was held by one of the Sheikhs when his son was released by the Jordanian security authorities after being allegedly caught because of his arrival from Iraq.

Relatives of the detainees consider the procedures against their children a kind of injustice and violation against their rights. What is more violent is detaining them at the Sana'a International Airport and landing them in prison for more than 20 days.

## Deaths rise in Taiz Central prison

TAIZ BUREAU

The death phenomena within the prisoners has increased during the recent period, due to the spreading of diseases and sicknesses in the shadow of low services, cleanliness, and health care, as an imprisoned person has died there. Meanwhile, another man committed suicide. As a result, one of the two corpses was taken to the General Republican Hospital freezer whereas the imprisoned Hameed Abdo Ali Ahmed, who comes from Shar'ab

al-Rownah, Taiz, died on 8/12/2003. As per information sources, the percentage of deaths in the central prison of Taiz has exceeded the number of the deaths in one of the hospitals during the year. It is worth mentioning that the Taiz central prison capacity is fixed for 700 prisoners, meanwhile, there are more than 1500 prisoners in there. This condition exists during the absence of the care and the interest in Taizism and the health of such prisoners that leads to a spreading of such sicknesses and killing diseases and slow-death.

## Women National Committee holds Gender and development workshop

BY FAHMIA AL-FOTIH  
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Supported by United Nations Population Fund, and the Women National Committee along with the Red Crescent Association, a 2-day workshop devoted to the gender and development was concluded on Sunday December 26 2004.

Mrs. Rasheeda AL-Hamadani, the head of Women National Committee, in statement to Yementimes "This workshop will focus on the gender issues and its tools and how they can be incorporated into development for the Red Crescent volunteers as the association has big staff who have efficiently worked during the war and in other activities.

"So we want this staff to be acquainted with the gender and its meanings as they have a big role in

raising awareness among society members in gender, women empowerment, millennium goals, women political participation, violence against women and discriminative laws. We try through this 2-day workshop to let the members know these concepts"

Eatedal Abdu Naser, Red Crescent Secretary-general, also told Yementimes "We have 30 boys and girls today from the Red Crescent and I hope that they could be trained and know the real role of the women in building society. They will in turn go to the field and spread the true concepts about gender"

A number of papers were presented through the two days. "Background about the Development" was presented by Ms. Soha Bashreen, "Gender" submitted by Ms. Horia Mashour, "Gender and Health" by Nouria Shuja AL-Deen, and "Political Participation" by Dr. Abdulkader AL-Bana and "Violence against women" by Ms. Soha Bashreen.

## Course on situation of Presswomen

The Yemeni Presswomen Forum organized on Thursday Dec. 23 an intensified course for the field survey team responsible for dealing with the situation of the Yemeni presswomen working for different media's.

Trainees from governorates all over Yemen have joined the course that will last for at least 6 months.

Dr. Mohammad Abdulwahab Al-Faqeeh, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Information, Sana'a University along with a number of media experts are responsible for the task of training.

The participants will listen to intensive lectures on the importance of revising field and office investigations after they conduct comparisons on a sample of researches with unintentional mistakes.

The course is due to provide several means that guarantee the trainees' comprehension of the study, and its objectives. Besides, they are supposed to answer the paper questions in the right sequence and in a full an accurate form.

It worth mentioning that the study is prepared by the forum, and as a result, the Yemeni Presswomen Manual will be issued. The manual aims at identifying problems and difficulties encountered by Yemeni Presswomen in their careers. The course is considered the first of its kind in the Arab World.

### Readers' Voice

Yemen Times features "Readers' Voice" a popular way for our readers to interact with us. This is your opportunity to have a say on world and local affairs.

#### This edition's question:

**For Yemen, do you think 2005 would be better or worse than 2004?**

- It will be better
- It will be worse
- Let's wait and see

#### last edition's question:

**Do you think that the expected dose to be implemented in 2005 will result in unrest in the country?**

Yes 81%  
No 19%

Go to our website at:  
[yementimes.com/#poll](http://yementimes.com/#poll)  
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## Postage & post saving general authority

TAIZ BUREAU

The total revenue of the Postage & Post Saving General Authority in Hodeidah Governorate, during January - September of the current year, has amounted to Y.R.3,795,052,389/00 against 312975 post service operations including collections of electricity, water, telephone, pensions payments, and social welfare cases in addition to payable exports and post savings.

The census issued by the Authority indicated that the postage & post savings services during the same period amounted to Y.R.7,645,967/00

against 7174 postage operations.

The General Manager of the Authority, Mr. Saleh al-Da'ery, has clarified that there are projects under execution during this year represented in Extending postage network and the starting of building two post bureaus in addition to projects which will be executed during the coming period such as post office branches in a number of governorates.

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## Vacancy Announcement

The German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is recruiting for the Urban Development Project in the Governorate of Hadhramawt, District of Shibam for the position of:

### Local Community Development Expert

Qualifications and Skills required are as the following:

- The position is reserved for a female Yemeni expert.
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- Good command of written and oral English and Arabic languages,
- Proven record of preparing professional reports,
- Computer skills include the use of most MS. Office applications,
- Good team spirit and excellent communication skills,
- Be ready to work in a remote area and hot climate.

The main tasks of the post are as the following:

- Work with women's initiatives and NGO's and cooperate with them to implement small projects for income generation, skills promotion and education.
- Enhance planning and organizational skills of women's initiatives and facilitate their participation in the urban management process, with emphasis on issues related to the environment and the preservation of cultural heritage.
- Organize training and exchange of information for actors related to women's development.
- Organize and conduct community education programs and awareness campaigns.
- Conduct monitoring procedures to evaluate women's development programs supported by the project.

Yemeni Nationals of suitable qualification are invited to present their application and include an up-to-date CV both in Arabic and English latest by 10th January 2005, to

The Deputy Director  
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Short listed applicants will be invited for interviews as of 28th January 2005 at the above address.

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# Struggles in Yemen and struggles abroad

ALAWI ABDULLA ABU BAKIR  
adam\_taha2000@yahoo.com  
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

One wonders how the many in Yemen that have no one to help them and their cries are only to Allah the Most High. I say this because here I am in England, a country of opportunities and yet, still, it is a hard struggle that can break your heart if you forget where you came from; a country called Yemen, a history of heroes, culture and a religion called Islam that whispers to you when you fall again and again:

*"Don't forget where you came from  
A generation of shine stars walk with you  
O Son of Yemen! I know it's hard but  
I know there's a way you can pull through  
Call on Allah! He'll make you strong  
Look back and see how far you've come  
Don't forget, son of Yemen, where you came from  
You have a debt to pay to the children, sisters, brother, fathers, mothers of Yemen!"*

And I get up again, wipe the dirt from my jeans and jacket and start again. It's morning and I am worried already as I hear the sound of my letterbox crashing as letters fall onto the mat. I sigh to Allah because I know what they are. I walk down the few steps, lower myself, reach out to the letters and open them. All are bills and its not the end of the month yet. I walk upstairs and look the other letters, bills that too so hard to pay and still there are some not even paid and now, new ones come.

It is then, you don't know if one should cry or laugh at the way life is.

Then, you remember you read an article in Yemen Times about 'servants getting a raw deal.' You wonder how they survive in the harsh life in Yemen. It is then, no vision of getting court summons, because of unpaid bills due to investing in an album. It was the only way because no one who has power threw money at you. There is no princess to come to your aid, nor heroes like 1400 years ago to help. Nor rich Arab or millionaire; such things don't happen to such as people as you.

The last day has come; the album is mixed with the grit of your teeth and you went over the time a little but the recording studio seen your hard work, knows your album is going to work and already calling people about the album, and has wavered the £40.00 for you to pay another time but you have that in your pocket. The last £40.00 you have left in the world. You don't want anymore debts. You have enough. You give him the last pounds you got and walk away with the album you've worked for, wondering where you are going to get the money to duplicate it, to print the inlay and package it ready for buyers. With no money left, you walk back home, holding that CD album like it was gold, as if you're life depends on it. You reach home two hours later and you're tired. You can hardly put your hands in your pocket to get out the key but you do and slowly turn the key in the door and you're home. It's now 11pm.

Instead of relaxing, you go straight to your computer and switch it on to see if your printer has enough ink. You go to the next room to see if there's anymore of that £50.00 glossy fine paper to print the inlays and polished CD sticker for the album. Good news, there's enough and enough ink and enough CD's to duplicate from your

quality CD writer 100 albums. You have a good start to raise monies to support Yemeni's.

I know, it's crazy to do think of someone else, of your people when bills need to be paid. But weigh the option here. There's a roof to make this home warm, central heating. And TV, Video to sell to pay some of the debts and if it comes to it, then the furniture too. When this happens, you can still live. There's some food in fridge and bags of frozen vegetables to live on and tins of beans. But the ones in Yemen, the ones who are poor do not know where there next meal is. No food then they die. Nothing to sell if the worse kicks in. And so, with this in mind, the Soul Train is ready and Insha-Allah more will come as people buy.

Next morning comes and it's life all over again. A letter comes through the door. It can't be bills but you go to that letter and, it's a court summons. This is the life, this is how it is, and this will change Insha-Allah, for it is true; one who struggles, who gives to his people will be blessed on a day, where God will smile down one day and we'll look back at these struggling days and wonder what were we crying about.

These are days that make boys into men, girls into women, and ordinary men into heroes. You and I will die, this voice will also fade to such no one will hear me when I even say my name and these youthful fingers and face will grow lines. These are days which we save ourselves and fashion our souls to love Allah and to love Allah the Most High one must give his heart and soul for his people. Not one morsel of food my people should ever go in our mouths without reminding ourselves of the many Yemenis who struggle with pangs of hunger.

With this thought, the wife has come from visiting family and says:

"Love, is everything ok."  
"Yes, you reply."  
"Ooh! More bills!" She says.  
"Yes, Habibitti, more bills." You reply  
"Allah will help us Insha-Allah, yes?" She asks.  
"Allah, will help, yes." I reply.

You put on the album and realise only now, why you called it the Soul Train. Your computers tells you an email has arrived and its from Yemeni Times.

"You have our support."  
And these words mean more than the gems, diamonds, and money in the world and refuel you to face another day to fight again. Suddenly, you hear Yemen sing to you again from other end of the world:

*"Don't forget where you came from  
A generation of shine stars walk with you  
O Son of Yemen! I know it's hard but  
I know there's a way you can pull through  
Call on Allah! He'll make you strong  
Look back and see how far you've come  
Don't forget, son of Yemen, where you came from  
You have a debt to pay to the children, sisters, brother, fathers, mothers of Yemen!"*

Don't ever forget where you come from."

I thank Yemen Times fore there has never been one who had faith in me as Yemeni Times. Without such support, I would not been able to get the message across nor get this album out. Indeed, this is where newspaper and community comes together, hand in hand for the prosperity of our people.

## Tailors Society concludes works management

TAIZ BUREAU

A party on occasion of concluding two courses in works management hosting some 20 trainees and another 14 trainees in upholstery, organized by the Tailors Society in Taiz for its members, took place last Wed. December 22, 2004. It was financed by the Yemeni-German project for supporting the private sector to create new job opportunities. EPSP is the second support component which lasted from December 8-22.

The party began with a recitation from the holy Qura'an, after which Mr. Riyadh Ali Abdo, on behalf of the trainees, Mr. Mansoor Raweh, on behalf of the trainers from the Social Development Fund, Mr. Volkmar, the coordinator of the German DED AHN and Mr. Najeeb Abdul-Mu'men, the head of the Tailors Society, have talked about the importance of con-



A scene from the ceremony

ducting such qualifying courses for such crafts sectors which are considered the most important ones so as to save them from the poverty phenome-

na, to become qualified workers and of special and general use. The head of the Society Mr. Najeeb indicated that the Society had trained two previous

groups in sewing line supported by the Social Fund. As a result, the Society members are participating almost 60% of the products which the local market is in need further to what are being exported from Yemen to Somali and the African horn, as such courses upgrade the performance and combat poverty. He also indicated that Society leaders too have been trained in society development line. Certificates of graduation have been distributed to the graduates of the 2 courses. Mr. Anwer Sharaf Ghaleb, Consultant of Training Fund of the Social Development was also honored.

HODEIDAH BUREAU

Twenty female trainees from Producer Families Center in Zabeed District, Hodeidah Governorate, finished their training course in sewing, embroidery and dresses cutting out, organized for three days by the Social Development Fund supported and financed by the European Community.

A number of words were delivered in the training conclusion party by the General Secretary of the Local Council in Zabeed District, Yousuf al-Anbary, the Executive Director of the Social Development Fund, Muhammad Abdul Majeed al-Duhbaly, and Miss

Feeda, the international training expert. The words emphasized the necessity of supporting the course alumnus by providing them with sewing machines which helps them to continue in the work. At the end of the celebration, certificates of appreciation and participation were distributed to the female trainees (alumnus).

The concluding party was attended by the Director of Beneficiaries Services Department, Arafat al-Salehi, the training national expert, Miss Nadiyah Sultan as well as a number of the Local Council members in the District.

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**UNESCO recognizes the Abu-Ghazaleh Cambridge International Diploma in Information Technology**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced its official recognition of the Abu-Ghazaleh Cambridge International Diploma in IT Skills, co-signed by the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. International (TAGI) and Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), and its endorsement "as a solid non-commercially oriented program for promoting computer literacy".

The diploma is offered in all 22 Arab countries, in Arabic and in English, online and through training courses, to candidates with different cultural backgrounds and of all ages, and is adaptable to the computer literacy level of each individual, and does not require full-time study.

William Bickerdike, Regional Manager Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan of University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), said that "this comes after TAGI, as a valued Cambridge Partner, has worked successfully with CIE over a number of years providing high quality IT education throughout the Arab World".

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## Shots fired at diplomatic car in Kuwait

KUWAIT, Dec 25 (Reuters) - A gunman fired shots on Saturday at an Indonesian diplomatic car in Kuwait carrying a family, but no casualties were reported, security sources said.

A source originally reported the car was a Philippine diplomatic vehicle but later said the car belonged to Indonesian officials in Kuwait.

They said Kuwaiti security forces had cornered the gunman in a residential building in a suburb of Kuwait City.

The Gulf Arab state is home to a large expatriate workforce.

Kuwait was the launchpad for last year's U.S.-led war in neighbouring Iraq. It has witnessed several attacks in recent years against U.S. targets, mostly blamed on Islamic militants.

# Bodies dug out after likely Baghdad embassy attack

BAGHDAD, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Rescuers dug out at least seven bodies on Saturday from the rubble of a Baghdad home flattened by an exploding fuel tanker the previous evening in what looked to have been a suicide attack on the Jordanian embassy.

The truck was driving toward the villa which has housed the Jordanian mission since a truck bombing last year destroyed the previous embassy, an eyewitness said.

But the tanker became jammed in a chicane of concrete barriers outside the embassy, designed to discourage just such attacks, and then detonated, added the local resident, who is known to Reuters.

A family home across the street collapsed in rubble and flames, the witness said: "I just saw a boy running out into the street. Everyone else was lost."

The embassy itself, protected by high concrete blast walls, sustained little obvious damage.

Rescuers dug out seven bodies, including children, from the rubble on Saturday. Neighbours said they were all from the same family.

Hospital officials had said late on Friday that they had received three



Rescuers remove one of seven bodies dug out from the rubble of a civilian house, which was destroyed by an explosion on Friday evening in the al-Mansur district in Baghdad, Dec. 25. At least seven bodies, said to be of one family, were dug from the rubble of a Baghdad home on Saturday, which was flattened by an exploding tanker the previous evening. REUTERS

bodies and 13 people with injuries, one dead and 19 wounded, none of them U.S. personnel. Police and the U.S. military said

little on the cause of the blast. Jordanian diplomats could not be reached for comment.

The explosion threw the fuel truck's tank into a nearby yard and left charred rubble strewn across the street in the once affluent Mansur neighbourhood, home to many embassies and foreign businesses.

The incident happened around 9 p.m. on Friday, shortly after U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had completed a day trip to the country, during which he told American troops the war in Iraq could be won.

Jordanian diplomats moved into a three-villa complex on the street after their main building in another part of the city was targeted by a car bomb last year. It was the first of many big attacks in the months following the fall of Saddam Hussein and was claimed by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Jordan, whose monarchy is backed by the United States, has major commercial links with Iraq but the kingdom turned against Saddam after the 1991 Gulf war. The U.S. military used Jordanian bases during its invasion of Iraq last year and later awarded the country several security contracts.

## Turk shipping magnate, 3 others kidnapped in Iraq

ANKARA, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Kidnappers have abducted a Turkish shipping magnate and three others in southern Iraq and demanded a \$25 million ransom, the Turkish private NTV television channel said on Saturday.

It said Kahraman Sadikoglu had been seized in the southern Iraqi port of Umm Qasr alongside a boat captain and a driver, both Turks, and an unnamed bodyguard working for his company. Lifter, which retrieves sunken ships.

Sadikoglu's family had contacted the Turkish Foreign Ministry saying they had not heard from him in 10 days and that kidnappers had demanded a ransom of \$25 million.

The channel quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying the group had been abducted as they travelled from Iran to Iraq and that U.S. authorities had been alerted and British forces in the area had set up roadblocks around Umm Qasr.

# Bethlehem rings in more hopeful Christmas

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Thousands of pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus's birth on Saturday with prayers for peace after the death of Yasser Arafat.

But Israeli restrictions on Palestinians entering Bethlehem and a barrier Israel is building in the West Bank cast a shadow over the celebrations.

At midnight mass, moderate leader Mahmoud Abbas filled the seat that had been left empty for Arafat for three Christmases past because Israel had stopped him travelling to the West Bank town - accusing him of fomenting bloodshed, a charge he denied.

Welcoming Arafat's successors, the Latin Patriarch for the Holy Land, a Palestinian, urged all parties to end violence.

"It has lasted too long," Michel Sabbah, Pope John Paul's representative, told the Church of the Nativity gathering.

"It is time for Palestine and Israel to defeat the evil of violence and give birth to a society of brothers and sisters in which nobody is subject to another, nobody is occupied by another and nobody threatens the security of another."

Abbas, who wants an end to fighting and to resume peace talks with Israel, is expected to win a presidential poll on Jan. 9 to pick a successor to Arafat.

Amid the incense and prayers, the silver-haired Abbas in his grey business suit

cut a profile far removed from ex-guerrilla Arafat, who favoured olive uniforms and a chequered headdress. Abbas, like Arafat and most Palestinians, is a Muslim.

"We extend our hand to the Israelis. We want to negotiate, to reach peace - a peace built on justice and right," Abbas told a meeting in Bethlehem on Friday evening.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has also called 2005 a year of opportunity for peace in the Middle East.

Despite cold downpours, visitors from around the world flocked to Manger Square, marking a modest revival in the pilgrim flow after a previous four years in which Bethlehem was often paralysed by violence, blockades and curfews.

The square was enlivened by twinkling white lights draping rows of small trees. Foreign choirs sang carols and flashes from digital cameras filled the air.

### NEW HOPE TEMPERED BY ISRAELI ENCIRCLEMENT

At the roadblock on the pilgrimage route in from Jerusalem, Israeli troops posted a sign: "Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year". But as before, they checked papers of travellers in only one direction at a time, causing long waits as traffic built up.

Sections of the barrier run up to the road entering Bethlehem, lending a forbidding air. Israel says the barrier keeps

suicide bombers out of its cities. Palestinians call it a step to annex occupied territory.

"The wall is being built eight metres (26 feet) high around Bethlehem. It's not easy for us to send a message of Christmas joy to the world when our town is being inexorably encircled by concrete, barbed wire and Jewish settle-

ments," said Jack Giacaman, whose family has run shops in Manger Square for generations.

Some pilgrims said they felt a new atmosphere of hope in Bethlehem.

But merchants and hoteliers who have been ruined by years of bloodshed said that while business was up somewhat, they were disappointed most pilgrims did

not stay overnight or snap up souvenirs like olive-wood nativity scenes as they once did.

Many shops remained bereft of customers and by Christmas morning Manger Square had reverted to a drab parking lot, with vendors chasing visitors and some little boys begging for money.

"The future should be quieter but it doesn't look that auspicious," said Father Severino, the Polish manager of a pilgrimage hotel next to the ancient Church of the Nativity.

"Abbas is not very popular and there's doubt how much control he will have (over militants). And Bethlehem is steadily losing its Christians too, which is pretty sad."



Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (L) and interim president Rawhi Fattouh attend Christmas mass in the Nativity church in the West Bank city of Bethlehem Dec. 25. Hundreds of pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus's birth on Saturday with new hopes for peace following Yasser Arafat's death. REUTERS



A Christian man prays near candles in the West Bank city of Bethlehem's Nativity church on Christmas day Dec. 25. Hundreds of pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus's birth on Saturday with new hopes for peace following Yasser Arafat's death. REUTERS

## Iran mourns anniversary of devastating earthquake

BAM, Iran, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Mourning Iranians have flocked to the southeastern city of Bam in recent days to mark the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake which killed tens of thousands and left the ancient Silk Road city in ruins.

Bam, a date palm oasis in Iran's southern deserts built around an ancient citadel, was flattened by an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale before dawn on Dec. 26 last year. More than 31,000 people were killed.

Scores of bereaved relatives, clad in black, arrived from neighbouring towns, heading straight to the city's cemetery to pay their respects to the dead.

"I now live in Kerman, I have come back after a year to be with my loved-ones for a day," said middle-aged man Ebrahim Faramarzpour. "I have lost 28 family members."

Men, women in all-enveloping chadors, the young and the old spent the day sitting amid tombs decorated with flowers and black candles, praying for the dead.

Readings from the Koran echoed from loudspeakers through the cemetery and

mixed with the cries of mourners.

"My Hassan, my Hossein, where are you? ... My heart is burning, won't you come back my children? It's already a year!" wailed Masoumeh Ebrahimpour, 50, as she looked over the nine tombs of her family members.

Most of Bam remains in ruins and the slow pace of reconstruction has angered survivors and some officials.

"Overcoming a disaster in such a scale is not easy ... there might have been some shortcomings," President Mohammad Khatami, who visited Bam this week, was quoted as saying by the state-run Iran newspaper.

"Bam will stand again before the end of this government," he said. Khatami will leave office in August.

But survivors, some still living in tents, are sceptical.

"Once there were houses here, there was life here, now it is a ruin. Who has helped these people? No-one!" a middle-aged woman complained.

The mass collapse of Bam's buildings has been blamed for the high death toll. Quakes of similar force in other countries have caused far fewer deaths.

# 17th Arabian Gulf title to Qatar

By ADEL AL-KHAWLANI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

DOHA - last Friday, Qatar won the final encounter against Oman by the penalty kicks when the game time plus the two additional halves ended with a 1-1 draw between the two sides. Accordingly, Qatar obtained the title for the second time in its history.

The third minute of the first half saw a free shot for Qatar through which player Wasam Rizq scored after receiving a retarded ball from the Omani goalkeeper who was crowned the best goalkeeper in the championship successively for the second time.

Skilled playmaker Badr Al-Maimani answered for Oman from a 30-meter distance in minute 26 of the same half when he took an advantage of a mistake committed by Qatar's goalkeeper.

The first half of the game ended with the two sides drawing 1-1. The two goals came as a result of mistakes of both the goalkeepers and many golden opportunities for Oman were lost throughout this half, particularly that of Emad Al-Hawsani in minute 11.

Qatari midfielders played an effective role in terms of hampering



Qatari Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani (C) applauds as Qatar's national team captain Amer Al-Ka'aby (R) celebrates with the winner's trophy after his team's victory in the 17th Arabian Gulf Cup final match against Oman at al-Sad stadium in Doha, Dec. 24. REUTERS

several recurrent Omani offensives and starting re-offensives in their favor, the most cleverly made of which was seen in minute 43 when forward player Sayyed Basheer received a ball from Hussein Yasser but failed and shot it to the lap of Oman's goalkeeper Ali Al-Hibsi.

The final minutes of the game time witnessed an Omani awakening and numerous attacks yielding nothing because of hurry among the players.

Qatar's national soccer team dominated over the course of the first additional half in spite of the hard exertion demonstrated by the players.

The second additional half witnessed an Omani dominance over the events and more possession of the ball, but both the teams resorted to the penalty kicks during which strange dramatic events were seen.

The goalpost stopped the kick of striker and top scorer in the Championship Emad Al-Hawsani to announce the victory of Qatar.

The event was attended by Prince of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Eesa, Crown Prince of Qatar and a number of high-ranking officials from the Gulf States.

After the match was over, Prince of Qatar and King of Bahrain awarded the gold medals to Qatar's national team members, silver medals to the Omani players as they occupied the second position and bronze medals to players of Bahrain for ranking third in the championship.

Qatar's national soccer team was chosen the ideal one in the championship and Bahraini playmaker Talal Yousif the best player.

Flag of the championship was submitted to Yousif Al-Serkal, President of the UAE's Football Federation as his country is due to host the 18th Arabian Gulf Championship in Jan 2007.

# Four killed as Nepal violence continues

KATHMANDU, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Three soldiers and a policeman were killed in new violence in revolt-hit Nepal as a rebel ban on traffic on the main road to the capital entered its third day on Saturday, an army officer said.

He said two soldiers were killed on Friday in the rebel stronghold of Kanchanpur district while trying to defuse a bomb 700 km (440 miles) west of Kathmandu.

"The bomb left by the rebels on a road went off before soldiers defused it," the officer, who asked not to be named, told Reuters. Two other soldiers were wounded.

One soldier and a policeman were killed elsewhere in Maoist related violence, another officer said.

The traffic ban on the highway carrying 90 percent of supplies to the capital's 1.5 million people began on Thursday and drivers are keeping off for fear of attack by the rebels.

The ban, the second in four months, has begun to bite, triggering fuel shortage and driving up food prices in the hill-ringed city, a tourist hub.

The rebels said the ban was to press for information about hundreds of missing comrades and to protest



Nepalese armed police patrol the main supply route of Nagdhunga road on the outskirts of Kathmandu Dec. 23. Nepal's Maoist rebels said on Wednesday they would block two of the three main highways leading to the capital, raising fears of another serious disruption of supplies to Kathmandu. The rebels, fighting to topple the constitutional monarchy and establish communist rule, successfully cut off the hill-ringed capital from the rest of the country for a week in August, choking it of food and fuelsupplies.

against alleged killings of Maoists in custody.

Authorities say they died in clashes with soldiers.

The rebels, who control about two-thirds of rural areas in the Himalayan

kingdom, are fighting to replace the constitutional monarchy with a communist republic. More than 10,500 people have died in the eight-year insurgency.

The guerrillas say their struggle

was in a decisive stage and have continued attacks ahead of a Jan. 13 deadline set by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for them to join talks, an offer the rebels have rejected.

REUTERS

## Nigeria troops drafted to south to halt crime spree

LAGOS, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Nigeria will deploy troops to the southwestern state of Edo to stop a sudden surge in armed robberies that culminated in a two-hour gunbattle with police there on Monday, a military spokesman said on Saturday.

A military task force has been set up to operate across the state by President Olusegun Obasanjo, and additional mobile police units have been deployed in the state capital Benin City where the gunfight took

place, police and military sources say. "There is a task force that has been set up by the President to bring security back up in Edo, but particularly in Benin City.

It will last as long as it takes to restore total security," said army spokesman Mohammed Yusuf.

Benin City residents said the streets were calm on Saturday, but they had yet to spot any soldiers on patrol.

Violent crime has been on the rise in Nigeria since Obasanjo won

elections in 1999, ending 15 years of iron-fisted military rule.

Eight police were killed by armed robbers in Edo state in August in two separate attacks and at least 50 have been killed in battles with suspected criminals nationwide since January.

One officer was killed in the latest clash in Benin City, a police source said.

Nigeria already has two other military task forces, set up after unrest in the oil-rich Niger Delta, which

produces most of the OPEC member's 2.5 million barrels per day of crude.

Criminal gangs in the delta use the proceeds of selling crude stolen from well heads and pipelines to sustain their activities and build up sophisticated arsenals.

Police sources in Benin say they suspect the weapons used in the recent raids in Edo state were obtained from delta gangs.

## Gunmen kill four soldiers in southwestern Pakistan

QUETTA, Pakistan, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Gunmen attacked a military vehicle in Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province on Saturday, killing four paramilitary troops, a security official said.

A shadowy militant group later claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was in response to a planned military build-up in the province.

The gunmen fired at least three rockets at a vehicle near Turbat, 800

km (500 miles) southeast of the provincial capital, Quetta, said Colonel Rizwan Malik of the paramilitary Frontier Corps.

"The vehicle was attacked in the early hours. They used rockets and also ambushed the vehicle," Malik said. "Four soldiers were killed and four were wounded."

The vehicle was returning from a routine security patrol.

A spokesman for the Baluch

National Army (BNA), who identified himself as Doda Khan, telephoned several media offices in Quetta, claiming that the attack was in response to the government plans to build three military cantonments in the province.

Police have blamed Baluchi nationalists for occasional rocket attacks on gas pipelines and government forces and thousands of paramilitary and regular troops have

been deployed in remote areas of the province to increase security.

Baluchistan is home to tribesmen who have been seeking greater autonomy for decades, demanding more control over the region's natural gas and minerals as well as increased political and economic rights.

Quetta has recently experienced a wave of small-scale bombings and its Shi'ite Muslim minority has suffered deadly sectarian attacks.

## India's Naga rebel leaders at home for Christmas

DHANFHIPARA, India, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Dozens of rebels in battle fatigues sang Christmas carols in a bamboo church in India's restive northeast on Saturday as two of their leaders returned for Christmas after 20 years of self-exile.

Armed guerrillas stood guard outside the thatched church in a sprawling dusty field in the forests of Dhanfhipara in Nagaland where some 20,000 people have died in a separatist campaign led by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 40 years.

More than 300 rebels and their families, many wearing traditional tribal red and white sarongs, cheered NSCN chairman Isak Chishi Swu and general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah as they arrived for Christmas celebrations at the guerrilla headquarters in a convoy escorted by machine-gun mounted jeeps.

"It's party time and I am really overjoyed to be celebrating Christmas in the presence of our leaders after a very, very long time," said Joy, who belongs to the rebel cadres.

"Christ is the king of kings and he will definitely resolve our conflict," he told Reuters.

The NSCN has been fighting for an independent homeland for India's three million Naga people, spread across the remote northeast, for more than four decades.

But a ceasefire, agreed between the rebels and the government has been holding since 1997 in predominantly-Christian Nagaland, one of India's seven states in the mountainous northeast.

### Greater nagaland

Swu and Muivah, who live in Thailand, held talks in New Delhi earlier this month with Indian leaders, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

They have held several rounds of peace talks in the past five years but a final agreement has proved elusive, a key reason being the government's refusal to accept an NSCN demand to unite all Naga-dominated areas in a "Greater Nagaland".

Insurgent groups in the northeast — numbering more than two dozen — say the government exploits the area's resources such as oil, tea and timber while neglecting its development.

"It was my long cherished dream to celebrate Christmas with my own people and today I feel blessed," Swu told Reuters at the rebel camp, deep inside a forest about 50 km (30 miles) from Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland state.

After singing carols in both English and Nagamese with young boys in camouflage uniform playing the guitar, the two leaders urged the gathering in the tiny church decorated with wild yellow and red flowers to exercise restraint.

The Nagas are a fierce mountainous warrior tribe who were formerly head-hunters. Christianity was spread in Nagaland, today a state of two million people, by British colonial rulers and missionaries in the 19th century.

The NSCN headquarters is a cluster of dozens of small buildings and barracks where the rebels and their families live. The complex consists of a community centre, a building that they call their "parliament", a school and playgrounds.

"Every single Naga is precious and indispensable," Swu told the people sitting on rows of plastic chairs.

"We urge everyone to exercise utmost restraint even if they face provocation."

The rebels and their families continued their Christmas celebrations with a feast of rice, meat and cakes but no alcohol on long tables spread out in the middle of the camp.

## Taliban attack Afghan army trucks given by India

KABUL, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Taliban fighters killed at least one driver in an attack on a convoy of Afghan army trucks recently delivered by India, a senior police officer in the southeast province of Farah told Reuters on Saturday.

The convoy of around 20 vehicles was on its way to Kandahar from the western city of Herat when it came under attack in the Bagwa Desert in Farah on Friday afternoon, Deputy Police Chief Haji Mohammad Rasool told Reuters.

At least one driver was killed, and another was missing, while two others were wounded, he said.

Rasool said security forces had mounted a major search operation for the guerrillas, who numbered around 20.

The vehicles had been donated to the Afghan Ministry of Defence by the Indian government, he said. India trades with Afghanistan via Iran, as Pakistan does not provide passage for trade between its eastern and western neighbours.

## China submits draft law opposing Taiwan secession

BEIJING, Dec 25 (Reuters) - China submitted a draft law on Saturday it says is aimed at peaceful reunification with Taiwan, but which the island's residents and the United States fear could ratchet up tensions across the Strait.

The official Xinhua news agency gave no details on the contents of the law, but Hong Kong media suggested it could contain clauses that would obligate Chinese military action if Taiwan ever declared independence.

The anti-secession law was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's parliament, at the session that will run through till Wednesday, Xinhua said.

Taiwan split from the mainland at the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, but Beijing still sees the self-governing island as its own and has

pledged to bring it back into the fold, by force if necessary.

That prospect poses an uncomfortable dilemma for the U.S., which recognises Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China but at the same time has pledged to help defend Taiwan.

Hong Kong's Wen Wei Po newspaper said the anti-secession law was aimed at ensuring the principles of "one country, two systems" and peaceful reunification, but added the law could justify military action in certain cases.

"If Taiwan independence elements unilaterally change the status quo and intentionally divide the nation, under such circumstances China will have no alternative but to use non-peaceful means to solve the problem," said the pro-Beijing newspaper.

Analysts have said the law is

unlikely to be that strong for fear of upsetting relations with the United States and was more likely aimed at preserving the status quo.

In Taiwan, pro-independence efforts by President Chen Shui-bian were dealt a setback earlier this month, when his party failed to gain a majority in the legislature, curbing his power to introduce a new constitution China says would be a step toward secession.

Taiwan residents have been warily eyeing the bill, with a poll released there on Friday showing nearly three-quarters of respondents would not accept the anti-secession law as a means to force the island to accept reunification.

Eighty-three percent of respondents to the poll conducted Dec. 21-23, disagreed with China using the law to form a legal basis to attack Taiwan.



U.S. navy personnel work near an F-18 fighter jet on board aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln after it arrived in Hong Kong Dec. 24. Taiwan played down Thursday remarks by a senior U.S. official who described the island as the biggest land mine in Sino-U.S. ties and said Washington was not required to come to Taiwan's defense if attacked by China.

REUTERS

# Entrepreneurs cash in on Ukraine's orange revolution

KIEV, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Everyone wants a bite of Ukraine's "orange revolution".

Be it religion, scarves, hats or mugs, Ukraine's outpouring of disgust at opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko's rival being declared the winner of a tainted poll has become the focus for those who want their message heard or their products sold.

Poles, Georgians, evangelicals and stall owners are just some of those who have jumped on the bandwagon, joining or coining in on a political crisis that sent hundreds of thousands into the streets to protest a falsified presidential election.

At Kiev's tent camp, still in place in the capital after being set up a month ago by Yushchenko supporters, almost everyone has something to tout.

"This is a revolution from God," George Idengo, an evangelist originally from Nigeria who has lived in Ukraine for 16 years, says in the "Embassy of God" tent on Khreshchatyk, Kiev's main thoroughfare.

His tent, equipped with heaters to take the chill out of Ukraine's cold winter, offers food and hot drinks to those wanting enlightenment on his breed of "charismatic evangelism" on Christmas day.

"God wants us to put religious principles in Ukraine ... We are here to bring them to Christ to be saved."

His tent vies with a multitude of stalls offering woollen scarves and



Workers of the Donetsk metallurgical works stand during a demonstration in support of presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich in Donetsk, Dec. 24. The two rivals in Ukraine's re-run of a rigged presidential election made last-minute pitches to voters on Friday, closing a campaign that has thrown the country into turmoil and could put a West-leaning reformer in office.

hats in Yushchenko's orange campaign colours and traders selling pirated CDs of the songs created and made popular by the mass protests.

Activists desperately try to keep the message that Ukrainians must vote for Yushchenko in Sunday's re-run election, when he again faces Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich.

They hand out calendars with the opposition leader's face emblazoned

across them or orange plastic strips worn on belts and lapels.

But after weeks of the same chants and slogans, many passersby now look for the quirky or the different tents in the camp, transformed into an organised city of large tents, punctuated by orange Christmas trees.

Dato, a Georgian businessman, has made a tent shrine to Georgiy Gongadze, a native Georgian Internet

reporter whose unsolved murder became a major opposition cause during outgoing President Leonid Kuchma's 10 years in office.

Kuchma denies allegations that he was involved.

"The Georgians set this up," Dato said, cleaning the shrine made out of a two-man tent to hold Gongadze's portrait, icons and wine. "We must never forget those who died for this."

# Fathers' rights group targets British Queen

LONDON, Dec 25 (Reuters) - British police arrested eight fathers' rights activists on Saturday after an abortive attempt to scale a church on Queen Elizabeth's country estate.

Fathers 4 Justice — famous for pelting Prime Minister Tony Blair with a flour-filled condom in parliament and breaking into the Queen's Buckingham Palace this year — was hoping for a similarly high-profile Christmas Day stunt.

Some 14 campaigners descended before dawn on the Queen's Sandringham estate, in eastern England, to try and get one of them onto the church roof dressed as Santa before the royal family were due there for morning service.

But police, who track the group closely given their remarkable security breaches earlier in the year, swooped with dogs before they could reach the church.

"It was worth a stab. It was too good an opportunity not to have a go," F4J founder Matthew O'Connor told Reuters.

"It was a bit like 'Colditz' in the end, lots of coppers and Alsations tucking into some legs for an early Christmas lunch."

Police said eight men were being held for breach of the peace offences, and insisted none had entered the

estate. But F4J, whose past stunts brought mockery and recriminations on security chiefs at a time of heightened alert over terrorism, said members had briefly entered the grounds.

"We have a big pot of ideas we dip into, mainly daredevil stuff. Some comes off, some doesn't. Remember that 2004 isn't finished yet!" O'Connor added.

The protester designated to climb up the church roof on Saturday was to have displayed a picture of just-resigned Home Secretary David Blunkett and a banner saying "Put the Father back into Christmas."

Blunkett left Blair's cabinet this month after being accused of abusing his office to do favours for a former lover.

He is involved in a custody dispute with her, making him a tongue-in-cheek poster-boy for the group campaigning against what it says is court bias towards mothers in determining how much access divorcing parents should have to their children.

While only a small pressure group, F4J has stolen disproportionate headlines and attention to its cause through an extraordinary string of stunts in the last year, including scaling some of the highest-profile landmarks in Britain.

# Pope says entire globe yearning for peace

VATICAN CITY, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Pope John Paul told the world in his Christmas message on Saturday that people were yearning for peace everywhere around the globe and expressed particular concern for Iraq, the Middle East and Africa.

"Everywhere peace is needed!" he said in an unusually short "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and world) message, which he read with difficulty from the steps of St Peter's Basilica.

The Pope, who suffers from Parkinson's Disease and no longer walks, asked the infant Jesus to encourage attempts to promote dialogue and reconciliation and to sustain peace efforts.

"I think of Africa, of the tragedy of Darfur in Sudan, of the Ivory Coast and the Great Lakes Region.

With great apprehension I follow the situation in Iraq. And how can I fail to look with anxious concern, but also invincible confidence, towards that Land of which you are a son?" he said.

Afterwards, encouraged by chants of

"John Paul II, We Love You," he continued with determination to read brief Christmas greetings in 62 languages, including Arabic, Hebrew and others spoken in some of the world's hot spots.

The "Urbi et Orbi" message was heard by thousands of people under umbrellas in a rainy St Peter's Square and watched by tens of millions of others on live television in more than 70 countries, including several predominantly Muslim nations.

Showing the signs of his illness and the weight of his office, the leader of the world's 1 billion Roman Catholics said the globe was marked by violence and despair in many places.

"Before the crib where you lie helpless, let there be an end to the spread of violence in its many forms, the source of untold suffering," he said, wearing gold-coloured vestments.

The 84-year-old Pope's message was the shortest it has ever been in his 27 Christmas seasons as Pontiff — a concession to the illness that makes it dif-



Pope John Paul II reads the homily during Midnight Christmas Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 24. The Pope led the world's one billion Roman Catholics into Christmas Day and said the troubled world needed the message of Jesus more than ever, braving Parkinson's Disease to deliver his sermon.

ficult for him to speak more than a few sentences at a time.

"Let there be an end to the numerous situations of unrest which risk degenerating into open conflict; let there arise a firm will to seek peaceful solutions, respectful of the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples," he said.

Packing a peace punch

The message was only about half as long as it has been in previous years. Still, it packed the type of peace punch that has become a trademark of his papacy.

"You, Prince of true peace, help us to understand that the only way to build peace is to flee in horror from evil, and to pursue goodness with courage and perseverance," he said "Men and women of good will, of every people on the earth, come with trust to the crib of the Saviour!" It was the second event for the weak Pope in less than 12 hours.

At his Midnight Mass in St Peter's Basilica, he read a brief sermon in which he said the troubled world need-

ed the message of Jesus more than ever. No longer able to walk, he sat slightly bent on his wheeled throne at the Midnight Mass, attended by representatives of some 150 governments, and appeared very pensive at times.

In the run-up to the holiday season, the Pope and the Church urged the faithful to keep Christ in Christmas and to shun the rampant materialism that has gripped Italy and other countries.

Several times in past weeks he praised the significance of the traditional nativity scene, which some Italian schools discontinued so as not to offend a growing Muslim population.

It has been a long and tiring year for the Pope, although his illness appears to have stabilised in the past few months.

Earlier this week he told aides he would need their help more than ever to run the Church.

"As the years pass, I feel more than ever the need for the help of God and the help of men," he told them in Christmas greetings on Tuesday.

# French magistrate widens bin Laden finance probe

PARIS, Dec 25 (Reuters) - A French judge has widened a probe into the financial network surrounding the family of Osama bin Laden after questioning his half-brother and learning of a 241 million euro transfer to Pakistan, Le Monde daily said.

Investigating magistrate Renaud Van Ruymbeke received court authorisation to extend his investigation after Yeslam bin Laden was questioned on Sept. 27 over allegations of links with the organisers of attacks in 2001 in the United States, the paper said in its Saturday edition.

As a result, Van Ruymbeke was adding "other instances of money laundering" to the probe already under way, Le Monde said.

The court was unreachable for comment on Saturday.

On Dec. 5, 2001, French authorities

opened an investigation into financial transfers carried out through Paris between firms grouped within the Saudi Investment Company (SICO) run by Yeslam bin Laden, who also manages some assets of the family's Saudi Binladin Group (SBG).

Yeslam bin Laden was questioned by the French judge in 2002, and has handed over a copy of documents detailing the distribution of the bin Laden family wealth to 54 brothers and sisters after the death of their father in 1967, the paper said.

Although he denied having had any contact with his half-brother for the past 20 years, the paper said, documents held by Swiss banking authorities suggest that Yeslam and Osama bin Laden held a joint account in Switzerland between 1990 and 1997, according to Jean-Charles Brisard — a

private investigator hired by families of the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Yeslam told French investigators in September that he had omitted to mention the existence of that account, while still insisting he had not had mixed with his half-brother, Le Monde said.

Yeslam bin Laden's Swiss-based lawyer, Pierre de Preux, could not immediately be reached by Reuters for comment.

But contacted by Le Monde, de Preux said his client simply acted as a relay for the rest of the family wishing to deposit their inheritance in Switzerland, since Yeslam was resident in Geneva.

And he added that the Swiss court had already questioned Yeslam bin Laden over the matter, in 2003, before classifying it as unconnected.

The French authorities, however, say the facts require further checking. Brisard notified Van Ruymbeke on Sept. 6 this year of several suspicious funds transfers, Le Monde said.

The investigator noted a 241 million euro transfer made to Pakistan in 2000 from an account belonging to a company called Cambridge, a SBG subsidiary, that was opened at Deutsche Bank in Geneva, the paper added.

U.S. authorities are aware of the existence of those funds, which they believe were transferred into an account belonging jointly to Osama bin Laden and someone of Pakistani nationality, it said.

The French authorities say the presence of SICO within the Saudi Binladin Group's orbit in Geneva justifies its probe, Le Monde added.

# Islamic militant suspect arrested in Barcelona media

MADRID, Dec 25 (Reuters) - Spain's Civil Guard has arrested a fourth suspected Islamic militant in the northeastern region of Catalonia, believed to be linked to others accused of trying to buy explosives last week, local media reported on Saturday.

A Civil Guard spokesman declined to comment and Interior Ministry officials were not available.

Three Moroccans were detained in the Barcelona area on Wednesday suspected of links to "international Islamist terrorism networks", the Interior Ministry said.

The latest arrest, part of a crack-

down on suspected militants in Spain in the wake of the March 11 train bombings, took place on Friday, state radio reported.

The suspect's flat was searched and several documents seized by police before he was transferred to Madrid, where he will be questioned by a judge in the coming days, reports said.

Under a special Christmas security plan police have been patrolling key buildings and transport hubs for possible attacks by Islamic militants, as well as by Basque separatist guerrillas ETA.

Troops may be called in to support them if necessary.

## Words of Wisdom

The rate of population growth is an extremely vital factor in the ability of the country to successfully develop. It is imperative that the government, Non government organizations, the media, educationists, and intellectuals join hands to make it clear to families that a large number of children is a burden which neither the parents nor the society can handle

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

OUR  
OPINIONLet us renew hope  
for the New Year

The beginning of every year should constitute a landmark in which a person would renew hopes and plan for a more prosperous future. I use this occasion to rethink the things I did in the last year and learn from my mistakes to do better in the New Year.

The year 2004 for Yemen has had many incidents, most of them bad, but some good. Among the good ones was crowning Sana'a as the Arab Cultural Capital 2004, resulting in tremendous activities of cultural nature. It was a time in which the capital was recognized for its cultural richness and historical importance.

On the other hand, the conflict with Al-Huthi and his followers for several weeks have caused serious damage to many areas in Saadah and caused great loss in life and money. Nevertheless, the fact that the insurgency ended decisively saved the year.

Some may not have hope in the future in this time. Among them are the journalists who have been harassed, prosecuted or imprisoned, including Abdulkareem Al-Khaiwani, who has suffered a lot for more than 6 months. He is now serving his jail sentence and was unable to appeal at all. For him, not a lot of joy is there to celebrate with the New Year's turnover, as he will still have to complete his one-year term.

It is truly amazing how time flies. I can recall as if it was yesterday when we gathered around the pictures wire service that we had to select the best photos to represent the world's events in 2003. It is now the time to select photos for the New Year.

Obviously, from the pictures we found from the wires for this year, we could see that 2004 was mostly full of unpleasant news such as the demise of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the atrocities and torture documented at Abu Ghraib Prison, the humanitarian disaster in Darfur. Apart from that, the re-election of George W. Bush, this has dominated a large area of the news, plus many other things.

In the last year, after the bloody war on Iraq and the different negative developments then, I asked myself, "Can it get worse than this?" but when I saw the selected photos of 2004's events, I realized that the answer was 'Yes'. Indeed, 2004 was in some ways worse than 2003.

Now I am repeating the question and asking, "Could 2005 be worse than 2004?" Even though some would argue that there is a great possibility that it could indeed be worse, I would like to think that it would not.

However, for those who base their conclusions on numbers, statistics, plans, and research can easily conclude that at least for Yemen, things could be worse, at least in the short term. They base their findings on the plan to implement the upcoming economic dose in the form of raising benzene and diesel prices, the ongoing population growth, the scarcity of water, and other negative phenomena that are evidently going to be more evident in 2005.

Yet, if one thinks of the future as dark and believes in that the future will always be worse than the past, then he/she would be de-motivated, lack interest in work, and even life.

Hence, I urge you if you are among those pessimist—even if you weigh your conclusions on facts and figures—to please think about the potential miracles so as hope would re-emerge and make you live with high spirit and more dedication.

There is nothing to lose when you think optimistically, let us maintain hope and look into the future with a rosy vision, at least for the coming month or two...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year...

The Editor



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First English Newspaper in Yemen, founded in 1991  
by Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf

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## Saying goodbye to 2004, welcoming 2005

We have not seen  
satisfactory reforms

BY PROF. DR. ABDULAZIZ AL-TARB  
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

A few days before we say goodbye to an entire year loaded with cares, blood, tears and crises, limited to a great extent in the Arab region, invariably surging to cover neighboring areas most of which belong to the Islamic world.

Every day of 2004 related the Arab nation's miserable story and saw the tribulations, devastation of its infrastructure, and deaths of its people. Every week was virtually a week of pains and sorrows. 2004, thus, deserves to be called the year of blood, and destruction from Iraq to Palestine inclusive of other Arab and Islamic spots.

This is no wailing, and is no contribution to self-beating but it is a notice of a pitiful reality and painful presence. It is a call to rise up and take actions before it is too late so that we do not waste our time repeating the same phrases at the end of each year. We should remember the value of the wasted time and the importance of every minute in the lives of people particularly the developing ones which are straggling behind in terms of civilization, knowledge, freedom and democracy.

If we calculate what happened in the previous year 2004, we will realize the losses of the nation in its capabilities, dignity, and members.

This is why 2004 is deservedly labeled the year of blood, and devastat-

ion. We lost Sheik Zayed bin Sultan, the wise man of the nation, president of the UAE and lost the leader and symbol of the Palestinian Cause Yasser Arafat, and locally there is the loss of Sheik Mujahed Abu Shawareb.

Therefore, the every Arab and Muslim has today a great responsibility and the duties of leaderships are greater. The leaders have decisive roles and have to peruse the ongoing developments and make changes and reforms from the inside and allow all people to participate in the process of change, modernization and democratization.

The Sudan is living nowadays hard times. It is suffering foreign interference and substantial threats from unrest in Darfur, South, and internal conflicts as well as increasing break-up of parties and active forces. There is unfortunately unawareness of the seriousness of the situation and leaders in both government and opposition have lost bearings for the shore of safety.

The same applies to Syria and Lebanon after the last UN Security Council's resolution because external forces want to interfere on the pretext of human rights, and freedom of practicing democracy.

In Yemen, we have concern after the confidence crisis between the government and the opposition in the wake of Saadah insurgency, trials of the press, and imprisonment of journalists despite the President's directives for not to harass pressmen.

All this arouses question as we are

conducting the census to fight corruption and establish the modern state, which needs the efforts of both state and opposition to push forward the issues of development and advancement.

While bidding farewell to 2004, we should indicate a positive station in the Arab Gulf, that is, the UAE where the transfer of power went on so smoothly and Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed took the office as president after the builder of the Union and captain of the ship of development and national unity Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan. Hence, sorrow has turned into happiness and fear of the future into contentment.

Today we are in need for unity and preclusion of reasons, excuses, and pretexts of the new world system's decision-makers. We should open door to dialogue with all parties without exception and get rid of mischievous exclusion policy from all Arab and Islamic countries.

Finally, I say no right is lost if it is sought. We will see elections in Palestine and incomplete elections in Iraq. President Mubarak will get a new term and Bajammal's government will have served for two years.

We want to live 2005 within palpable changes and noticeable stability based on reform, challenge, and quite development far from outside threats and those of the future forum. The challenges of change require the participation of all. The fact that should be always remembered is that reforms are linked to democracy and modernization.

## Letters to the Editor

Yemen, where  
foreigners feel at home

I came to Yemen about a month ago from India to take the job of Marketing manager for a company called Mega Products Ltd. This company operates from Thailand & Australia and deals in Pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals and cosmetics.

One thing, which I liked the most about this country, is its people and their helping hand. Even though I am foreigner, but I never felt like one. I go to any shopping mall and ask for anything, people are there to help. Just the other day I was in one of the malls enquiring about the price of a cosmetic brand, even though the employee doesn't know English, still he came forward for help & with the help of calculator and displayed the price. Then came another person who offered his help for translating for me in Arabic. Although I don't know these people but their helping attitude definitely shows how good they are.

In India I used to give lectures on marketing and training and used to write articles in newspaper. Kindly advise how can I do the same thing here in Yemen

Mohammed Zafar  
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Can't we be  
safe in Yemen?

I do not know where to start from. Should I start from the criminal act that took place in Aden or the one that happened likewise in Sana'a. In Aden 2 innocent people died by a policeman (as most of them -if not all- are indeed ignorant), one of them died in front of his child. Can you imagine yourself dead in front of your own child or as a child to see your dad being killed? Another high-rank policeman killed a civilian in Aden (God knows for what reason). And one of the very well known figures dies or was killed in Sana'a with his wife, right in the middle of the capital city. The question that imposes and forces itself is "What is going on? Aren't we safe in our own country? How can people get killed by their protectors (the police) or die in their homes while in peace?"

Is there any way that our

government could provide safety and stability to the country, so that all the people abroad can go back home and live in peace and contribute in building the country? Does anybody has an answer for all these questions...

Nabeel Alabadany  
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Tribal wars eating  
away Yemen

I think that Yemen as a country and people is finished, with this ongoing tribal warfare, terrorism and hatred that is going on in my former homeland, I certainly see no future for this country. May God have mercy on Yemenis still living there.

Adnan Al-Hadrami  
United Kingdom

## Dr. Mahatir said it right!

After I finished watching the interview of former Malaysian Prime Minister and legend Dr. Mahatir Mohamed on Al-Jazeera channel on Wednesday in the 'Without Limits' Program (Bila Hudoood), I was both impressed by his conversation and upset for our Arab countries.

When he was asked about how he achieved this massive transformation of Malaysia, Dr. Mahatir did not answer with pride and egoism, but rather humbly stated that he did what he had to do.

He said that he focused on more action and less talk, something that our Arab governments are unwilling to do as they talk too much and do little.

Countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea have reached this level of development only because they exerted efforts and worked hard unlike our government in the Arab world, which kept on talking while achieving nothing.

I personally believe that there are a lot of cadres in my country that can be utilized to help the country's progress.

All the Asian countries I mentioned above never started their path towards development by digging for oil, but rather started by digging their minds to set up strategies and goals, and then work extensively to achieve them. This is in total contrast to Arab coun-

tries that gain wealth from oil and when it is not enough, they go on begging others for aid.

So I just hope that the wisdom of Dr. Mahatir would one day find its way into our own Arab leaders.

Mohamed Saleh Haidar  
mosaha@hotmail.com

## Congratulations YT

I would like to congratulate you on a job well done through the Yemen Times. I'm a Yemeni student in the US who finds your paper the best amongst its comparisons. It saddens me to know that the freedom of press in Yemen is some what restricted however the Yemen Times has proven that its worth a fight.

Unlike other papers that provoke propaganda and are more like puppets for the Government, your paper is the new face of press freedom in our great country Yemen. I am proud to have done a study about Yemen Times through one of my college courses. Please accept my appreciation for the work of your staff and you. People like you are clearing the many bad images about countries of the Middle East and in particular, Yemen.

Munib Althary  
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## Bush and Iran

There is good reason to believe that Mr. Bush intends to go to war against Iran. Bush has been developing a new thermonuclear weapon designed to destroy both underground and surface targets. See

http://www.ihf.com/articles/119913.html

Tritium production (required for the B61 series nuclear bomb) in the U.S. is currently at a high level and is being manufactured at privately owned nuclear power production sites in the U.S.

This is exactly what Bush is accusing Iran of doing - making bomb components at power production plants. However, it appears that Bush's rush to produce even more powerful nuclear weapons is acceptable to the western world whereas that same production in Iran is seen as evil.

It is very likely that Mr. Bush

will use nuclear weapons against Iran in the next 4 years - unless Iran becomes a member of the nuclear club. Who can blame the Iranians for wanting to protect their citizens and making Tehran look like Baghdad?

Robert Lindh  
lindh@swnebr.net

Time to realize  
what's going on

Sometimes I just wonder what people believe in and think about when looking at the events unfolding around the world, especially in the Middle East.

Nijole King, for instance, claims that Arabs didn't condemn enough the killing of the Iraqi aid worker. She probably doesn't watch Al-Jazeera. But to compare the death of an aid worker with thousands of dead Iraqis is truly out of context.

And she also claims that those are mere insurgents. Half of a country cannot become insurgents. I just hope that she accepts the facts that these people are genuine Iraqis and are telling Bush that he is not welcome and that he should keep his democracy to himself and America.

After all, Bush never came to liberate Iraq or to change a regime and bring democracy but to invade Iraq for oil and strategic reasons. Check the map and look where Iraq is located, particularly in comparison to Israel. She should also look at Iraq's borders with Saudi Arabia and Syria. Doesn't that give enough hints?

Let me explain what this basically means. As for Israel, like Saddam demonstrated, it's an easy target and not too far at all.

As for Saudi Arabia, its the center of the Islamic world and the worlds largest oil supplier and home to some of the biggest Islamic scholars.

Finally comes Syria, which is the only country that hasn't bowed to Israel yet and is a constant threat to its security.

No wonder why the US and Israel are so enthusiastic about occupying Iraq and keeping it a loyal ally. It is about time for us to realize what is going on.

Saeed Al-amoudi  
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COMMON  
SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haifi

Increasing  
awareness in  
the countryside

Yemeni cities are continuing to absorb many of the rural Yemenis, who have come to feel that their rural habitats are unable to provide the means of sustenance, or those who have come to believe that modern life can only come to dwellers of urban metropolises. It goes without saying that there is a clear inequity in the lives of the urban and rural dwellers and the access to many social services or the amenities of modern life is almost non-existent for the rural dwellers in many of the remote areas of the country. Over the last twenty years, this massive migration from rural to urban areas has become a foundation for the rise of many social ailments Yemeni society was lacking as traditional rural norms managed to keep family life stable and people were content with the sustenance that traditional farming eked out for them.

The development process in Yemen unfortunately focused its projects and programs on making the large cities the beneficiaries of most of the efforts to provide social services and even markets were encouraged to concentrate in urban areas, thus leaving the rural countryside untouched by the rapid strides that the major cities of Yemen have taken. On the other hand, the cities have neither been prepared for this influx of rural dwellers nor capable of sustaining continued urban growth in light of the absence of adequate sustainable water supplies in the basins that provide them with their potable water requirements. Yet, the influx continues and the cities are forced to absorb a lot of people, who are neither prepared for city life or even have a feeling of the adjustments they need to make, socially and culturally if they are to realize the quests they hoped to pursue in the cities they have come to.

Part of the problem is that the public media, especially television and radio, has very little broadcast room for making the rural population aware that the cities are not going to be the paradise they envision and that they should pursue means of developing their own areas. This is a consequence of the slow efforts at decentralization of government authority and the reluctance of the central government to empower local habitats to have a say in how they run and use their local resources or how they manage their development projects, if they have any that are directed towards them. Thus, if such projects are undertaken, it is usually administrators from the central government that are assigned the tasks of designing and implementing these projects, often with very little input from the beneficiaries. These projects, in many cases are usually finished and almost abandoned right afterwards, or turned over to local authorities or traditional leaderships that are ill prepared in their operation and maintenance. Thus, there is a lot of waste of investment funds that are often provided by loans and many of these projects turn into empty facades or dead rusty metal that never serves the purposes intended for them.

Because the rural countryside relies on broadcast media for most of the information that is available to it about the rest of the world or as a possible source of cultural development, one would hope that the broadcast media would allocate certain air time to helping the rural population finding means of making their present habitats by providing programs that educate the rural population that rural areas can also become modern habitats that provide all the services that may be found in cities and can attract merchandise and goods that provide some of the amenities of modern life as well. This would of course mean educating rural populations on the way to administer themselves, without having to rely on central government authorities to provide the services they need (although they should contribute to the funding of the establishment of such services and provide some technical backup).

The best way is to make the rural population feel that they are free to organize themselves into cooperatives that are independent of any government control and that are able to determine the activities they will sponsor based on their needs. In many ways this can be done through teaching rural people how to set up community action teams that can pursue different projects and manage them independently in a fully transparent manner. Yet, so much air time is wasted on meaningless programs that are not only not directed to the rural citizens, although they still make up some 70% of the population, but even city dwellers find them to be useless or lacking in any form of culture so as to enrich their lives or direct them to the path to better living.

The government is spending a sizable chunk of its budget on sustaining various forms of public media, especially radio and television. The people in the countryside are hungry for knowledge, especially on how they can better their lives where they are living rather than join the mass exodus to urban centers that are neither ready to accommodate them or become the dream world they hope to become a part of. On the other hand, the public media should also point out to the rural population the difficulties they will face in cities and the social problems that will counter their peaceful and serene rural lives.

Much of the inhabited rural countryside are areas of scenic beauty and may often be suitable for developments as attractive tourist havens. The public media can help introduce programs that educate rural residents how they can work to provide the facilities that tourists need to make their areas attractive to them. This means that rural areas need to set up basic accommodation facilities, rest areas for tour groups and protection for sites that have a historical or aesthetic value.

The public media should start to reach out to the rural people because they have truly been victims of neglect long enough. This is not only important for the rural dwellers, but for the already congested metropolises that are becoming hotbeds for social degeneration and urban squalor.



# Powers of the Future

By RALF DAHRENDORF

Looking back over the turbulent year that is now coming to an end, one is tempted to focus on what American leaders have come to call the Greater Middle East. Such a survey would obviously take us to Iraq, to Israel, and Palestine – and to terrorism.

Lasting peace in the Middle East could lead to greater prosperity and cooperation in the world. But if we take a wider view, the problems of the Middle East appear to be but one aspect of deeper shifts among the powers of the world. Indeed, tectonic changes became visible in 2004. We have begun to see the “powers of the future,” to borrow the title of former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt’s recent best-selling book.

Chancellor Schmidt is certain of two developments. The United States remains the key player, and China’s power will continue to grow. He is less certain about the future of Europe, Russia, and the Middle East.

To be sure, 2004 has seen the confirmation of America’s hard power – and its voters’ choice of a politics of values rather than of interests. Americans may not want their soldiers and military hardware in dozens, if not hundreds, of places around

the world, but they accept a president who offers simple – often martial – certainties.

One may also wonder whether this president could lead them in another direction, to traditional Republican isolationism. After all, it is the Democrats who have traditionally taken America to war. In any case, security guaranteed by military power will continue to be an American concern.

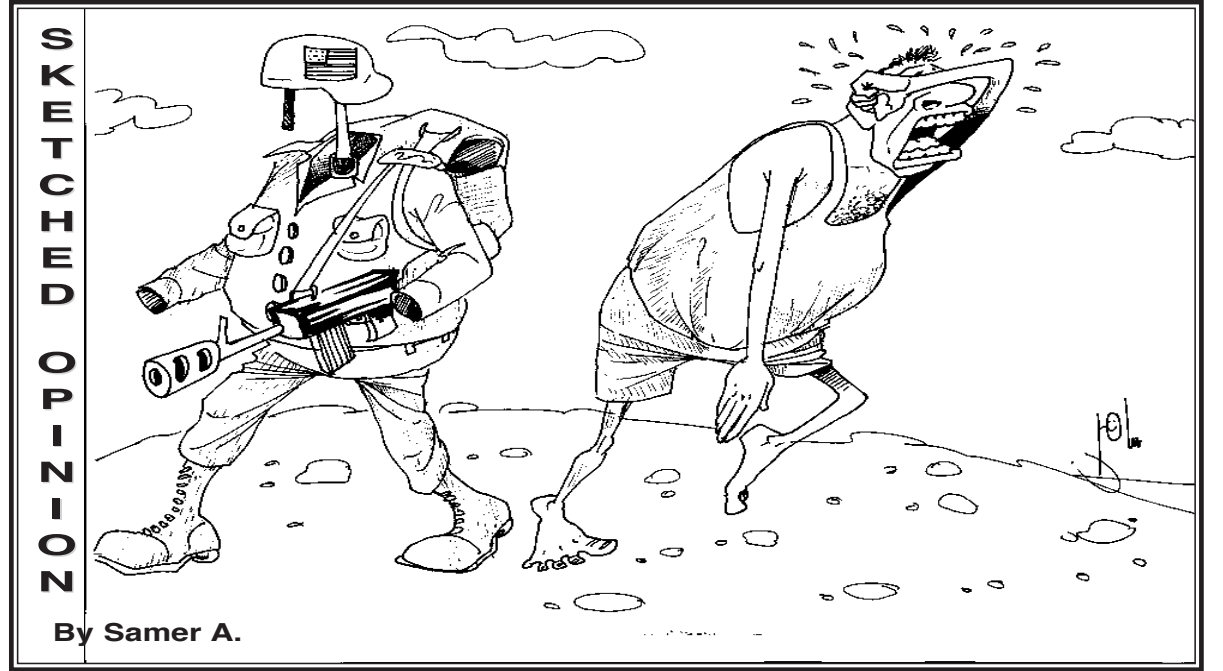
But while America’s hard power dominates the world scene, its soft power declined this year. The US lost some of its attractiveness for many, and Americans are unpopular in many parts of the world. The decline in overseas visitors, and notably in the number of foreign students in the US, is the immediate result of stricter visa laws, but it is an important factor in the weakening of America’s global hegemony.

Soft power begins with economic power. America’s twin fiscal and trade deficits may prove to be solvable problems, but new ways will have to be tried to resolve them. At a recent conference, US government representatives were unimpressed by European pleas to do something about the deficits – and the falling dollar that has resulted from them. “That is not a European problem,” the Americans responded. “It is an issue between us and China.”

All at once, China is rapidly emerging as a growing economic force. It not only has considerable dollar reserves, but has also become the manufacturing capital of the world. American and European jobs increasingly migrate to China. Early hints at the reaction could be heard in the American presidential election campaign, with the frequent protests against outsourcing and China’s pegged exchange rate. But the trend will not be stopped. It is surely only a matter of time – a short time – before China makes its political and military weight felt.

This leaves the uncertain future of Russia and those still in the Russian orbit, like Ukraine. This year witnessed a decline in democracy and the rule of law across what Mr Putin calls the “former Soviet space.” The problem is a challenge especially for Europe. At first sight, 2004 was a good year for the European Union, with enlargement to 25 members completed in May a notable success. Enlargement was not only a triumph for democracy and the rule of law in the post-communist countries to the west of Russia, but it is also an indication of the magnetism of the EU, and thus of its soft power.

Eastward expansion of the EU enables the New Europe to emulate the economic dynamism of other recent members, like



Spain and Ireland. Enlargement has produced a Union confident enough to engage more explicitly – and even with elements of hard power – in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. It has also provided the courage to open accession negotiations with Turkey.

Yet one cannot help agreeing with Chancellor Schmidt when he sees Europe’s future shrouded in uncertainty. There is no clear recognition of the fact that Europe’s soft power means little unless it is allied with the hard power of

the US. But there was no progress in 2004 in recreating a transatlantic partnership that recognizes the massive changes occurring in world affairs. Pathetic attempts to go it alone have not made Europe stronger, and anti-Americanism harms Europe more than the US.

Thus, at the end of 2004, the most important global task remains unresolved: creation of a confident nucleus for the Free World. An alliance of those who espouse and practice liberal democracy might provide a pole of certainty in a

highly uncertain world. Let us hope that 2005 will bring us a few steps closer to that objective.

Ralf Dahrendorf, author of numerous acclaimed books and a former European Commissioner from Germany, is a member of the British House of Lords, a former Rector of the London School of Economics, and a former Warden of St. Antony’s College, Oxford.

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## On Confucius, Jesus and my son the doctor

# Being human is a big bummer

By KURT VONNEGUT

Many years ago, I was so innocent I still considered it possible that we could become the humane and reasonable America so many members of my generation used to dream of. We dreamed of such an America during the Great Depression, when there were no jobs. And then we fought and often died for that dream during the Second World War, when there was no peace.

But I know now that there is not a chance in hell of America’s becoming humane and reasonable. Because power corrupts us, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Human beings are chimpanzees who get crazy drunk on power. By saying that our leaders are power-drunk chimpanzees, am I in danger of wrecking the morale of our soldiers fighting and dying in the Middle East? Their morale, like so many bodies, is already shot to pieces. They are being treated, as I never was, like toys a rich kid got for Christmas.

When you get to my age, if you get to my age, which is 81, and if you have reproduced, you will find yourself asking your own children, who are themselves middle-aged, what life is all about. I have seven kids, four of them adopted.

Many of you reading this are probably the same age as my grandchildren. They, like you, are being royally shafted and lied to by our Baby Boomer corporations and government.

I put my big question about life to my biological son Mark. Mark is a pediatrician, and author of a memoir, *The Eden Express*. It is about his crackup, straight-jacket and padded cell stuff, from which he recovered sufficiently to graduate from Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Vonnegut said this to his doddering old dad: “Father, we are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is.” So I pass that on to you. Write it down, and put it in your computer, so you can forget it.

I have to say that’s a pretty good sound bite, almost as good as, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” A lot of people think Jesus said that, because it is so much the sort of thing Jesus liked to say. But it was actually said by Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, 500 years before there was that greatest and most humane of human beings, named Jesus Christ.

The Chinese also gave us, via Marco Polo, pasta and the formula for gunpowder. The Chinese were so dumb they only used gunpowder for fireworks. And everybody was so dumb back then that nobody in either hemisphere even knew that there was another one.

But back to people, like Confucius and Jesus and my son the doctor, Mark, who’ve said how we could behave more humanely, and maybe make the world a less painful place. One of my favorites is Eugene Debs, from Terre Haute in my native state of Indiana. Get a load of this:

Eugene Debs, who died back in 1926, when I was only 4, ran 5 times as the Socialist Party candidate for president, winning 900,000 votes, 6 percent of the

popular vote, in 1912, if you can imagine such a ballot. He had this to say while campaigning:

As long as there is a lower class, I am in it.

As long as there is a criminal element, I’m of it.

As long as there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

Doesn’t anything socialistic make you want to throw up? Like great public schools or health insurance for all?

How about Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes?

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. . . .

And so on.

Not exactly planks in a Republican platform. Not exactly Donald Rumsfeld or Dick Cheney stuff.

For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes. But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course that’s Moses, not Jesus. I haven’t heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.

“Blessed are the merciful” in a courtroom? “Blessed are the peacemakers” in the Pentagon? Give me a break!

There is a tragic flaw in our precious Constitution, and I don’t know what can be done to fix it. This is it: Only nut cases want to be president.

But, when you stop to think about it, only a nut case would want to be a human being, if he or she had a choice. Such treacherous, untrustworthy, lying and greedy animals we are!

I was born a human being in 1922 A.D. What does “A.D.” signify? That commemorates an inmate of this lunatic asylum we call Earth who was nailed to a wooden cross by a bunch of other inmates. With him still conscious, they hammered spikes through his wrists and insteps, and into the wood. Then they set the cross upright, so he dangled up there where even the shortest person in the crowd could see him writhing this way and that.

Can you imagine people doing such a thing to a person?

No problem. That’s entertainment. Ask the devout Roman Catholic Mel Gibson, who, as an act of piety, has just made a fortune with a movie about how Jesus was tortured. Never mind what Jesus said.

During the reign of King Henry the Eighth, founder of the Church of England, he had a counterfeit boiled alive in public. Show biz again.

Mel Gibson’s next movie should be *The Counterfeiter*. Box office records will again be broken.

One of the few good things about modern times: If you die horribly on television, you will not have died in vain. You will have entertained us.

And what did the great British historian Edward Gibbon, 1737-1794 A.D., have to say about the human record so far? He said, “History is indeed little more than

the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.”

The same can be said about this morning’s edition of the New York Times.

The French-Algerian writer Albert Camus, who won a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, wrote, “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.”

So there’s another barrel of laughs from literature. Camus died in an automobile accident. His dates? 1913-1960 A.D.

Listen. All great literature is about what a bummer it is to be a human being: Moby Dick, Huckleberry Finn, The Red Badge of Courage, the Iliad and the Odyssey, Crime and Punishment, the Bible and The Charge of the Light Brigade.

But I have to say this in defense of humankind: No matter in what era in history, including the Garden of Eden, everybody just got there. And, except for the Garden of Eden, there were already all these crazy games going on, which could make you act crazy, even if you weren’t crazy to begin with. Some of the games that were already going on when you got here were love and hate, liberalism and conservatism, automobiles and credit cards, golf and girls’ basketball.

Even crazier than golf, though, is modern American politics, where, thanks to TV and for the convenience of TV, you can only be one of two kinds of human beings, either a liberal or a conservative.

Actually, this same sort of thing happened to the people of England generations ago, and Sir William Gilbert, of the radical team of Gilbert and Sullivan, wrote these words for a song about it back then:

I often think it’s comical  
How nature always does contrive  
That every boy and every gal  
That’s born into the world alive  
Is either a little Liberal  
Or else a little Conservative.

Which one are you in this country? It’s practically a law of life that you have to be one or the other? If you aren’t one or the other, you might as well be a doughnut.

If some of you still haven’t decided, I’ll make it easy for you.

If you want to take my guns away from me, and you’re all for murdering fetuses, and love it when homosexuals marry each other, and want to give them kitchen appliances at their showers, and you’re for the poor, you’re a liberal.

If you are against those perversions and for the rich, you’re a conservative.

What could be simpler?

My government’s got a war on drugs. But get this: The two most widely abused and addictive and destructive of all substances are both perfectly legal.

One, of course, is ethyl alcohol. And President George W. Bush, no less, and by his own admission, was smashed or tidley-poo or four sheets to the wind a good deal of the time from when he was 16 until he was 41. When he was 41, he says, Jesus appeared to him and made him knock off the sauce, stop gargling nose paint.

Other drunks have seen pink elephants. And do you know why I think he is so pissed off at Arabs? They invented algebra. Arabs also invented the numbers we

use, including a symbol for nothing, which nobody else had ever had before. You think Arabs are dumb? Try doing long division with Roman numerals.

We’re spreading democracy, are we? Same way European explorers brought Christianity to the Indians, what we now call “Native Americans.”

How ungrateful they were! How ungrateful are the people of Baghdad today.

So let’s give another big tax cut to the super-rich. That’ll teach bin Laden a lesson he won’t soon forget. Hail to the Chief.

That chief and his cohorts have as little to do with Democracy as the Europeans had to do with Christianity. We the people have absolutely no say in whatever they choose to do next. In case you haven’t noticed, they’ve already cleaned out the treasury, passing it out to pals in the war and national security rackets, leaving your generation and the next one with a perfectly enormous debt that you’ll be asked to repay.

Nobody let out a peep when they did that to you, because they have disconnected every burglar alarm in the Constitution: The House, the Senate, the Supreme Court, the FBI, the free press (which, having been embedded, has forsaken the First Amendment) and We the People.

About my own history of foreign substance abuse. I’ve been a coward about heroin and cocaine and LSD and so on, afraid they might put me over the edge. I did smoke a joint of marijuana one time with Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead, just to be sociable. It didn’t seem to do anything to me, one way or the other, so I never did it again. And by the grace of God, or whatever, I am not an alcoholic, largely a matter of genes. I take a couple of drinks now and then, and will do it again tonight. But two is my limit. No problem.

I am of course notoriously hooked on cigarettes. I keep hoping the things will kill me. A fire at one end and a fool at the other.

But I’ll tell you one thing: I once had a high that not even crack cocaine could match. That was when I got my first driver’s license! Look out, world, here comes Kurt Vonnegut.

And my car back then, a Studebaker, as I recall, was powered, as are almost all means of transportation and other machinery today, and electric power plants and furnaces, by the most abused and addictive and destructive drugs of all: fossil fuels.

When you got here, even when I got here, the industrialized world was already hopelessly hooked on fossil fuels, and very soon now there won’t be any more of those. Cold turkey.

Can I tell you the truth? I mean this isn’t like TV news, is it?

Here’s what I think the truth is: We are all addicts of fossil fuels in a state of denial, about to face cold turkey.

And like so many addicts about to face cold turkey, our leaders are now committing violent crimes to get what little is left of what we’re hooked on.

This article was previously published by In These Times.

# Putin’s Imperial Dreams

By VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS

To divide a people in order to conquer them is an immoral strategy that has endured throughout recorded history. From Alexander the Great to Stalin the Cruel, variants of that strategy have been used to keep nations in thrall to the will of an emperor.

We are now seeing this strategy at work again as President Vladimir Putin stealthily seeks to restore Kremlin supremacy over the lands treated as “lost” when the USSR imploded in 1991. In so overplaying his hand in Ukraine’s recent election, however, Putin clearly revealed to the world his neo-imperialist designs.

In the wake of the euphoric mass protests in Kyiv, Russia’s president has since said that he can work with whatever government Ukraine’s people choose. These are mere words, for in mind and action Putin does not want anyone to rule Ukraine that he has not put in place. No price is too high to achieve that end, so traditional threats about dividing Ukraine have been used.

I speak as someone who has been on the receiving end of Russian imperialist designs. When Lithuania and then the other Baltic States – Estonia and Latvia – which were occupied by Stalin early in WWII, seized their opportunity for freedom in 1990-91, the Kremlin did not sit on its hands. It knew that the rest of Russia’s colonies – the so-called “Soviet republics” – would want to follow the ungrateful Baltic countries into freedom.

Although Russia’s rulers were by then communists in name only, they didn’t hesitate to reach for the old Leninist recipes. They began to foster and incite splits and confrontations. They stoked supposed resentments among different national or ethnic communities based on Lenin’s idea that even small groups of villages could demand territorial autonomy.

Note the word “territory.” The demands were never about normal cultural autonomy as a means of continued identity and supposed self-protection. Only territorial autonomy, it seems, would do.

This way, minorities become easily manipulated majorities. Divide enough, stoke enough resentment, and a nation becomes nothing more than a ruined society within a national territory. Arm some of these manufactured minority structures so that they can demand autonomy at the barrel of a gun, and you get the kind of chaos the Kremlin can use to reassert its control.

Fortunately, Lithuanians – as well as Estonians and Latvians – understood this game. It failed also in Crimea when Russia sought to deploy its old strategy of divide and rule there in 1991. But these defeats did not inspire the Kremlin to abandon the basic strategy. On the contrary, Russia’s imperial ambitions persisted, and persistence has paid off.

Around the Black Sea, Russia has called into being a series of artificial statelets. Georgia and Moldova have both been partitioned through the creation of

criminal mini-states nurtured by the Kremlin and which remain under its military umbrella. Indeed, in the very week that Putin was meddling in Ukraine’s presidential election, he was threatening to blockade one of those statelets, Georgia’s Abkhazia region, after it had the temerity to vote for a president the Kremlin did not like.

Moldova has been particularly helpless in the face of the Kremlin’s imperial designs. A huge Russian garrison remains deployed in Transdneister, where it rules in collaboration with local gangs. Proximity to this lawless territory has helped make Moldova the poorest land in Europe. To the east, Armenia and Azerbaijan were pushed into such bloody confrontation at the Kremlin’s instigation that the only way for them to end their ethnic wars was to call in the Russians – as in Transdneister – for a kind of “Pax Ruthena.”

Now Ukraine’s people may face a similar test after supporters of Viktor Yanukovich threatened to seek autonomy should the rightful winner of the country’s presidential vote, Viktor Yushchenko, actually become president. Who can doubt that the hand of Russia is behind this? Would Moscow’s mayor Yuri Luzhkov, a loyal creature of Putin, have dared to attend the rally where autonomy was demanded without the sanction of the Kremlin’s elected monarch? Indeed, Putin openly claims this part of Ukraine as a Russian “internal matter.”

It is to be hoped that Ukraine’s Russian-speaking citizens, having witnessed the economic despair – and sometimes the bloodshed – caused by the Kremlin’s manufactured pro-autonomy movements, will realize that they are being turned into Putin’s pawns. The test for Viktor Yushchenko and his Orange revolutionaries, as it was for Lithuania’s democrats in 1990-91, is to show that democracy does not mean that the majority suppresses any minority. Lithuania passed that test; I am confident that Viktor Yushchenko and his team will do so as well.

But Europe and the world are also being tested. Russia is passing from being the Russian Federation of Boris Yeltsin to a unitary authoritarian regime under Vladimir Putin and his former KGB colleagues. Europe, America, and the wider world must see Putin’s so-called “managed democracy” in its true light, and must stand united against his neo-imperialist dreams.

The first step is to make Russia honor its binding commitment to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as to the Council of Europe, to remove its troops from Moldova and Georgia. Any plans to “defend” Yanukovich and the eastern part of Ukraine by military force must be confronted.

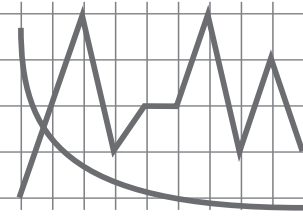
Vytautas Landsbergis, Lithuania’s first President after independence from the Soviet Union, is now a Member of the European Parliament.

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# YT Business

## Investment

# opportunities in scrap iron



### Exchange Rate for the Yemeni Rial

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	185.3500	185.5500
Sterling Pound	356.8800	357.2700
Euro	247.3800	247.6400
Saudi Rial	49.4200	49.4800
Kuwaiti Dinar	628.9200	629.6000
UAE Dirhem	50.4700	50.5200
Egyptian Pound	29.8700	29.9000
Bahraini Dinar	491.6400	492.1700
Qatari Rial	50.9100	50.9700
Jordanian Dinar	261.4200	261.7100
Omani Rial	481.4200	481.9400
Swiss Franc	161.3900	161.5700
Swedish Crown	27.5300	27.5600
Japanese Yen	1.7835	1.7854

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

By MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

**A**s construction activities rise in all Yemeni cities causing the price of iron to exceed YR105, 000

per ton (a 50 per cent increase), there is a great opportunity for investing scrap iron.

The government has banned re-exporting great quantities of iron because it is imported at such high prices, and leaves the door open to businessmen to establish local iron factories, exploiting the available

amounts of the scrap iron.

The authorities say that investment opportunities in the iron industry are encouraging. Investors will receive support and the scrap iron will be sold to them very cheaply.

Iron is the second most used construction material behind cement and Yemeni constructors have underscored

the need for scrap iron industry.

"Businessmen prefer to invest in speedy returns, such as tourist hotels, inns, and telecommunication and Internet centers. If they thought of investment in manufacturing iron, their income would increase in the near future," constructors said.

Constructors call on the authorities

to produce feasibility studies promote the significance of iron industry to investors in Yemen.

The official statistics show that Yemen imported 570,000 tons of iron last year, worth of YR 31.5 billion, 455,000 tons of iron powder, and 194,000 tons of iron pipes. Yemen exported 41 tons of scrap iron, worth YR 561

million. There were also 400 tons of re-exported iron, worth of YR 307 million.

The great quantity of imported iron proves that there are many opportunities to establish iron factories to meet local consumption needs and increase the export rate to the external markets.

### Japanese support for rural water projects

## Orange production of Mareb covers 60% of local demand

By MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

**T**he Japanese government has decided to offer two grants to be invested in water provision projects in rural areas in the governorate of Sana'a and the local council of Farie district of Mareb governorate.

The first grant amounts to \$82,032 thousand for the improvement of waters network at Dar Ashareef area, the district of Jahanah, Sana'a. The second grant amounts to \$24,987 thousand for building the health unit at Farie district. The local council would undertake its construction to meet needs of health care for inhabitants of the district.

Japan had, as part of the Japanese program, last August given Yemen a grant for projects of human safety amounted to \$50 thousand for improving water networks in five villages in the governorate of Sana'a and two grants worth of \$155 thousand for improving medical services in Yemen.

On the other hand, agricultural sources mentioned that the growing of oranges in the governorate of Mareb tops all other types of fruits. The governorate's production covers 50-60% of the local market demand of this fruit. Produced quantities have increased noticeably after the rebuilding of the

historical dam of Mareb under grant of the late Sheik Zaid Bin Sultan al-Nahayan, former president of the United Arab Emirates.

Head of Horticulture department at the State Authority for development of Eastern Areas Mohammed Izzi Kabie said in a press statement that growing

orange in the governorate of Mareb represented a %23 of the total cultivated land area in the governorate. Orange growing spreads mainly in the districts of Mareb and the Wadi, whereas its plantation drops in remainder of areas because of drought and that has led to limitedness of its growing especially in

the district of Hareeb.

Mr. Kabie estimated production of one hectare planted with orange trees by around 10-15 tons, calling the attention that collecting orange fruit begins in the beginning of October and continues until January and trees begin to blossom again in February.



### Bidding farewell to 2004 with weak economic result

## Yemen welcomes 2005 with new economic dose to face corruption

By MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI

**Y**emen bids farewell to the year 2004 with a very bad economical performance that can be described as weak whether in terms of the individual income development or infrastructure services establishment, development projects, slow development's paces, lack of job opportunities and unemployment in the society.

The government, however, tried during 2004 to come out of the economical crisis with applying a dose of reforms, but it encountered the rejection of the parliament members as well as all the public.

It was therefore compelled to postpone the structural reforms to 2005.

It seems that Yemen is insistent on the new dose of reforms during 2005 following the directives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and donors especially when Yemen has given a commitment to carry out some reforms to fit the required financial support for economical development.

Well-informed resources said to YT that Yemen has some obligations for donors and it can't stop the economical reforms program whatever the interior opposition strength for the program is.

The resources mentioned that the Yemeni government has conducted a new step of price reforms including the prices of diesel, gas, and petrol keeping about YR150 billion of subsidies that the government has been paid for the consumption goods giving the subsidies to those who still in need for it.

The government pointed out that the year 2005 will be decisive regarding the economical, financial and administrative reforms and it will implement a new economical strategy that is based on the following item:

1. implementing intensive strategic programs
2. distributing estates for youth to plant them
3. constructing settlements for people with limited income
4. taking care of technical and vocational education
5. establishing a rail way and decreasing the customs and taxes for controlling smuggling.

President Saleh directed the government to follow this strategy in order to have control over financial and administrative corruption and to reform the condition of public

establishment.

Saleh said that, "we want officials to be productive and creative and to respect the public property and nation."

The presidential directives includes that the local banks should execute settlement and employ the unemployed people.

In this respect the government said that it would implement the coming dose for renewing message of intentions with the International Monetary Fund and donors.

On the other hand, the opposition is against whatever preparations the government started in for applying the dose.

The government is doing so through the use of multimedia in order to lighten the influence of opposition parties and to urge people to support the policy of economical reforms in Yemen.

## Workers seeking jobs, suffering poverty, Government endeavours to implement projects generating jobs

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

**L**ong queues of jobless workers stand in columns at corners and turnings of the capital streets in quest of jobs, holding their work equipment.

Those people come from various Yemeni areas in search for work. When they talk about their concerns, they do not know there are strategies, plans drawn, and conferences held for finding solutions for unemployment, as the government claims that it would curb unemployment in the plans of the year 2005.

Workers say all doors are closed to us. They say in the early morning they carry their work tools, wait for long hours in vain until their bodies get exhausted of cold weather and waiting. Some of them catch cold and other diseases due to those hard circumstances and after all they do not get jobs but in very rare cases of the kind that lasts for four days a week.

A worker points at his tools in front of him, stressing that he has traveled a long distance to come to the capital for work. He did not find but coldness to host him in the morning and sees him off in the evening, leaving behind him in his village in Taiz five children waiting to send them expenses for living.

Another worker says he has acquired the profession of plumbing when he used to work in Saudi Arabia and says he has good experience in the job but seems job opportunities would not be available until the wave of cold weather subsides, adding he does not know about what would happen to him in the coming days.

Another man from the governorate of Ibb, well versed in economic conditions and retreat of family income sees that the existing mechanism of market based on free works, do not provide many job opportunities and if they are there, they are rather limited.

Each construction contractor

has his own workers who he knows and he would hire them to work for his projects. He adds that the problem is that here in Yemen "We hear of strategies and plans for creation of work opportunities and the government tells about role of local authorities in this regard but in reality we do not feel any improvement in our situation or in reduction the rate of unemployment in our areas.

We have practically felt that the local councils in the governorates and districts are incapable of creating any job opportunities."

Those workers and others constitute samples randomly selected from among thousands of unemployed workers queuing every day at main street crossings waiting for getting a job.

Despite of all those situations the government says it has designed suitable cures in the budget of 2005 to deal with the question of curbing unemployment and founding job opportunities.

According to the government, the plans are centered on creation of intensive job opportunities through giving priority to infrastructure projects and appropriation of over YR 197 billion for those projects in addition to about 35 billion riyals allotted among credits for profit-yielding projects.

The government affirms that its endeavor for alleviation of unemployment would be promising in the plan of the year 2005. The government expects that conditions of workers would be improved under its interest in qualifying labour, fighting poverty and providing practical solutions accommodating the largest number of the unemployed in the free market, among those are the graduates from universities.

In this plan, the government has given hope to the labour market if it managed to implement its plans in this respect of profit-yielding projects and employing the unemployed who feel the suffering of searching for jobs delivering them from bankruptcy.

# Are kindergartens for education or entertainment?

YEMEN TIMES  
TAIZ BUREAU

In recent past parents, especially those who have to work outside the house were used to be bewildered about where to keep their children and how to protect them. They used to keep them with relatives or neighbors until they would return from work. Nevertheless, they were not quite assured about their children safety. When they hear about accidents that happen usually to children, they became extremely worried over their children's safety.

Today, there are kindergartens where children, before attending primary school, are taken care of. They are considered a suitable solution to lighten the burden from upon parents' shoulders, which have other work to do outside. It is a good strategy to let children spend safe and healthy times especially when directors of a kindergarten should be educationalist and specialized in children psychology; they should be able to know, properly how to direct children's behavior and desires. They should try to discover and improve their talents.

Nevertheless, those kindergartens are private; they belong to some rich people. This state makes kindergartens only confined to a limited number of people because of the high fees charged for children. It is not possible for the family with limited income to have their children join any of these establishments. The poor families consider joining a kindergarten a sort of luxury that they cannot afford required expenses so they regard it unnecessary. The reason is that the government does not establish nurseries in each public

school though they are available in all schools in other countries. The role of the kindergarten is seen in preparing children mentally, skillfully and emotionally. This does not exempt us from asking the concerned people about the role of the kindergarten and nurseries whether it is a sort of entertainment or education, of which this reportage is the result.

#### A child like a blank page:

Asia Ali Abdullah, teacher in kindergarten of Geel Al-Ghad School, said that, "entertainment should be blended with education; entertainment is a crucial thing for children; it is an activity that helps in acquiring knowledge. Children are like blank pages; they have the ability to comprehend and pay attention to things. The kindergarten is a great chance to discover and improve their talents. We surely know that we deal with little children who are in need of love, kindness and continuous encouragement by teachers. This kind of treatment convinces children to stay with teachers and they love and respect them accordingly too much."

"Teaching becomes a kind of entertainment when I, for example, present the letter 'A' in a song related to it and then I make competitions showing some drawings and flashcards, children enjoy such activities so much. If I do otherwise they will get bored," she added.

#### A child learns good values:

Safiyah Ahmed al-Hemiari, basic level teacher, explained that "the kindergarten has a vital role in both education and entertainment. The things that a child acquires in education are very significant topics such as

morals. The child is taught honesty, faithfulness etc. The funny aspect including playing, memorizing songs and developing skills are also involved. That's because the child at this age practices the two things together that qualify it to gain more knowledge.'

#### Preparing for adaptation with community:

Fathia Luqman, teacher in a kindergarten, thinks that 'kindergartens are much more for entertainment than being for education. They are for preparing the child to adapt with its surroundings in order to enable it to integrate in the community which is different from the atmosphere of the family.'

She added that, 'the child learns the right value and morals such as honesty, cleanliness, loving others, regulations and other principles that it acquires when dealing with friends and family members providing it with special mental and physical abilities.'

Dr. Ghassan Hatahet, social worker in children education, said that "the aim of kindergartens in the past was keeping children during the day hours: they play together and spend their time regardless of how they spend it. The entire goal was only to keep them away from their houses in order the allow parents to be free for their works. As the role of the kindergarten is being developed, the kindergarten shares the parents the aim of bringing children up and training them. They also learn to sing, dance, and manners of drinking, eating, speech, and good behaviors. We see nowadays some kindergartens give children homework and do some tests for the children's knowledge. The daily lessons become a normal situation in



kindergartens.

"Parents insist to make their children learn foreign languages from their early age. When a child becomes in the fourth year, they send it to preparatory schools where it learns reading, writing, basics of mathematics, and perhaps a foreign language. Parents ask these schools to offer evidence that the child has learned something. They get extremely happy when the child comes back home carrying the unbearable stress as well as so many books. The child suffers from the homework. They start helping it while it is crying."

#### Early preparation is necessary:

While discussing the parents' insistence on the early education, Dr Ghassan said, "It's believed that learning in the first year in schools is the grounds in the next levels of education. The early preparation is a necessity.

"A lot of researchers did a future study in the 1960s in USA on 123 of poor children who were brought from a

poor community. The study proved that the children who got a basic education in a kindergarten or a preparatory school were more able to complete their university studies and to get better jobs. Those who had not gotten any preparatory education were more likely to deviate. The early education helped the team to avoid deviation and going against laws. They recommended that a child of four should receive a basic education."

#### What should be there?

Dr. Hatahet finally said that, "what any kindergarten should do is plainly that they should respect the child's abilities and motivations and deal with it accordingly. This is the human instinct known by every mother: when her child starts walking- trying to walk and stumble- a mother remove the harmful things that may hinder the child's attempts. This is the way she respects her child's abilities and desires and helps it to develop them.

The child's abilities are developing from time to time, it may start early or late. So, taking for granted that growth takes place at a specific time for all children is a great mistake. A child to learn needs to pay attention and concentration. We should teach a child different shapes and how to recognize the difference between them. It needs also to remember all that in order to learn. These capabilities may need some time to be ready for education.

"The early education is better but it should be in proportion to each child's abilities: this can happen with the use of a toy, song, story, or dance. The child should be given the opportunity to energize its ability of imagination. If you want a child to draw something, let it draw whatever it wants. We do not want the kindergartens to conclude spoiling our children that the TV has started. However, we want them to improve the child's abilities preparing it to go to school to receive the basic knowledge.

**Republic of Yemen**  
**Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP)**  
**Health Reform Support Project (HRSP)**  
**Credit Administration Unit (CAU)**

**Request for Expressions of Interest**  
**Professional Health Management Information System Consultant**

The government of the Republic of Yemen has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of its Health Reform Support Project (HRSP), and intends to apply the proceeds of this credit for the procurement of consultancy services for the HRSP.

The World Bank financed HRSP (Credit 3625) now invites eligible consultants to provide **consultancy** services to the HRSP, who will be function as a professional health management information system (HMIS) consultant. The HMIS consultant will report and be accountable to the DG responsible for the HMIS subcomponent and CAU.

The activities/responsibilities of this consultant will include (but will not be limited to) assisting the HMIS subcomponent of the project in:

- 1- Preparing TOR, scope of work, qualifications, technical specifications, RFP, procurement documents, and other related documents for consultancy services, as well as technical assistance to the HMIS subcomponent of the project.
- 2- Develop plans (quarterly and annual) and implement activities.
- 3- Follow-up on progress of all activities of this subcomponent, take measures to ensure that activities are achieved in an efficient and timely basis, as well as preparing monthly progress reports showing deviations and providing recommendations.
- 4- Assessing needs for goods, training, civil works and consultancy services.
- 5- Strengthening coordination between donors and government bodies supporting or financing the HMIS general directorate within the MOPHP.
- 6- Prepare evaluations, analysis, recommendations, and discuss these with MOPHP.
- 7- Participate in consultant's evaluation and selection, as well as supervising their activities during implementation and reporting to the HMIS on progress and outcomes.
- 8- Prepare technical advise and provide written feedback on all improving health systems management subcomponent activities under the same component and outputs.
- 9- Provide on-job training for HMIS staff.

#### Qualifications:

- A minimum of a Bachelors degree in information technology or a relevant field.
- A minimum of five years of experience in health information systems, information technology management, and on similar assignments as specified in the scope of work.
- Good experience in statistical programmes.
- Proficiency in both Arabic and English.

Interested consultants must provide information indicating they are qualified to perform the required services and have the relevant experience. Consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank guidelines; *Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, January 1997 (revised September 1997, January 1999, and May 2000).*

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by the 5th January 2005. Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.

**Credit Administration Unit**  
**Health Reform Support Project**  
**4th Floor- Ministry of Public Health and Population**  
**P.O. Box 1330 - Al-Hasabah - Sanaa - Republic of Yemen**  
**Tel: +967(1) 252224 - Fax: +967(1) 251622 Email: hrsp@y.net.ye**

**Republic of Yemen**  
**Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP)**  
**Health Reform Support Project (HRSP)**  
**Credit Administration Unit (CAU)**

**Request for Expressions of Interest for Consultancy Services to**  
**Evaluate the MOPHP National Health Management Information System**

The government of the Republic of Yemen has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of its Health Reform Support Project (HRSP), and intends to apply the proceeds of this credit for the procurement of consultancy services for the HRSP.

The World Bank financed HRSP (Credit 3625) now invites eligible consultants to provide short-term **consultancy** services towards the health management information systems (HMIS) subcomponent of the project who will be responsible for performing an evaluation of the existing national HMIS of the MOPHP. The consultant who will evaluate the national HMIS of the MOPHP will report and be accountable to the DG responsible for the HMIS subcomponent and CAU.

#### The selected consultant will be expected to perform the following:

- Review, assess, and evaluate existing National Statistical Guidelines within the MOPHP.
- Review and assess MOPHP tools and methods of statistical data collection and validation at different levels.
- Review and assess data flow and information availability, and how this statistical information is utilized and influences decision-making processes and policy formulation.
- Review the existing organizational structure of the NHIS, and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing structure (managerial, technical capacity, staff skills and qualifications), and provide recommendations to improve performance including a job description for key staff and develop a reporting system.
- Evaluate the quality of data collected at all levels from health facility up to the national level and provide a description of the existing methods and recommendations to improve.
- Review reporting responsibilities as well as skills and qualifications of NHIS appointed staff from health facility level to district, governorate and central levels.
- Review and evaluate data collection methods, data quality, report generating and data flow at private health facilities and their accordance with MOPHP Statistical Guidelines.
- Carryout a training needs assessment of staff of the MOPHP general directorate of statistics centrally and peripherally.
- Make recommendations for improvement of the national HMIS and the scope of work specified above.
- Prepare key performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the HMIS subcomponent and develop a monitoring and evaluation tool to measure performance.

#### Qualifications:

- A minimum of a Masters degree in statistics, information systems, or a relevant field.
- A minimum of five years of experience in statistics, health data management, and health information systems, and on similar assignments as specified in the scope of work.
- A minimum of three years experience in developing countries.
- Proficiency in both Arabic and English.

Interested consultants must provide information indicating they are qualified to perform the required services and have the relevant experience. Consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank guidelines; *Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, January 1997 (revised September 1997, January 1999, and May 2000).*

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*Power from the earth, energy from ocean waves & the world's tallest structures full of hot air:*

# New technologies from Australia unveiled

By IRENA KNEHTL\*  
IRENA\_KNEHTL@MAKTOOB.COM

**E**nergy is and will remain the largest issue and business on Earth. The industry is undergoing major changes as the world grapples with climate change, pollution, the dependence on fossil fuels and the need for renewable energy.

**Power from the Earth: Heat from the earth, stored and buried granites, and oil technology is the tool, water is the agent, and clean sustainable energy is the product.**

Hot Dry Rock (HDR) geothermal energy or heat mining has recently been recognized as a new resource. It has a unique position within the renewable energy sector, for being capable of generating low cost, base-load power on a large scale. For Australia, it is a project of national importance: The experimental basin represents the largest known geothermal resource in the world and has the potential to supply 1000s MW of low cost power. This known resource has the energy potential equivalent to 50 billion barrels of oil. Economic studies show that HDR geothermal power technology has the potential and is competitive with fossil fuels. The cost of Australian historic well is approximately 5, 4 million Dollars.

HDR does not depend on new technology. It relies on extracting heat from special hot granites at depths of less than 5 km from the surface, i.e. within the so-called "oil window". The heat is extracted by means of circulating water from a deep surface well, through an engineered underground heat exchanger, with the hot water returning to the surface through the second well.

HDR geothermal electricity should be distinguished from conventional geothermal electricity, such as the power plants installed in the hot spring regions. Conventional geothermal energy is generated from naturally occurring hot water and steam in rocks near volcanic centers. This form of electricity production is well established in many countries. Conventional geothermal power stations are generally limited in size and are often linked to emissions of volcanic gases and toxic elements.

HDR geothermal energy generations differ from its conventional cousin below ground. It relies on artificially creating an underground heat exchange-

er to extract heat from high temperature locks by circulating water. It uses existing technologies equipment and skills that were developed for the oil and geothermal power generation industries. The simplest HDR plant consists of one injection well and two production wells. Water from the injection well flows through the underground heat exchanger developed within the hot rocks. The superheated water is brought to the surface under pressure and used to boil an organic liquid. The water cooled by the process is the re-injected into the underground heat exchanger in a closed loop, to extract more heat.

The organic vapor goes through a turbine to generate electricity..

It is thought that a small number of locations around the world have the right conditions for cost effective production of HDR electricity. For the best results, HDR geothermal electricity generation needs a large volume of the right kind of hot rock in the right geological setting. The best HDR energy source is high heat production granite that has naturally occurring radiogenic minerals, which produce heat. The heat needs to be trapped by an overlying blanket of insulating rocks, generally more than 3000 meters in thickness. Without such cover of younger rocks, the heat would be radiated away into the atmosphere and rock temperatures would be insufficient for cost effective HDR application. The objective is to produce electricity from its HDR geothermal resources on a large scale and at competitive costs. It intends to generate clean, emission-free power with the heat equivalent of 50 billion barrels of oil.

The pilot well has been named "The Habanero", after the world's hottest chilli. In addition, hot it is! Outside of volcanic areas, these rocks are the hottest in the world. Hot-dry rock geothermal electricity production in Australia will be the deepest and the hottest well ever drilled on mainland Australia and also first deep geothermal well. It is Hot Dry Rock (HDR) technology what mineral grades are mining. Establishing the underground heat exchanger will open up the full potential of the excellent, high-grade HDR geothermal resource. It is part of the first step of achieving an emission-free base load electricity generator using renewable HDR geothermal energy.

Generating electricity from the Earth's heat is not new. Countries like

Italy, Iceland, New Zealand and Japan have been doing it for up to a century, utilizing naturally occurring steam. In contrast, hot dry rock geothermal energy makes its own superheated water. Such power plants can only work where there are special geological conditions and very hot granite rock. This rock has to be no deeper than five kilometers as that is the current depth that oil-drilling equipment can comfortably reach. The granite has to be covered by a three kilometer thick blanket of insulating rocks so that the heat does not escape to the surface. The unique combination of resources offers the scope to produce large scale, renewable electricity at a lower cost than hydro, wind, biomass or solar alternatives.

Clean power is becoming a preferred priority for Australia. The Australian Government has passed legislation that allows incentives to be paid to approve alternative-power generating corporations. With the world attention focused on the finite oil reserves of the Middle East, the need for dependable renewable energy resources has never been stronger. If successful, Australia aims to become the largest renewable producer.

It is believed that HDR geothermal energy is at the same stage of development as natural gas was 30 years ago. It is expected that HDR geothermal will become an important energy source in the next ten years. HDR geothermal energy generation may become even cheaper with the advent of advanced drilling techniques. With reserve equaling 50 billion barrels of oil, this is the most exciting and fastest-growing development project on Australia's power generation horizon. If they are right - and it looks as if they will be - this could be one of the greatest and most rewarding power plays of our time.

## World Tallest Structure will be full of Hot Air

An Australian company plans to build five "power towers" over the next 10 years, altogether capable of providing electricity to a million households. Each of the proposed towers will be a kilometer high and 160 meters in diameter, and will produce electricity. The world first commercial solar convective "power tower" is expected to start producing electricity by early 2006. The huge 670 million dollar power tower has been already built. The first solar towers will produce 200 megawatts of clean, emission-free electricity, sufficient to meet the power needs of 200,000 households. Just as the air inside a greenhouse is heated by the sun, air under the translucent collector will be heated and will flow towards the only available outlet, the chimney, like tower at speeds of up to 50 km/h. One single tower will meet about 8 per cent of Australia mandatory renewable energy target

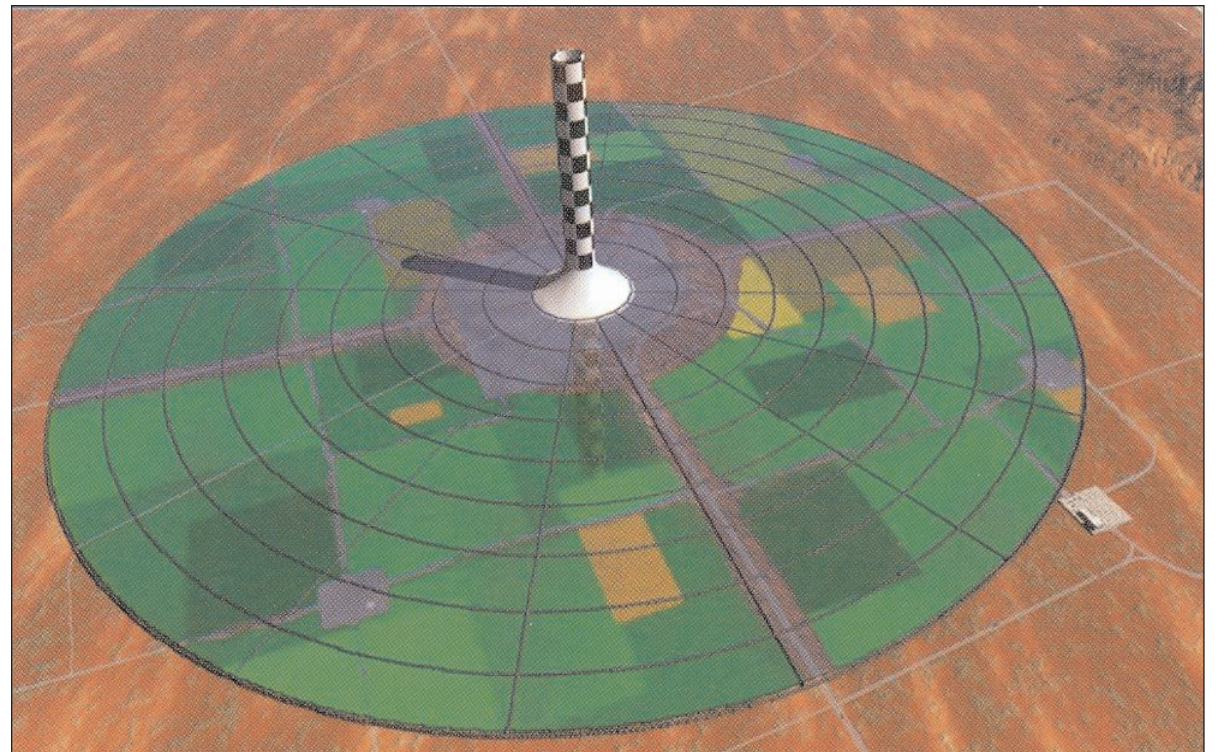
## And Energy from Ocean Waves

A revolutionary system of extracting energy from ocean waves has been invented in Australia. It uses underwater air bag coupled to underwater compartments that circulate air. The systems are anchored to the sea floor, do not protrude above the waterline, and encourages marine life in the same way as an artificial reef. It uses a flexible air-filled membrane, which moves up and down as waves pass overhead. During compression, a valve opens and air is stored in a lower compartment. While existing wave energy devices use only part of wave's energy, this new systems achieves greater efficiency by focusing more of the wave energy on the device.

A prototype unit exposed to an 80 m wave front has the potential to produce 1.5 megawatts of electricity, which mean a production capacity of 13 million kilowatt hours per year - equating to enough electricity supply 770 to 1,026 homes.

## Australia at a Glance

Australia is a stable society with a skilled workforce and a strong compet-



itive economy. With the population of 20 million, Australia is the only nation to govern an entire continent and is the sixth largest country in the world in land area. As multicultural society, it includes indigenous peoples and migrants from some 200 countries. It has high-growth, low-inflation, low interest rate economy. The government sector is efficient, the labor market flexible and business sector competitive. It has made a significant investment in social infrastructure, including education, training, health and transport.

Australia's workforce of approx 10 million is highly trained. Almost half of them have university, trade or diploma qualifications. Because of major diversification in Australia's export base, Australia is now a commodity exporter; it has also sophisticated manufacturing and service industries. Although trade in commodities remains strong, new services and sophisticated manufacturing export markets have emerged. Japan, USA and Republic of Korea remain its largest export markets. Australia is also strong in information and communications technology, infrastructure, innovation systems, business environment and human resource development.

Cultural diversity has become a touchstone of Australia's national identity. One example is the growth of Islam in Australia. Muslims form an increasingly important part of Australia's diverse modern society, there were 281,576 Muslims at the last count...

Australia is committed to establishing a culture of innovation and to make the best use of national and international information networks, encourage creativity in all forms of research, promote collaboration between university researchers and industry.

Innovations, science, and technology are strong drivers of economic growth. More than half of Australian small and medium enterprises use the internet for B2B e-commerce. A third of the population are registered users of internet banking and mobile phone use is the fourth highest in the Asia Pacific Rim. E-government use is widespread, and a third of Australians have accessed public sector services online.

Tourism is one of Australia's largest and fastest growing industries. The number of short-term visitors grew during 2002-03 to nearly 5 million.

Australia's unique environment has many native plants, animals and birds that exist nowhere else in the world. Despite the vast size of the continent however, the majority of Australians live on the coast and in major cities - around 75 percent of Australia's population lives in urban areas. Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. Its interior has one of the lowest rainfalls in the world and above three-quarters of the land is arid or semi arid. These arid areas extend from the large central deserts to the Western coast. This has presented Australians with the challenge of how best to manage the variety of regions to meet the competing demands of agriculture, economy and conservation.

## Yemen in Australia

Yemen and Australia are both founding members of Indian Ocean regional grouping for economic cooperation. Australia is an important trading partner to Yemen and supplier of basic commodities, such as wheat and meat.

Laying as it does, half way to and from Europe on logistical and transport route, an important trading partner to Australia, Yemen presents a number of opportunities worth exploring for innovative Australian investors and businessmen. In particular, in the field of manufacturing, products assemble product distribution.

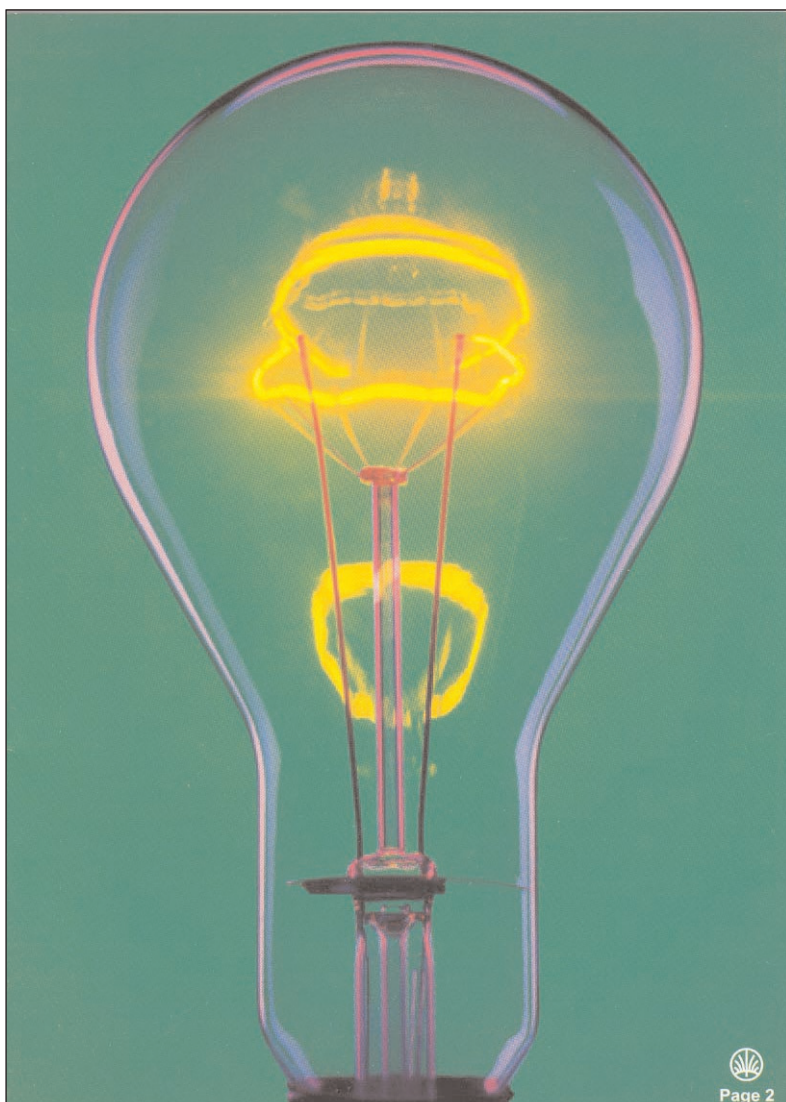
A number of opportunities for cooperation ranging from investing to joint undertakings exist in the field of agriculture, husbandry, fishing and tourism, in addition to oil, gas, mining and geothermal energy, exploration. Also transport and logistical connections, shipping lines and joint marketing exploration.

## Extra remarks:

Explore Australian Innovations web site: [www.industry.gov.au/publication/](http://www.industry.gov.au/publication/)  
Australia Travel Search: [www.austaliatravelsearch.com](http://www.austaliatravelsearch.com)

Our appreciation and thanks go to the Deputy Head of Mission at Australian Embassy for providing valuable background information.

\* Irena Knehtl is an economist and writer residing in Yemen. She is also a regular contributor to Yemen Times and had written tens of articles in issues ranging from culture and society to economics and technology.



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# IHD Bazaar in the eyes of a foreigner

By: Mrs. Judit Brown  
For the Yemen Times  
IHD visitor

The Refugee Health and Social Care Center in Sana'a held a very successful bazaar on the 16th and 17th December 2004. The event was opened by the UNHCR spokesman Mr. Abdel Malik Abboud who described the wealth of

skills and expertise within the refugee community, and congratulated the participants on their excellent array of goods offered at the bazaar. He pointed Ethiopian food, a wide range of cultural goods, henna painting and face painting for the children. The head of IHD Yemen, Mr. Khalid Yassin spoke about the important work of the refugee centre, particularly in education as this means that when refugees are able to return to their homeland they will take

back skills that will help to redevelop their own societies that have been disrupted due to war. A refugee who had benefited from the UN and IHD education programme also spoke of the value to refugees of the continued commitment of the United Nations and IHD in Sana'a.

Those who attended were entertained by a wonderful range of performers, which included small children who attended the kindergarten who sang for

the audience, and singing and dancing by the Somali performers the Somali band and the Ethiopian singing and dancing group Oromo Association band. They presented a professional, entertaining and varied programme. Maria stops who also do valuable work with mothers and small children in Sana'a, presented prizes to guests who were able to demonstrate their understanding of health issues. Several hundred people attended the event.

The organizers of the event, Dr. Sameera Banowair the centre manager, Warda Al- Hubashi the education coordinator, Hodman Jamaa community facilitator and Mohammed Omar the Refugee Community Centre manager were very pleased with the bazaar, which they thought demonstrated to the local community the value of their work and the contribution of refugees to Sana'a. They extended their thanks to everyone who had taken part and to

Yemen Times and Al-Thowra newspaper for their assistance with publicity. Visitor Judith Brown, a previous health coordinator with the Refugee Health Project in Sana'a returned to Yemen from Britain to attend the event. She commented on the lively and vibrant atmosphere and congratulated the staff and the refugees on their organization and their contribution to such an excellent two day event.

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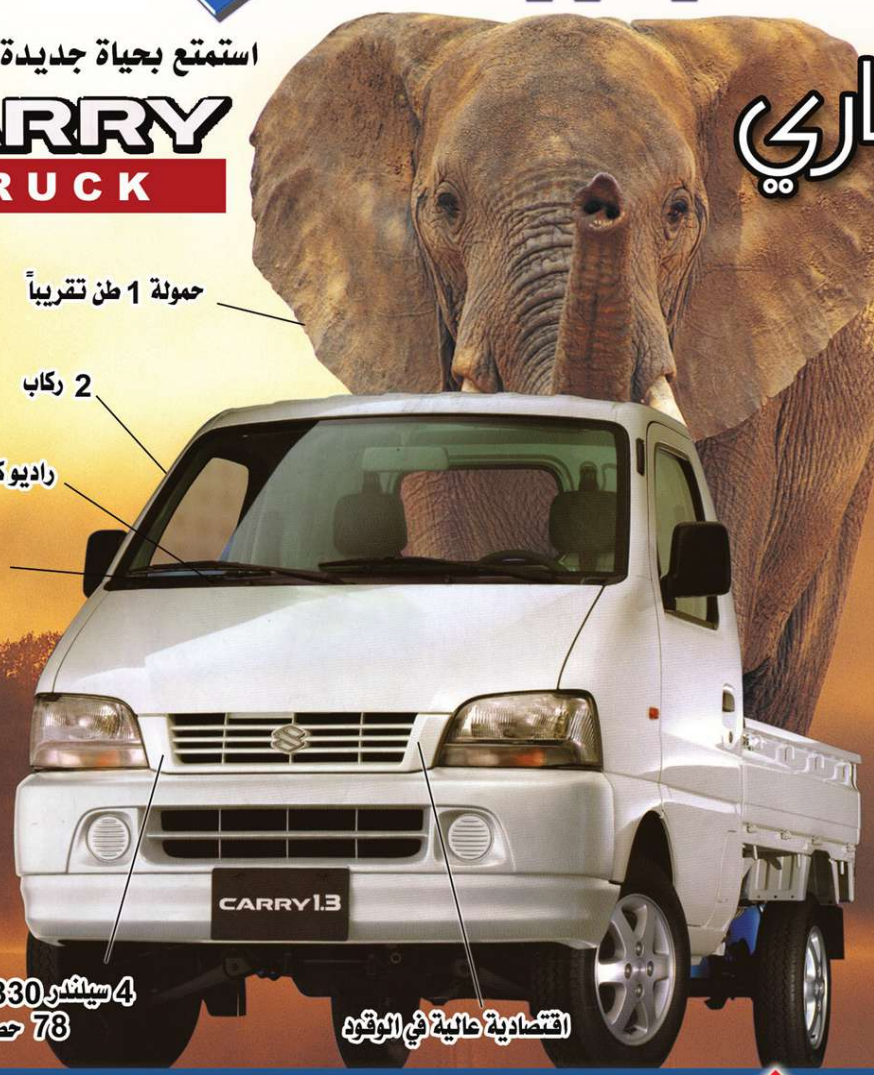


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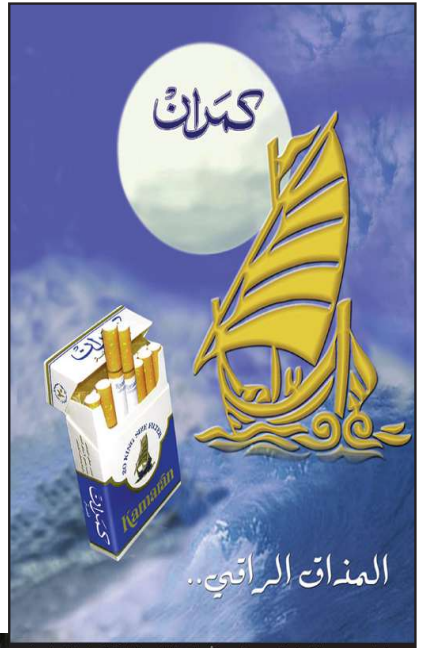


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# Iraqi Christians pray for peace on sombre Christmas

BAGHDAD, Dec 23 (Reuters) - Iraqi Christians won't be celebrating Christmas this year. Midnight mass, the centrepiece of Christmas festivities in Iraq, has been cancelled because of night-time curfews.

Few will be showing up to church on Christmas morning, scared that insurgents who have bombed churches, mosques and Muslim religious festivals, will strike again.

"We usually go to midnight mass and then a celebration and then we go home where the family gathers for dinner," said Bushra Gorjis, 31, a cleaner. "This year we are not going to church because everyone is scared of the terrorists."

While Iraq's Christian minority, some three percent of the population, had little power under Saddam Hussein, they were free to worship without the threat of sectarian violence.

With Iraq's government struggling to stop the bombings, murders and kidnappings that have left nothing sacred, Christians say the size of their community makes them feel particularly vulnerable.

A guard armed with an assault rifle rocks back and forth on his chair outside the imposing gateway of Our Lady of Salvation Syrian Catholic Church in Baghdad's Karrada district.

The building is ringed with barbed wire and concrete blocks to stop cars from parking too close. They were set up after Aug. 1, when the church was one of five in Baghdad and the northern city of Mosul hit in coordinated attacks which killed 12 people.

The bombs detonated during early evening prayers when pews were packed, clearly intended to inflict maximum casualties.

### Praying for peace

Bombings of churches, like attacks



An armed guard stands watch near a Christmas tree in a store selling holiday decorations in Baghdad Dec. 21. Iraqi Christians, most from the early Assyrian and Chaldean churches, say they will celebrate this Christmas quietly at home. Few will be showing up to church on Christmas morning, scared that insurgents who have bombed churches, mosques and Muslim religious festivals, will strike again. Picture taken Dec. 21. REUTERS

on mosques and Muslim shrines, have been nothing unusual in Iraq since.

Five Baghdad churches were bombed on the Oct. 16 start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Eight were killed in two church bombings on Nov. 8. A car bomb exploded near police guarding the hospital where the wounded had been taken.

Once avid churchgoers, only the most devout of Iraq's 650,000 Christians, now venture to mass, even on Sunday.

The Seventh Day Adventist church in Baghdad has not opened its doors to worshippers since a bomb shattered its

stained glass windows and set part of the building ablaze in September.

The church, its huge arched windows still boarded up, will remain closed on Christmas Day. The pastor will instead visit parishioners in their homes to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago.

At Baghdad's Virgin Mary Church, hundreds of worshippers used to spill into staircases and aisles during midnight mass and Christmas Day rites. This year the mood will be more sombre.

"Christian churches are not officially celebrating Christmas this year," said



An Iraqi girl looks at a figure of Santa Claus in a store selling holiday decorations in Baghdad Dec. 21. Iraqi Christians, most from the early Assyrian and Chaldean churches, say they will celebrate this Christmas quietly at home. Few will be showing up to church on Christmas morning, scared that insurgents who have bombed churches, mosques and Muslim religious festivals, will strike again. Picture taken Dec. 21. REUTERS

Father Boutros Haddad. "All we will have are morning prayers in which we will ask the heavens to return to Iraq the peace the angels brought to earth when Jesus was born."

No one is booking restaurants, hotels and clubs for traditional Christmas parties this year.

Iraqi Christians, most from the early Assyrian and Chaldean churches, say they will celebrate at home. Even there, trees festooned with coloured lights and dancing Santa Claus dolls sit well away from windows. No one wants to invite trouble.

"We feel like there is no Christmas

this year. We cannot go anywhere. We haven't prepared any special food," said Raad, who was too scared to give his second name.

"Why would anyone want to take Christmas away from children who look forward to it all year. Who are these people who attack ordinary Iraqis?"

### Low key celebration

Iraqi Christians have always kept a low political profile, aware of the precariousness of their position in a country dominated by Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim Arabs and Kurds.

Even before churches became tar-

gets, attacks on liquor stores, music shops and hairdressers were common.

Women were increasingly harassed in the street for exposing their hair or skin, raising Christian fears they would be singled out by Islamic extremists who have gained influence since last year's U.S.-led war toppled the secular Baathist government.

The chaos has left Iraqis of all religions feeling scared.

But some Christians, proud of their roots in Iraq which long pre-date the seventh century arrival of Islam, feel especially vulnerable because of the perception that their religion gives them something in common with the Americans occupying Iraq.

William Warda, spokesman for the Assyrian Democratic Movement, said both Muslims and Christians were targets.

"When they kill a professor or hit an oil pipeline they are hitting all of Iraq; it is a conspiracy to divide the country. But Christians are a weak link as we have no power, militias and tribal structure," Warda said.

"We hope people vote because with an elected government they will no longer be able to complain about occupation."

Elections are not until Jan. 30 and shops selling artificial Christmas trees, sparkly baubles and golden bells say business was never so bad. No one is in the mood to celebrate.

"Usually, I would have run out of decorations by now, but this year no one is buying," said Setta, whose Silva Flowers shop is lined with red poinsettias and decorated trees.

"We are living in Iraq, the land of war, not New York. We even played down our own decorations this year in case someone comes and blows us up."

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