

PERSON OF THE YEAR Khaled Abdullah Al-Rowaishan

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Khaled Abdullah Al-Rowaishan was born in Sana'a in 1963. Mr. Al-Rowaishan is married with three children and graduated from Cairo University in Management. Between 1986 and 1996 he worked as head of the cultural administration at the Presidency Office. Then between 1996 and 2003 as head of the 'General Book Authority.'

Mr. Al-Rowaishan has been the Minister of Culture and Tourism since 2003 and has received many awards and prizes for his work from the Arab League, Lebanon, Oman, Egypt, Kuwait, and from Art and literature societies from Germany, Italy and the UAE.

As Minister of Culture Mr. Al-Rowaishan has made great efforts in promoting Sana'a as the Arab Cultural Capital for 2004 with 789 national events and 82 Arab and international events. The old city of Sana'a was restored, many theaters and historical monuments were either renovated or established, and more than 394 books were published.



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Government insistent on reform dose:

Opposition warns of violating civilians' rights

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Joint Meeting Opposition Parties have waged a media campaign, which demands that the killer dose of economic reforms included in the government's 2005 budget be rejected. The Cabinet forwarded the budget to the Parliament insisting that the subsidies on oil derivatives be lifted.

The exchange of accusations between the opposition and the government has mounted, following the attack on the Prime Minister Abdulqader Bajammal, when one of the companions pointed his gun at Bajammal saying to him "if you pass the dose on I will shoot you dead and tomorrow we will storm your house". Many observers believe that Prime Minister Bajammal is likely to be the first victim of the subsidy cuts.

The threats led the Parliament to suspend several sessions and resume its dis-

ussion of the budget this week.

In the last few days, newspapers belonging to the ruling Peoples' General Congress (PGC) have attacked those who they have deemed to be fundamentalists at the Iman University. They allege that the Islah party is deliberately sparking chaos and are disrupting reforms that will prevent people from smuggling Yemen's oil derivatives out of the country.

The budget proposed by the government reduces the subsidy on oil derivatives to YR 44 billion. This is down from the YR 120,669 billion allocated to oil derivatives in last year's budget.

The price of diesel will rise to YR35 from 17 per liter, the price of petrol will increase from YR35 to 52.5 per-liter and Kerosene will go from YR22 to 40 per liter. Such increases are certain to meet with public outrage.

In their statement on the 2005 budget, the opposition parties consider the

reforms likely to be socially catastrophic. They charge that there was a pre-planned policy to pass the budget despite the government's awareness of the risks. It is the people who will suffer if the parliament approves the proposed budget.

The government is intent on exploiting the power of the ruling party at the expense of the opposition parties that are less powerful within the parliament, but a number of the ruling party members stand by the opposition, and are calling on the government to make real reforms in favor of the people.

Controversy is building as the government has also approved an additional allotment to the budget of 2004 without consulting the parliament. A large number of MPs now believe that the government is weakening the reform process, wasting public money and breaching the constitution and the law.

Some economists say that the 2005

budget will help increase the random expense of money, while other observers claim that passing on the reform dose before the Parliament's January vacation will help the opposition to increase its standing among the public.

Increasing unemployment and corruption, coupled with the fact that the government has been unwilling to punish corrupt figures, also contribute to the lack of trust that the public holds for the reform process.

Public protests are expected to be like those of 1997, when a large group of people took to the streets causing chaos and vandalizing properties in the capital and other cities after subsidies on foodstuffs and oil were lifted. The Yemeni Interior Ministry is on high alert as it prepares its security forces including the Central Security, which is the biggest and is commanded by the President's nephew, to confront any ensuing chaos.

Saleh urges clerics to work against extremism

By PETER WILLEMS
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

President Ali Abdullah Saleh called on Yemeni preachers to discourage extremism and encourage national unity while speaking at the closing of an 11-day re-education course for 350 clerics in Sana'a.

"Preachers must urge people to follow the straight path and avoid extremism and fanaticism," said Saleh on Jan. 1.

Saleh pointed out the cost Yemen had to pay following the bombings of the USS

Cole in 2000 and the French oil tanker Limburg two years later. The President said that when the terrorists attacked the USS Cole, they barred the arrival of ships that would bring to Yemen revenue of \$250 million. Which one was harmed as a result of this, Yemen or the United States?"

After the Limburg bombing, insurance premiums skyrocketed for vessels coming to Yemeni ports. To help lower the cost of insurance, the Yemeni government had to put up \$50 million for insurance under-

writers.

The USS Cole was attacked as it was refueling at the port of Aden. Two men approached the destroyer in a dinghy loaded with 500 pounds of explosives killing 17 US sailors and wounding 33 others when the explosives were detonated. The French oil tanker was attacked off the coast of Yemen that killed one crew member and unloaded 90,000 barrels of oil into the Gulf of Aden.

"The President's words are going to be a significant move in religious speech towards moderation," said Judge Hamoud Al-Hitar, Head of the Yemeni Dialogue Committee. "The President called on the preachers to renew religious speech towards moderation and prepare speeches before they are delivered. This is part of a series of steps Yemen has taken towards moderation from unifying education to

concentrating on dialogue and training preachers."

The Dialogue Committee, which was established in the fall of 2002, works with sympathizers of radical groups to persuade them to turn away from violence and believe in peace, tolerance and the importance of people living together without any conflict. Around 350 detainees have been released since the Committee began.

Saleh also referred to members of Believing Youth, an organization once founded by Hussein Al-Houthi, who chanted "Death to America, death to Israel," which could cause Yemen to be labeled as a supporter of terrorists.

Government forces battled with followers of Al-Houthi in north Yemen for three months in 2004 until the radical Muslim cleric was killed in September. At least 600 Yemeni soldiers and Al-Houthi supporters were left dead once the conflict ended.

During his speech, Saleh urged preachers that family planning is essential to controlling the population boom in Yemen.

"I have said many times that family planning shouldn't be perceived as exactly another name for birth control," said Saleh. "It rather means determining the number of your children and ensuring that your children are the number you can care for and educate."

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), a private organization based in the United States, reported last August that Yemen's population growth rate is one of the largest in the world. It calculates that in 2050 the country's population will have increased by 255 per cent, bringing the number of Yemenis from 20 million up to 71 million.



Journalists continue protest to release Al-Khaiwani

Appeals Court to look into Al-Khaiwani's case

By MOHAMMED BIN SALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Minister of justice gave directives this week to Mohammed Al-Hirdi, newly appointed judge of the Penalty Department to decide a date for a session to look into the appeal against the sentence of Al-Khaiwani and Al-Shura newspaper. The appeal was made on the issuance of the verdict on September 5, 2004.

This move comes after a sit-in staged by scores of journalists, politicians and intellectuals last week. They staged a sit-in for three days in front of the Court of Appeals and another before the compound of the Ministry of Justice to force a quick reconsideration of the case and a release of Abdulkarim Al-Khaiwani who has been for four months in the Sana'a Central Prison.

The Minister issued his directives after his meeting with the Board of the Journalists Syndicate and Al-Shura newspaper's staff. Yet, the judge has not undertaken the case until writing this article.

Colleague Hamdi Al-Bukari called on journalists to be always present at the headquarters of the Syndicate to give impetus to the protest and quell

attempts at delay.

"We will wait for one day until the defense team requests an appointment of a session. If they reject we will accelerate protest," said a member of the Syndicate Board.

The journalists are still holding a sit-in before the Appeals Court lifting banners asking for freeing Al-Khaiwani, and Al-Shura, and for judicial independence without the interference of authority or influential personalities.

The sit-in organizers daily went into the Ministry of Justice building. The Minister promised that the case of Al-Khaiwani and Al-Shura would be undertaken by the Court of Appeals, in the wake of the recent appointments of judges announced last week.

The panel of the Appeals Court is still absent while the defense team of Al-Khaiwani and Al-Shura has registered a request for a session to suspend the judgment, the one they had submitted before last Ramadan but delayed by the court.

On the other hand, the opposition parties called for the release of Al-Khaiwani and stop the suspension of Al-Shura newspaper.

Continued on page 2

Italy boosts mine action program

Yemen's mine action programme received a boost last week from the Italian government when it contributed a further 150,000 euros to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported Mine Action Programme, in addition to its previous grant of 200,000 euros in 2003.

"The Italian government appreciates UNDP's actions and projects in Yemen and it is very satisfied with the results of the Yemen Mine Action Programme - the number of square kilometres cleared and the sharp reduction in the number of victims," the Italian ambassador to Yemen, Giacomo Sanfelice di Monteforte, told IRIN in the capital, Sana'a.

He explained that Italy had reduced its funding to national de-mining projects generally, but continued to support Yemen as it is a country which "deserves special consideration."

The ambassador highlighted the important political significance of the Yemen Mine Action Programme as a symbol of healing between the northern, traditionalist former Yemen Arab Republic and the southern, socialist former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The two states were unified only in 1990, and continuing friction between the two resulted in a brief but devastating civil war in 1994.

Past conflicts in Yemen meant that a large number of mines were laid.



Between 1999 and 2000 the Mine Impact Survey (MIS) - the first such UN-certified survey in the world - found a total area of 923 sq km covered with mines, affecting 592 communities with a population of 900,000. Yemen's total population is estimated to be around 20 million. Under the programme, by the end of 2004, all of the 14 "highly affected" communities will be cleared.

At the end of 2003, the governorate of Aden in the south was declared free of mines, and there will shortly be an official ceremony to declare Hodeidah, on the western Red Sea coast, free of mines.

This contribution is seen as a prime example of UNDP's continued bilateral engagement with Italy through its government and its decentralised regional programme of relief and development, Flavia Pansieri, UN Resident Coordinator in Yemen, told

IRIN.

Jamal Jarallah Jawbah, programme analyst for UNDP, told IRIN that the Italian grant was especially welcome as it "added value" to the Mine Action Programme, especially as the money was not earmarked for a particular activity, giving them flexibility.

The Mine Action Programme is also supported by, amongst others, Japan, which funds mine awareness and education campaigns and victim assistance activities; Germany, which finances the mine-detecting dogs component; and the government of Yemen, which provides operating expenses for mine-clearing teams.

In addition to this new contribution, specific support has been given by Italy over the past year in the form of free treatment for Yemeni child victims of mines.

Funded by the Tuscany regional government, a 13-year old girl was the most recent victim to benefit from the scheme and her health was "physically and psychologically restored" after three to four months of treatment at Italy's leading orthopaedic hospital in Florence.

An 18-year old youth is currently recovering very well in Florence following extended treatment for severe bone infections, and is expected back in Yemen soon. Two more children will be treated in Florence in 2005.

Aden Hotel files suit against US Embassy

By RIDHWAN AL-SAQAF
ADEN BUREAU

The Aden hotel administration has filed a suit against the Embassy of the United States of America over its warning of not spending New Year's Eve at the hotel because of alleged security factors.

In a statement to the Yemen Times, Fadhil al-Hilali, General Manager at Aden Hotel said the warnings of the American Embassy sparked fear among clients and made them leave the hotel. A number of workers also left the hotel fearing the warnings from the embassy.

Al-Hilali pointed out that the rumors

resulted in heavy losses for the hotel and negatively affected the hotel's reputation. It also led numerous companies to cancel their bookings at the hotel.

He mentioned that the hotel's administration had already prepared several ceremonial programs to celebrate the occasion as other hotels all over Yemen do and that the celebration was to be sponsored by many trade companies.

"The warning period ended and nothing bad occurred, so this indicates that such rumors have no place of truth," Al-Hilali said. "According to the filed suit, we claim a compensation worth \$ US500,000."

Presswomen taught Internet skills

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Under patronage of Abdulmalik al-Mu'alemi, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, the Yemen Female Media Forum (YFMF) commenced on Jan. 1 at the Technology City.

The training course is intended to teach Internet and web design skills to

female journalists and was attended by 30 women.

These 30 women were trained in June 2004 to use computers and the Internet under the patronage of the Mr. al-Mu'alemi, who had given directives to train all Yemeni presswomen in this field at the ministry's expenses after it was revealed that only 19 women journalists of 360 had access to e-mail.

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Assessing the humanitarian situation in Saada

By Yemen Times Staff

The Yemeni Red Crescent Society (YRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has produced an assessment of the post-conflict humanitarian situation in Saada province.

Since the conflict started, the YRCS and the ICRC worked to address the humanitarian needs of civilians affected by the conflict. In mid-September, immediately after the end of the conflict, the YRC has, with the support of the ICRC, undertaken the first distribution of non-food relief items to needy families in Marran area.

Twenty-one YRCS volunteers, two field officers of the ICRC, and five students and teachers from the Marran area participated in the humanitarian assessment.

They spent four days in the Marran mountains and adjacent areas, visiting the effected villages and interviewing families. The team visited

the neighboring Razeh district, and several small towns and villages in the immediate surrounding of Saada city where those people displaced from Marran area have found shelter. The team was able to move freely in all areas visited.

On the basis of this assessment, the YRCS and ICRC will decide which means of assistance will be appropriate to address the humanitarian needs of the population affected by the conflict.

For more information, please contact: Ronald Ofteringer- ICRC Yemen, Tel: 01-467873-4, Mobile 71944343, or Dr. Abdullah Hamoud Al-Khamissi, YRCS, Mobile 77961926.

Course for Local Council members

As many as 20 Local Council members from Makha District, Taiz, are taking part in the training course, which is on developing abilities and skills of local council members as well as activating their roles in the social development.

The course was organized from Jan.1 to 5 by the French Organization DIA.

A number of prominent figures including Qasim Zaid, Chief of the local Councils in the District, Eng. Abdullah Al-Humaidi, and Mr. Olivy, Coordinator of the project attended the inauguration of the course.

Mrs. Raja Nasser, Social Activities Coordinator pointed out that the course aims to give trainees adequate information about the different development programs and upgrading their skills in administering and planning projects, particularly those related to water.

She indicated that the course program covers many lectures on the new

developmental moves and the concepts and bases of the social development.

She gave an emphasis on monitoring the service projects and supporting the local councils to carry out effective initiatives and supervise the process of project implementation.

It is worth noting that the course coincided with the water projects currently implemented by the French Organization DIA in Makha District. These projects are funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office.

Protection of rare animals

By ISMAIL AL-GHABRI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

In cooperation with the Federal Environment Authority in the United Arab Emirates, the General Authority for Environment Protection (GAEP) is planning to establish a protected area for the rare animals in the country.

Mahmoud Shidawah, Chairman of the GAEP stated that a delegation from the UAE's Federal Environment Authority is due to visit Yemen in the coming two months to learn about the environmental and biological diversity in Yemen, specifically on Socotra Island.

The visit comes as a result of the joint efforts between the GAEP, Environment & Protected Areas Authority in Al-Shariqa and the Local Authority in Hadramout.

The three sides discussed the ways of maintaining the ibex as well as establishing a zoo in Hadramout with the joint effort and cooperation between the UAE's Environment & Protected Areas Authority and the zoo based in the capital, Sana'a.

War and humanitarian crimes discussed

By Yemen Times Staff

The International Criminal Court's Secretariat of International Coalition, represented by Sister's Arab Forum for Human Rights is holding a consultative meeting to discuss the work of the International Criminal Court today.

The court started moving forward cases of suspects of war crimes in the northern parts of Congo and in the east of Uganda.

The work paper of the Yemeni Coalition for the 2005 will also be discussed in the meeting.

Information Minister visits Aden University

Yemen Times Aden Bureau

The Minister of Information Hussein Dhaifullah Al-Awadhi visited the Department of Press and Information, at Aden University on Jan. 2.

The Information Minister was received by Professor Abdulkarim Yahya Ras'e Rector of the University, Dr. Sulaiman Faraj Dean of the Faculty and the teaching staff and the students at the department.

The Rector of Aden University delivered a speech in which he emphasized the support of the

University for the Department of Press and Information for working to improve the skills of students in this field.

The Information Minister commented that "our offices, institutions and radio and visual media are at your disposal, particularly the creative and hard-working students... I invite those who are interested to partake in the new Television May 22 Channel, inaugurated on Saturday Jan.1, 2005. I insist on the students of press to participate in Rukn Al-Shabab page in October 14 daily Newspaper."

May 22 Television Channel inaugurated

By IBTISAM QUDAR
ADEN BUREAU

In response to directives of HE President Saleh, the May 22 Television Channel was inaugurated on Jan. 1. The transmission will cover all Yemeni governorates.

The inauguration ceremony was held at the National Channel Headquarters in Aden and was attended by the Information Minister

Hussein Dhaifallah Al-Wadhwi, ministry officials, journalists and the leadership of the local authority in Aden.

The engineering sector and the technical cadres at the General Radio and TV Corporation have completed all the arrangements including a tentative transmission.

The channel will have special programs, some of which will tackle Yemen's economic, political and social changes.

Continued from page 1

Appeal Court to look into Al-Khaiwani's case

Leaders of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) stated that the case is political and is an indication of the state's policy of reducing democracy and freedom of expression. They considered the imprisonment of journalists as evidence. Their talks on the second commemoration of martyr Jarallah Omar, Assistant Secretary General of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), underscored the importance of judicial independence from the executive authority and the country's need for an overall political overhaul.

Secretary General of YSP said continued detention of Al-Khaiwani, editor-in-chief of Al-Shura, is an indisputable proof of a necessity for real political reform so that democracy can thrive.

People who attended the ceremony at the hall of the Yemen Center for Studies and Researches made waves of applause whenever the name of Al-Khaiwani was uttered in speeches.

The national committee formed to follow up martyr Jarallah Omar's case expressed its solidarity with Al-Khaiwani.

Mohammed Al-Ruba'i, head of the committee criticized the retreat of the government in terms of applying free speech measures. The freedom of speech is "the remaining part of democracy" which has been assassinated by "restrictive policies on advocates of opinion and democratic opposition."

Al-Ruba'i added, "The first step of the deterioration was the mock trial of Abdulkarim Al-Khaiwani and the punishment of Al-Shura for the same charge by a repeated sentence that ruled its being shut down."

"The court was not satisfied by the charges offered by the prosecution, but also went further to relegate seven of Al-Shura staff to interrogation which has started recently."

He pointed out in his speech the political-

ly-fueled campaigns managed by the state to targeting different social classes to the extent of using the military and security forces to quench whoever has an opinion different from the state's.

Al-Ruba'i highly appreciated the role of the Syndicate in defending the freedom of expression, and urged civil community organizations to follow the model of the Syndicate since the case in question is about rights and liberties, which are the main concern of democracy supporters.

Secretary General of the Nasserite Public Unionist Party voiced the JMP's denunciation of the harassment of liberties, the campaign against the opposition, arbitrary trials of newspapers and journalists, and the sentences and fines imposed on Al-Wahdawi, Al-Ehya'a Al-Arabi, Al-Tajamao, Al-Shura, Al-Assemah, and Annas newspapers.

He called for the immediate release of Al-Khaiwani, editor-in-chief of suspended Al-Shura newspaper.

Journalist Aswan Shaher wondered at putting Al-Khaiwani in the same room with murderer Al-Sa'awani. She said Al-Sa'awani was an extremist killer who does not value human life. "He killed a peaceful human being [Jarallah Omar] in public in a savage way, while Al-Khaiwani is an unarmed journalist who has nothing but his ink and pen. He committed no sin but writing in a country that claims to be democratic and to defend human freedom and human rights."

She showed her disappointment in the JMP and NGOs because they have taken no "honorable" stance towards Al-Khaiwani who is incarcerated in the Central Prison suffering daily oppression, tyranny, and death.

"Who stands behind the bars is not Al-Khaiwani. Rather it is our freedom, dignity, rights, and resolution that are confined," she concluded.

ACCA in Yemen

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Mohamed Taha Hamood & Co. invited Mr. Stephen Shields of the ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, UK) to visit Yemen to assess the environment and the potential of the Yemeni market.

During his two day visit, on Dec. 18 and 19, Mr. Shields and ACCA members Mr. Mohamed Taha Hamood Al-Hashimi, Managing Partner and Mr. Umair Dawood Khan, Manager, Mohamed Taha Hamood & Co. met a number of employers, students and members in Yemen.

Mr. Mohamed Taha Hamood stated "our aim is to increase the number of students and eventually members in the Yemeni market through marketing means and contacts with relevant authorities, universities, employers and potential students".

The ACCA has been recognized and respected across the world for almost 100 years, and currently has nearly 320,000 students and members in 160 countries.

Mr. Stephen Shields (l) and Mr. Mohamed Taha Hamood Al-Hashimi in Taj Sheba on 18 December.

Moreen Silver to YT:

False rumors about Yemen hinders investment

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Moreen Silver studied decades ago with Dr. Abdulkarim Al-Eryani at the University of Georgia while he was a studying for his Masters degree in agriculture. As a result of this friendship, she gained a keen interest in Yemen.

Though she has been living in Spain her love for Yemen has lingered. Her love for Yemen was associated with her love for music, photography and journalism.

Moreen, who is currently visiting Yemen, works with some of the Spanish local governments, one being Galicia, to promote commercial interests and tourism in Yemen.

The Yemen Times met with her for the following interview:

Q: How do you find yourself as a musician in Yemen?

A: I appreciate the Yemeni music actually as well as the Oriental music in general since I listened for the first time to Um Kuthoom with Al-Eryani. I like her many songs such as 'Al-Atlal'. I liked the great lady's art though I couldn't understand the meaning of her songs. My first impression encouraged me to listen to a number of Yemeni singers like Al-Kebbi, Abu Bakr Salem and Ayoub. And in 2000 I



Moreen Silver

YT photo by Gaid Al-Radfani

heard Ahmed Fathy and was happily surprised to see him again at the Taj Sheba Hotel again and where we remember together Al-Atlal. He invited me to his concert where he played many of his compositions as well as an Oud solo Rubayat Al-Khayam one of Um Kulthoom's best songs composed by Ryadh al-Sunbati, and it was majestic.

Q: Does your being a photographer effect your love for Yemen?

A: I am interested in taking photos of every Yemeni custom or any beautiful scenery. Yemen has many tourist places, so it is difficult to select what to take photos of. Almost every landscape deserves taking photos of. I have taken also some pictures of the Spanish products that are sold in Yemeni markets. I unexpectedly found many of them.

Q: When did you widely start to introduce Yemen to others? Have

you been officially asked to do so?

A: In 1994, Dr. Al-Eryani who was then the Minister of Planning, came to Spain heading an official delegation and he was preoccupied with the idea that there should be someone to introduce Yemen to merchants, tourists and investors especially since Yemen had no embassy there at that time.

Dr. Eryani asked me to help. And I introduced him to important bankers and industrial businessmen.

Then in 1995, when he became foreign minister, he asked me to become honorary consul of Yemen for the purpose of strengthening the relations between the two friendly countries.

It was an honor for me and I felt very much at home with this role since I am a diplomatic journalist. My being a journalist with a very vast social circle and with many acquaintances, and being a public relations consultant helped me so much in that promotion. I called for many investors to come to Yemen and invest through meetings, conferences, press releases...etc. And I brought a Spanish electric company here for a project as well as Spanish projects in tourism and fishing.

Q: What are the aspects of cooperation between Yemen and Spain and how do you evaluate it?

A: There are a variety of aspects of cooperation between the two countries. As Spain has worthwhile experiences in the field of investment especially in the tourist islands which Canary Islands is a good example. For this, they became the destination of many tourists from all countries.

The cooperation is everyday getting stronger and stronger. What is new is the first international conference on the investment opportunities in the Yemeni

islands, organized by the Yemen Island Authority, showed that there is a great possibility for investment in the Yemeni islands. They are subjected to tourism and investment as well because they have the suitable climate, nature and environment. Arturo Pina from the Spanish embassy Commercial Office in Riyadh participated at the conference and was very optimistic about future business exchange. Also representatives from Murcia, Asturia, and other regions were present such as Galicia with whom I am collaborating.

On the other hand, Yemeni waters have another wealth that I am to coordinate with some Spanish investors to make use of it, which is fishing. Yemen has a huge number of marine creatures and a highly unique biodiversity.

Q: What is it that hinders such cooperative efforts?

A: Of the main obstacles is that the Yemeni islands except for Socotra are not known. Besides, there is unfortunately a bad reputation for some countries, including Yemen, therefore investors are very cautious in this respect. Here comes the role of people who know Yemen well, they present Yemen as it is with all positive and negative points and the investors themselves judge. Their judgments are mostly positive.

The protocol that was signed by the Deputy Minister of Fisheries weeks ago in Spain was a result of such efforts and it is just the beginning. These efforts help in strengthening the mutual relations between the two countries. Yemen in the past hadn't an embassy in Spain but now there is and it headed by Mr. Al-Kamarani who is doing a good job to improve cooperation in all sectors, and the visit from the

Fish Wealth Vice minister is an important step.

Also regarding tourism, I spent the New Year's celebration at the Taj Sheba with several groups of Spanish tourists and another Spanish group who filmed a documentary in Yemen for the Reina Sofia Museum in Spain and the St. Petersburg Dali Museum in Florida, USA. Other groups of Spanish tourists spent New Year's Eve in other provinces of Yemen.

By the way, Yemen and Spain has also historical relations from the Islamic country in Spain; there are still many places in Spain that prove that possibility of forming a good cooperation in the near future.

Q: Why there is not a Spanish embassy in Sana'a, that would of course make a better official coordination?

A: We all are trying for this goal. Mr. Sofan, Yemeni Planning Minister, asked me the same question at the Japanese embassy during the national day celebration, which I attended. I have been asked this question more than once since my arrival in Yemen.

I spoke with Dr. Quirbi about consolidating the Yemeni-Spanish Association that Dr. Eryani and I planned in 1994, which will make the efforts of marketing easier. He expressed interest in the fish delegation that visited Spain recently and had several meetings with Mr. Kamarani who is in charge of the Yemeni embassy in Spain.

There are rumors of the possible visit of the Spanish Foreign Minister early year. We hope they are more than rumors, for the future establishment of a Spanish embassy in Yemen, which will facilitate more business exchange.

University professors being heard

BY PETER WILLEMS
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Some progress has been made with the government on the demands of professors from seven public universities across the country. Mohammed Mottahar, Vice Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, said that the Ministry of Finance is looking into the professors' proposal based on the changes they are asking for.

"The file is within the Ministry of Finance. The ministry will look into the financial implications and will develop options that can be discussed," said Mottahar, "then negotiations can begin."

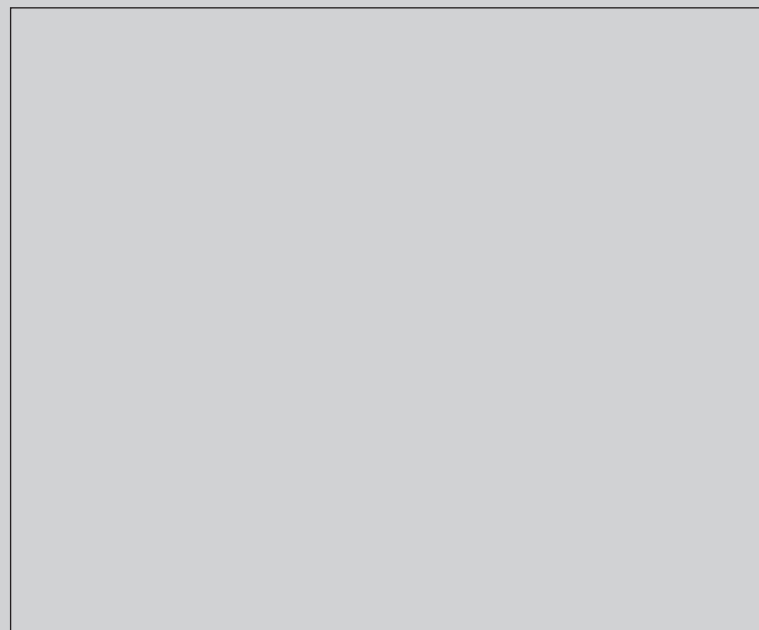
According to Iqbal Said Al-Alas, head of the Syndicate of the Teaching Body in Aden University and the official spokesman for the Union Council which coordinates the syndicates in the universities, the demands include the restructuring of the salary system, health benefits, compensation in different areas and job descriptions based on international standards.

Al-Alas pointed out that the average salaries for university professors are some of the lowest in the region. He said that a local professor in a Yemeni public university receives \$600 on average, whereas the starting salary in a number of other Arab countries is between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

"Unfortunately, we are losing a number of professors who are drawn by a better income in other countries in the region," said Al-Alas.

Over the last four years, at least 80 professors have left Yemeni universities and moved to the United Arab Emirates alone.

At a meeting at Sana'a University last Thursday, the representatives of the syndicates decided that the professors may strike after Eid Al-Adha if



Students at Sana'a University (Yemen Times photo by Peter Willems)

not enough progress is made.

"We in the Council agreed to give time until Eid Al-Adha ends," said Abdul Rahman Ghanem, the current head of the Council. "If there is a response to the demands, that is good. If not, then we'll hold a strike in seven universities at the beginning of the next term at Sana'a University and the beginning of exams in six universities."

The Council would like to see in the near future one of three things: a government response that clarifies its position on the professors' demands, the Ministry of Finance forming a committee to negotiate, or the government setting a timeline for negotiations. "Each would show a sign that something is happening and that the government is acting on the issue," said Al-Alas. "Up until recently, the government had not looked at the file."

Within the universities that are in the major cities, there are 2,250 full, associate and assistant professors, with another 3,000 lecturers. There are roughly 250,000 students enrolled in universities, of which 90 per cent attend public universities.

A number of students said that they would not be happy if a strike occurs, but they would still like to see the professors' demands met which in turn would benefit the students in the long run.

"A lot of professors have other jobs because their salaries are not enough to support their families," said a student at Sana'a University. "In 2001 there was a three-month strike, and the curriculum and the exams were then condensed into a month. It had a negative effect on us. But it is important that they take care of the professors so the professors can take care of us and the curriculum."

Appeal for help

Mohammad constantly suffers from fungi on his right foot making him disabled. He is from a needy family and urgently needs treatment to get rid of his illness, either inside Yemen or abroad.

Mohammad cannot afford the cost of treatment and is waiting for your help.

Mohammad Mohammad Mosa Ahmad
Tele: 613558
Mobil: 73589292

Japanese speech competition

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

In cooperation with the Japanese Embassy in Sana'a, the Yemeni-Japanese Friendship Association will hold the second speech competition in the Japanese Language today, Jan. 6, at the Culture House.

The competition will cover two sections, the first in the Japanese Language and the second in Arabic on the topic of "how the bilateral rela-

tionship between Yemen and Japan can be developed."

The competition aims to encourage students who are studying the Japanese Language as well as strengthening the cultural ties between the two countries.

The Yemeni-Japanese Friendship Association, chaired by Haj Mohammad Adhban, offers a unique opportunity for learning the Japanese Language at its headquarters.

INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

NATIONAL WATER AND SANITATION AUTHORITY

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROJECT, SADAH

CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE SYSTEM, SADAH

The following 'Invitation for Prequalification' appeared in early December, the date for submission of the prequalification documents has now been extended from 17th January 2005 to 1st February 2005.

Within the framework of the "Water Supply and Sanitation Project Sadah", jointly financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) and the Republic of Yemen through the Ministry of Water and Environment, National Water and Sanitation Authority (NWSA), it is intended to construct a water supply and sewerage system for the city of Sadah. The scope of these Works are summarized as follows:

Water Supply:

- between seven to nine well pumping stations and one booster pump station; note that the well drilling will have been completed under a previous contract;
- transmission lines from wells, pump station and reservoir, length approx. 9.6 km;
- electricity supply for wells and pump station;
- chlorination building and equipment;
- reinforced concrete reservoir (1530 m³) and reinforced concrete tank (200 m³);
- primary and secondary distribution network, length approx. 28.5 km; and
- tertiary network, length approx. 50 km and approx. 3,500 no. house connections.

Sanitation:

- wastewater collection system: pipelines, manholes etc. length approx. 31.5 km;
- force main length approximately 0.8 km;
- one or two sewage lifting stations;
- approx. 2,000 house connections incl. lateral lines and inspection chambers etc;
- sewage treatment plant using non-aerated pond system including: anaerobic, facultative and maturation ponds, operation building and equipment; and
- pilot schemes for improved decentralized sanitation facilities.

Contract Location:

The city of Sadah with a current population of 44,000 inhabitants and a projected population of 75,000 inhabitants in the year 2020, is located in the Sadah province about 240 km north of the capital Sana'a. The average elevation of the city is approximately 1800 m asl and the area has an average annual rainfall of about 120 mm.

The Ministry of Water and Environment, National Water and Sanitation Authority (NWSA), of the Republic of Yemen intends to pre-qualify contractors and/or firms for the above works. Pre-qualification will be governed by the KfW's 'Guidelines for Procurement of Supply and Work Contracts under Financial Cooperation with Developing Countries'. Payment will be made in Euros and Yemeni Rials, the language of the Contract will be English. It is expected that invitations to bid will be made in May/June 2005.

Applicants will be required to submit the following information: period engaged in construction; average annual turnover; completion of similar projects; evidence of construction capabilities; experience in Yemen; access to assets/credit; evidence of adequate cash flow; personnel capabilities; equipment capabilities; litigation history and organization structure. All applicants must be able to present evidence that they can provide a performance guarantee of US\$ 2,000,000 if awarded the Contract. A complete set of pre-qualification documents in English may be purchased on the submission of an application to the address below and upon payment of a non refundable fee of US\$ 200.-. The method of payment will be cash or a certified check. The documents will be sent by email to addresses outside of Yemen.

Dorsch Consult,
GITEC - Dorsch Office,
Haddah Street, Haddah,
P.O. Box 8900
6DQDDI Republic of Yemen
Tel./Fax. 9671 410247 / 424613

Attn: Keith Roberts
Mobile: 71134022
E-mail: Keith_Roberts@dorsch.com.jo
Project Management Unit
Attn: Eng. Ahmed Kaid Sarhan
Mobile: 73711174
E-mail: sarhan@y.net.ye

Applications for pre-qualification should be submitted in sealed envelopes, delivered to the above address before 1st February 2005 and be clearly marked as follows: "Application to Prequalify for Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Sadah". Two copies of the completed prequalification documents should be submitted.

The main body of the page is a large, empty rectangular frame, indicating that the reportage content is missing or has not been rendered.

Israel kills 7 Palestinians in north Gaza: Medics

BEIT LAHIYA, Gaza Strip, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Israeli troops shot dead seven Palestinians in a strawberry field in north Gaza on Tuesday after mortar fire from Palestinian militants there wounded two Jewish settlers.

"We collected the bodies, three of them teenagers, in a strawberry farm and we believe all were farmers. The bodies were blown to pieces by a tank shell,"

said Mahmoud al-Assali, hospital director in the Palestinian town of Beit Lahiya.

Capt. Ishai David, an Israeli army spokesman, said soldiers had targeted a group of six to eight militants and fired a tank shell at them shortly after they launched four mortar bombs into the nearby settlement of Nissanit.

"We are still checking the exact iden-

tity," of those who were shot, David told Reuters. Israeli sources said Hamas gunmen had been the target of the shooting.

Local residents said the militants managed to flee before the Israelis opened fire into an area where farmers were harvesting strawberries.

A Reuters news team found the strawberry grove splattered with blood and bits of flesh. A severed foot lay in the

field.

Palestinian medics said six other Palestinians were seriously wounded by the tank burst.

Israeli medics said the mortars landed near a bus filled with settler children, lightly injuring two adult escorts.

Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat said the violence threatened to disrupt the campaign for a Jan. 9 presidential election to choose a successor to Yasser Arafat.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the new Israeli attack on our people in Beit Lahiya which killed several Palestinians. These attacks are seriously harming the elections process," he told Reuters by phone from the West Bank.

The violence erupted a day after Israel ended an armoured incursion into Beit Hanoun and Jabalya in north Gaza in another effort to eliminate rocket and mortar squads who constantly fire towards settlers and areas over the nearby border in Israel.

Violence in Gaza has escalated in the run-up to a planned Israeli pullout from the occupied territory by the end of 2005.

Militants hope to portray an Israeli withdrawal as a victory, while Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has pledged tough action to ensure settlers and troops do not leave Gaza under Palestinian fire.

One Palestinian militant was killed in Monday's fighting, while another nine were killed in a separate raid into the refugee camp of Khan Younis, a militant hotbed, at the weekend.

Iraq president urges UN to review poll date

BAGHDAD, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Iraq's president urged the United Nations on Tuesday to look into whether the country should go ahead with its scheduled Jan. 30 election despite violence that could scare voters away from the polls.

"Definitely the United Nations, as an independent umbrella of legitimacy ... should really take the responsibility by seeing whether that (timing) is possible or not," Ghazi al-Yawar told Reuters in an interview.

Iraq's interim government and their American allies have repeatedly said that the vote would not be delayed but Yawar said the elections would fail if a raging insurgency kept a significant number of Iraqis away from voting stations.

"Definitely the United Nations, the party who is independent, who cannot be threatened or intimidated and who is credible in the international community, should really stand up for their responsibilities and obligations by saying whether that is possible or not," he said, speaking in English.

"On a logical basis, there are signs that it will be a tough call to hold the election."

Insurgents have been targeting leading politicians, election workers and Iraqi security forces ahead of the polls.

The Interim President of Iraq, Ghazi al Yawar, speaks with reporters during an interview in the heavily guarded so called "Green Zone" in central Baghdad, Jan. 4. Al-Yawar told Reuters in an interview that the United Nations should look into whether the country can go ahead with Jan. 30 elections despite violence which could scare people away from voting. REUTERS

Palestinians carry the body of Jaber Kaseeh who was killed during clashes with Israelis during his funeral in Beit Lahiya town north of Gaza Strip Jan. 4. Moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas called Israel "the Zionist enemy" for the first time on Tuesday after an Israeli tank killed seven Palestinian youths in a Gaza strawberry field. REUTERS

Palestinian Abbas calls Israel "the Zionist enemy"

GAZA, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas called Israel "the Zionist enemy" in a campaign speech at a militant stronghold on Tuesday, unprecedented language for the relative moderate who is expected to succeed Yasser Arafat.

The words were certain to stir concerns in Israel, where images of Abbas embracing fighters during the campaign for a Jan. 9 elections have led some to question hopes for reviving peace talks after Arafat's death.

Abbas was speaking after Israeli troops killed seven Palestinians at a strawberry farm in Gaza following a mortar attack by militants there that wounded Jewish settlers.

"We are praying for the souls of our martyrs who fell today to the shells of the Zionist enemy," he told a campaign rally in Khan Younis, a stronghold of militants waging a 4-year-old uprising.

Arafat, accused by Israel and the United States of obstructing peace, had not used such language in public for many years — more akin to the statements of Islamic militants who are committed to destroying Israel.

Abbas has gone out of his way to woo militants during his campaign. He needs to win them over if he is to have any hope of securing a truce that could allow any resumption of negotiations with Israel.

Abbas opposes armed struggle and says he wants peace with Israel, but he

has emphasised that he sees militants as heroes of the struggle for a state whose security must be assured.

Palestinian presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas speaks to his supporters during a Fatah election campaign rally at the Khan Younis refugee camp southern Gaza Strip, Jan. 4. REUTERS

Disappointing some Israeli commentators, he has also stuck very firmly to Arafat's old commitments to a Palestinian state on all of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem — captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

Baghdad governor assassinated; bomber kills 11

BAGHDAD, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Gunmen killed Baghdad's governor in Iraq's highest-profile assassination in eight months and a suicide bomber killed 11 people at a police checkpoint on Tuesday in an escalating campaign to wreck the Jan. 30 election.

The shooting of Governor Ali al-Haidri in a roadside ambush showed insurgents' power to strike at the heart of the governing class, raising fresh doubts as to whether security forces can protect politicians and voters as the ballot draws near.

The assassination took place hours after a bomber rammed a fuel truck into a checkpoint near Baghdad's Green Zone, a sprawling compound housing the Iraqi government and the U.S. and British embassies. The vehicle went up in a giant fireball that rocked the capital.

The blast killed eight police commandos and three civilians and wounded 60 people, bringing fresh scenes of bloodshed to Baghdad's streets a day after 17 security men died in a string of ambushes and explosions across the country.

The attacks were the latest in a drive by Sunni insurgents trying to force out U.S.-led forces, cripple the American-backed interim government and scare voters away from the polls. Iraqi leaders say guerrillas also want to provoke sectarian civil war.

Voicing sadness at Haidri's assassination, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said: "It once again shows that there are murderers and terrorists and former regime elements in Iraq that don't want to see an election.

"They want to go back to the tyranny of the Saddam Hussein regime and that is

Iraqi officials as well as members of the country's fledgling security forces, accusing them of collaborating with foreign occupiers.

VULNERABLE SECURITY FORCES

Tuesday's powerful explosion hit a roadblock near the police commando headquarters on the outskirts of the Green Zone.

The choice of targets again showed the vulnerability of Iraq's new security branches, which have gained a reputation for ineffectiveness even as they undergo crash training to take over eventually from American-led forces.

The latest attacks have been concentrated in Baghdad and the restive Sunni heartland of northern Iraq.

There was also a fresh strike against foreigners. Four security contractors, three Britons and an American, were killed on Monday in a bombing in Baghdad, a diplomat said.

Insurgents blew up a Turkish fuel tanker in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday, killing the driver, witnesses said.

The Iraqi militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which last week mounted the deadliest suicide attack on Americans since the start of the war with an attack on a U.S. base in Mosul, claimed responsibility for a separate bombing in west Baghdad on Monday.

An explosives-laden car trying to ram through a checkpoint near interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party offices exploded, killing two police officers and a civilian.

A recent undated television image shows the Governor of Baghdad Ali al-Haidri, who was assassinated by gunmen in the Iraqi capital Baghdad January 4, 2005, speaking at a press conference in Baghdad. REUTERS

not going to happen," he told a news conference in the southern Thai resort island of Phuket as he began a visit to tsunami-hit countries in Asia.

Haidri and one of his bodyguards were killed when gunmen opened fire on his car in western Baghdad, police sources said. He was the most senior official assassinated in the city since the head of the Governing Council was killed last May.

Haidri, the head of Baghdad province, had survived a previous assassination attempt in September.

Insurgents have repeatedly attacked

Death sentence for Iranian who beheaded sons

TEHRAN, Jan 4 (Reuters) - An Iranian who beheaded his two sons after they witnessed him murder a woman was sentenced to hang on Tuesday by a Tehran court, in a case that has hit Iran's front pages.

The man, known only as Ismail, pleaded guilty to beheading and dicing up the bodies of two adults and severing the heads of his sons, aged 7 and 11, newspapers and the ISNA students news agency reported.

"Ismail suspected his wife

Masoumeh of having an affair with a man called Ebrahim. He then forced her to marry him in a lavish ceremony attended by some 700 guests," Naser Seraj, the head of penal courts in Tehran province, told ISNA.

Ismail then killed Ebrahim and his sister Fatemeh.

"I had beheaded sheep before and I felt Fatemeh was a sheep so I cut her head off and chopped her body to small pieces. I placed her head in a tray which scared the life out of my children," he

was quoted as saying by Etamad newspaper.

After learning that his sons had witnessed Fatemeh's murder, Ismail beheaded them.

Seraj said Ismail received two death sentences for killing the adults. Under Iran's Islamic law a father need only pay blood money for killing his children.

Masoumeh was sentenced to death for her affair with Ebrahim. Adultery is punishable by death in Iran.

Saudi TV presenter divorced from abusive husband

RIYADH, Jan 4 (Reuters) - A Saudi television presenter has been granted a divorce from her husband who savagely beat her last year in a case which highlighted the taboo topic of domestic abuse in the conservative Gulf state.

Newspapers said Rania al-Baz suffered 13 facial fractures after her husband Mohammed al-Fallatta repeatedly slammed her head against the floor during a domestic dispute. The papers published pictures of her battered face in April.

"The judge ordered him to divorce me," Baz was quoted as saying by the Arab News daily on Tuesday.

"Except in extreme cases, judges prefer to hear the husband say that he

divorces the wife rather than for judges to grant the divorce," she added.

Divorce is legal under Islam but rights activists say many women in Saudi Arabia prefer to stay in unhappy or violent marriages rather than be stigmatised by society or lose custody of their children.

Analysts say there have been no official studies of household violence in the Muslim kingdom, whose tribal culture frowns upon publicising home life, but believe abuse is quite common.

Fallatta served half of a six-month jail sentence and was released after Baz pardoned him and dropped claims for compensation in return for custody of their two children.

Iran reformist cleric announces presidency bid

TEHRAN, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Iran's former parliament speaker Mehdi Karroubi said he would stand as a reformist presidential candidate in a June poll hardline conservatives are tipped to win, media reported on Tuesday.

The mid-ranking, 68-year old cleric is the second reformist, following former higher education minister Mostafa Moin, to announce his intention to run in the June 17 elections, which are expected to mark the reform movement's final defeat.

Liberal President Mohammad Khatami is ineligible to stand for a third term. His first two saw his popularity plummet as the conservative clerical establishment repeatedly frustrated his attempts at political, social and economic change.

"I will not withdraw in favour of anyone, nor expect anyone to do so for me," Karroubi was quoted as saying by the ISNA students news agency.

Karroubi is known as a compromising, moderate reformist who has mediated between the reform camp and conservative-dominated bodies such as the judiciary and the Guardian Council, a legislative watchdog.

It is not clear whether the reformists will eventually agree on one candidate or risk splitting the vote between Karroubi and Moin.

Conservatives netted a massive majority in February's parliamentary elections after the Guardian Council banned thousands of reformist candidates for not conforming with the Islamic Republic's morals.

Former foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati and former head of state radio and television Ali Larijani, both hardline advisers to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have announced their intentions to stand.

Former Revolutionary Guards commander Mohsen Rezaie and hardline lawmaker Ahmad Tavakoli are also conservative candidates.

Iran's influential former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, considered a pragmatist conservative, has signalled that he may run if he gets enough high-level backing.

Modest social reform marked Rafsanjani's 1989-1997 presidency.

Indian islanders search for loved ones on radio

PORT BLAIR, India, Jan 4 (Reuters) - With phones down, boat links cut and the number of missing people dwarfing the death toll, tsunami survivors on India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands have only one hope for tracing relatives — the radio.

Airwaves in the remote islands are jammed as hundreds of anxious islanders have flocked to the office of state-run All India Radio with handwritten questions about the fate of their loved ones, many of which are still cut off from the world after the Dec. 26 tsunami.

"I am very concerned about you, I promise you, I will take the first boat and fetch you," reads a message from schoolboy P. Uday Bhanu to his father who was in the Hut Bay islet in the south of the archipelago when disaster struck.

Another went out from a Catholic priest, listing the names of each of his family members on Car Nicobar island,

which took the brunt of the waves, and urging them to somehow get out and reach Port Blair, the island's capital.

Nine days after the tsunami, there is still no clear number for the number of the people who have died on this remote cluster of more than 550 islands, of which only three dozen are inhabited.

Almost all the islands can only be reached by sea, but the giant waves destroyed most jetties, leaving many people stranded.

Rescue teams have so far found 900 bodies in the rubble of buildings, in the thick forests and in fissures in the ground. But 5,700 people are listed as "missing".

The tsunami, triggered by an under-sea earthquake off Indonesia, just south of the Nicobar islands, has killed nearly 150,000 people across south and southeast Asia.

The toll includes 15,160 people dead or presumed dead in India.

Radio is the lifeline

Indian officials say they cannot confirm whether the missing are dead until bodies are found or they are accounted for by a village headman or locals who survived the waves.

"We have to be sure about these things, how can you say somebody is dead when you cannot land on the island, cannot speak to anyone there," said P. Vaidyanathan, a clerk in the local electricity department.

Vaidyanathan came to the radio station to send a message to his 18-year-old nephew on Nancowry island.

He has not heard from him since the tsunami and wants to tell him to hang in there, because a boat will be coming in the next two days.

There is no way of knowing if Vaidyanathan's nephew will hear his name on the airwaves, and he can't respond.

But there is no stopping the stream of people at the radio station from trying

to reach out to their families. Many others call in with messages over the few phone lines that work.

"Even in normal circumstances, the radio is critical to islanders to know about ship movements, weather, etc.," said K.D. Shukla, a programme officer at All India Radio. "But today it is the lifeline, the only link to the outlying islands."

Some people looking for missing relatives have got lucky.

Shukla recalls a call he took one night last week from a man in Port Blair trying to reach his sister who he thought was in Car Nicobar island when the tsunami struck.

Fifteen minutes after the message was read out over the radio, the sister rang up the station saying she was safe and in the interior of Andaman island.

"We promptly went back on the air and relayed her message to the brother," said Shukla.

Children from Car Nicobar Island on the Andaman Sea sit on donated clothes in front of a painting of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi at a relief camp in Port Blair, the main city of remote Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, Jan. 4. Aid workers cleared landing strips in flooded tsunami-hit regions to start flying food, clean water and doctors to hungry and injured survivors, but the global relief operation continued to struggle on Tuesday. REUTERS

China population to officially hit 1.3 billion

BEIJING, Jan 4 (Reuters) - China, the world's most populous country, is expected to reach an official population of 1.3 billion on Thursday, state media said, despite a quarter century of its one-child policy.

Xinhua news agency credited that policy with successfully delaying hitting the 1.3 billion figure for four years.

"Although the population growth rate has been reduced, the actual increase is still huge," Xinhua quoted an official at the State Commission for Population and Family Planning as saying.

China is expected to add about 10 million to its population each year, demographics experts have said, and has no plans to ease the one-child policy, despite concerns about low urban birth rates and an ageing population.

The strict rules on family size have also resulted in a gender imbalance in China, with about 117 boys for 100 girls, as a cultural preference for sons prompts couples, usually in rural areas, to abort girls.

At the end of 2003, the total world population stood at 6.27 billion people, according to the World Bank.

Chinese commuters walk down a pedestrian bridge near a train station in Beijing Jan. 4. China will reach an official population of 1.3 billion on Thursday, state media said, despite a quarter century of its one-child policy that aimed to put the brakes on growth after Mao-era exhortations that more kids would make China strong. REUTERS

China, with 1.29 billion people, had the biggest population, followed by India, with 1.06 billion; the United

States, with 291 million; Indonesia, with 214 million; and Brazil, with 177 million people.

Tsunami-hit Thailand fires chief meteorologist

BANGKOK, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Thailand fired its chief meteorologist and opened an investigation into why his department failed to issue a tsunami warning last month which might have saved thousands of lives, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said on Tuesday.

"When a quake measured at 8.9-9.0 on the Richter scale struck in Sumatra, it was widely known tsunami can happen. But why weren't there any alerts? I really want to know the truth," Thaksin told reporters.

A day after deadly waves devastated the country's Andaman Sea coast, Meteorological Department chief Suparek Tansriratanawong had told reporters Thailand had not been hit by a tsunami in more than 300 years and had no reason to expect one.

But the English-language Nation newspaper quoted an unnamed member of the department last week as saying a tsunami alert was not issued for fear of hurting the important tourist industry at the peak season if it turned out to be false.

During the investigation, to be led by Information & Communications Technology Minister Surapong Suebwonglee, Suparek will help set

up a national early warning system for all natural disasters, a government spokesman said.

No Asian country issued a warning of the Dec. 26 tsunami, triggered by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake off Indonesia, which killed nearly 150,000 people as it crashed ashore around the

Indian Ocean.

Hotels on Thailand's Andaman Sea coast were packed when the tsunami hit, killing at least 5,187 people, including more than 2,400 foreign tourists, many from Scandinavia, drawn to its sand, warm seas and coral reefs to escape the long northern winter.

Thai rescue workers remove the body of a foreign female tsunami victim which was discovered as they prepared to rescue two Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins trapped in a nearby lake after the tidal waves in Khao Lak, nearly 110 km (68 miles) north of the Thai resort island of Phuket on Jan. 3. The death toll in Thailand sprawled to nearly 5,000 after a tsunami, caused by a magnitude 9.0 quake off the northern Indonesian coast on December 26, devastated the southern tourist isles and beaches. REUTERS

Thousands queue for water in Aceh, aid blocked

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Hungry and filthy, Indonesians queued for water in their thousands on Tuesday as aid deliveries to the tsunami-ravaged Aceh province hit new snags.

The main airport Banda Aceh, a key hub for relief flights, was closed to planes after the landing gear collapsed on an aid flight in the early hours of the morning.

Parts of Banda Aceh city were deserted, especially the downtown area near the waterfront, where buildings were flattened by the massive Dec. 26 quake and killer tsunami. Small fires smoldered in a desperate attempt to burn stacks of debris.

In front of a collapsed shopping mall where food and water were being distributed, at least 1,000 people stood in a long line for water from a private aid station set up by businessmen.

Volunteers handed out bags of rice, marking people's fingers with ink that would wash off after a day, which would allow them to then collect more.

Residents said that outside the huge makeshift refugee camps it was still a struggle to get adequate food and water for their families, many of whom were injured or sick.

"If you don't live in a refugee camp,

you have to queue like this. It's very hard for us also out here," Ramzi, 27, told Reuters as he queued for water.

He said he and 15 family members were living in a house not damaged by the tsunami.

The health ministry said on Tuesday nearly 400,000 people were now refugees in Aceh, a province of about four million at the northern tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. More than 94,000 have died there.

Nur Hassana, 30, stood in line with her 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. She had ventured outside the refugee camp she lives in, explaining the food provided was not sufficient.

"They are only giving us five packets of noodles for two days. We have to find extra here," she said, clutching her filthy, barefoot children.

A little 8-year-old girl, Ulisarati, said her school had been destroyed by the waves.

"I want to go to school. I just want to learn. I will ask my dad to find another school," she said, gesturing to her

father standing in line for water.

Plane blocks runway

At the airport in Banda Aceh, a chartered Boeing 737 cargo plane was blocking the runway after its landing gear collapsed.

Helicopters continued to fly in and out of the airport, but airplanes had not been able to land since about 2:30 am (1930 GMT on Monday).

An Australian air force corporal said the plane, resting on one wing about one-third of the way down the runway, may have hit a cow.

"If you look at the amount of damage done to the wheel, it had to be something that size ... Livestock in this area would be used to the noise," Corporal Craig Cutler told Reuters.

A Singaporean soldier said a backlog of planes due to bring in aid was building up in Medan, Sumatra's largest city 450 km (280 miles) to the southeast.

In Banda Aceh city, an Australian military water purification station was preparing to open for the day.

An Acehese woman carries a box of drinking water while others queue for their relief rations in the provincial Indonesian capital of Banda Aceh, January 4, 2005. Aid workers cleared landing strips in flooded tsunami-hit regions to start flying food, clean water and doctors to hungry and injured survivors, but the global relief operation continued to struggle on Tuesday. REUTERS

A machine the size of a large truck stood near 11 big black plastic tubes full of water and guarded by Indonesian soldiers with assault rifles.

"This is probably the most important thing. If they can get clean water, its going to have a major impact," another Australian air force corporal said.

"People want to shake your hand. They say 'bless you mister'. They say 'Indonesia has problems, but you help us'."

Aid workers (C and R) from the International Organisation for Migration transport an injured Acehese girl to a U.S. Navy helicopter at the airport in Banda Aceh, Indonesia Jan. 4. Aid workers cleared landing strips in flooded tsunami-hit regions to start flying food, clean water and doctors to hungry and injured survivors, but the global relief operation continued to struggle on Tuesday. REUTERS

U.S. Congress set to convene; seek disaster aid

WASHINGTON, Jan 4 (Reuters) - The 109th U.S. Congress convenes on Tuesday with more aid for victims of the South Asia tsunami a top priority.

Amid opening-day formalities, including the swearing in of newly elected members, lawmakers are expected to approve a resolution expressing support for the millions left homeless by the Dec. 26 calamity that killed tens of thousands in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

The Republican-led Congress' "first order of business is going to be to provide disaster aid," U.S. President George W. Bush told lawmakers at the White House on Monday.

Bush already has committed \$350 million.

Congress seems certain to add to that but it will likely be at least a few weeks before lawmakers approve a specific package, aides said.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Tennessee Republican as well as a doctor, plans to help convene Congress and then head to the ravaged region.

"As a leader in the Senate, I want to assess on the ground to see that that money is being spent effectively, also to look to the future," Frist told NBC's "Today Show."

"And as a physician, I'll be studying what is the next wave of threats ... and see what we need to be doing," Frist added.

U.S. President George W. Bush, flanked by former Presidents Bill Clinton (R) and George H. Bush (L), makes an appeal to Americans for donations to aid victims of last ZHHNE tsunami, while at the White House January 3, 2005. The SUHVLGHGWH and Clinton will lead a bipartisan effort to seek out donations to provide relief assistance to millions left homeless by the December 26 calamity that killed thousands in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

REUTERS

While wide support is expected among lawmakers for the aid for tsunami victims, dissent is likely between the parties as the chambers take up a number of controversial issues in the new session.

Bush won a second term in the Nov. 2 elections and fellow Republicans expanded their majorities in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

The president now hopes that the added political muscle will help push

his ambitious second-term agenda.

But the record federal deficit, rising cost of the Iraq war, plus competing positions of rival Democrats and even within the Republican Party, all pose risks to such White House goals as the overhaul of the federal tax code and the Social Security retirement program.

Republicans boosted their majority in the 100-member Senate by four to 55. But that is five short of the 60 needed to end Democratic procedural roadblocks known as filibusters.

Republicans raised their majority in the 435-member House by three to 232.

While there are no filibusters in the House, some conservatives now seem more willing to break ranks with Bush, such as his effort to ease immigration requirements.

"Immigration will be very dicey because much of our House membership is to the right of the president on this," said Rep. Deborah Pryce of Ohio, a member of the Republican leadership.

There was plenty of partisan gridlock in the Senate the last four years and that may increase, particularly if Republicans carry out threats to change the Senate rules to forbid filibusters on controversial judicial nominations.

Democrat vow they will retaliate with other procedural moves. "All hell would break out," a top Democratic aide warned.

Ukraine election commission pores over last results

KIEV, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Ukraine's central election commission meets on Tuesday to sign off on the final paperwork from last month's presidential election, which could see winner Viktor Yushchenko's victory formally declared at last.

A spokeswoman said the commission would gather at 4:00 p.m. (1400 GMT).

It must still certify results from just 55 out of 225 regional commissions, but may be barred by legal challenges from declaring a formal winner until at least Thursday.

Yushchenko was on holiday at a mountain retreat with his friend and political ally Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, whose own rise to power on the back of massive popular protests was an inspiration for Yushchenko's supporters.

Although there is little doubt Yushchenko will take power sometime this month, legal challenges by his rival, former prime minister Viktor Yanukovich, have held up the official proclamation of the election result.

Yanukovich has not been seen in public since resigning as prime minister on New Year's Eve. He said he would continue his challenges to the election although he acknowledged he had little hope of success.

The weekend New Year holiday turned into a three-day celebration of Yushchenko's victory in downtown Kiev, which was jammed with families, street musicians, Santa Clauses and Christmas trees festooned with

Yushchenko's orange colours.

The centre of the Ukrainian capital is still occupied by a tent city of his supporters, who turned out in their hundreds of thousands in November to demonstrate against an earlier election, in which Yanukovich was declared the victor.

That poll was overturned by the Supreme Court because of massive fraud, paving the way for Yushchenko's eventual victory.

Yushchenko, a western-leaning former prime minister and central banker whose wife is American, promised over the weekend to turn his country of nearly 50 million people into "the most modern market in Eastern Europe".

"I will prove one thing: if this country is governed by honest people, who love their country and their people, and this government can survive, then within 365 days each person will feel the effects of the economic development plan," he told a Polish television station.

The days since Yushchenko's victory have not all been smooth.

One member of the outgoing cabinet, Transport Minister Heorhiy Kyrpa, was found dead in his sauna the day after the poll with a gunshot to his head.

On Jan. 1 Turkmenistan, a distant central Asian state which supplies much of Ukraine's natural gas, shut off supplies, demanding a price hike.

It turned the gas taps on again on Monday after Kiev agreed to pay more.

Peru arrests siege leader, rebels hold out

LIMA, Peru, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Peruvian authorities arrested a former army major who led a three-day uprising in a southern Andean town and vowed on Tuesday to storm the police station where his followers remained holed up unless they surrendered soon.

With the southeastern farm town of Andahuaylas under a dusk-to-dawn curfew, Peruvian troops surrounded the police post and Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero warned: "We can't wait too long."

The group's leader, Antauro Humala, was arrested late on Monday.

Afterward, a man identifying himself as a former army commando now in charge of 150 remaining rebels told RPP radio there were "armed people prepared to die here."

He said the insurgent group - which killed four police officers in clashes on Sunday - were holding 19 hostages, including four Army commandos and 10 police officers.

They were willing to negotiate an 8 a.m. (1300 GMT) surrender, he said, but would only lay down their arms in daylight because "all sorts of things can happen at night."

Ferrero told a news conference that Humala - who called unpopular President Alejandro Toledo corrupt and demanded his resignation - was detained without a fight during talks with Peru's police chief, Felix Murazzo.

Police officer Anibal Gomez (C) embraces a relative after being released in the southern Peru town of Andahuaylas Jan. 3.

REUTERS

"He is now in a safe place outside the city," Ferrero said. "One of his followers was arrested with Antauro Humala."

Authorities declared a state of emergency in Andahuaylas, some 560 miles (900 km) southeast of Lima, on Saturday and sent 1,000 police and troops to restore order.

At least six people have been killed in clashes.

Ferrero said the government rejected Humala's demands, including a partial handover of the police hostages and a surrender of stolen weapons at an

unacceptable date.

No sign of attack yet

Humala had been holding the police hostage since he marched into the police post before dawn on New Year's Day.

He said he had also captured five government snipers.

Humala's nationalist group, inspired by the ancient Inca empire, a 19th century war hero and a general who took power in a 1968 coup, are veterans of Peru's wars with Ecuador and leftist rebels in the 1990s.

Humala said one student and one of his men were killed in a government offensive on Monday.

Ferrero said: "We cannot leave the murder of four police officers unpunished ... We have committed to respecting their lives and we guarantee to do so if they turn themselves in peacefully, but we can't wait too long either."

Despite the government's ultimatum, the situation was calm early on Tuesday.

A reporter in the town said there was no sign of an attack.

Humala - who paraded on Monday at the head of a crowd of several hundred residents cheering him and blasting the government - backtracked on an earlier surrender pledge.

The sight of him - in a green woolly hat, black sweater and army fatigues - carried on the shoulders of townsfolk highlighted discontent with unemployment and constant corruption scandals 3-1/2 years into Toledo's five-year term.

The president's rating is just 9 percent in polls.

Humala's headline-grabbing action was the latest instance of frustrated Peruvians taking the law into their hands after a wave of public lynchings last year in Andean towns.

"People may disagree with some of Humala's methods, but the criticism against the frivolous, corrupt political class is there," said Augusto Alvarez, editor of Peru.21 newspaper.

EU Commissioner to propose disaster corps

BRUSSELS, Jan 4 (Reuters) - The European Union is mulling the creation of a 5,000-strong "crisis management corps" to deal with disasters such as the Asian tsunamis, the EU's external relations Commissioner told the Financial Times on Tuesday.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner told the FT she was working on proposals to set up teams of EU experts for tasks such as disaster relief and emergency reconstruction.

"I would like to see the EU rapidly developing the capacity to deploy experts, with rapid reaction teams in disaster relief, firefighting, emergency reconstruction, on standby," she said.

Such a crisis management corps could be composed of about 5,000 experts identified beforehand by national governments, who would be exercised and trained, and placed under central co-ordination when on call.

"We should do it as early as possible," she said.

"Because of climate change and the warming of the atmosphere, we have more and more of these catastrophes," she said, adding it "would be great" if the corps could

be ready by 2007.

There was no immediate comment available from Ferrero-Waldner's office.

She also said the Commission was likely to increase its aid for the victims of the disaster by tens of millions of euros in the coming days.

"Obviously, money is important," Ferrero-Waldner said.

"But it is equally vital that we have systems in place to make sure that we have aid for people who need it first and the effective co-ordination of efforts. The present crisis has revealed the limitations of our capacity in civil crisis management."

So far the EU's executive Commission has committed 23 million euros (\$31.3 million) in aid to victims of the tsunami and it plans to allocate a further 10 million as soon as it receives a concrete proposal.

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) has a further reserve of 70 million euros (\$95.2 million), and there is 221 million euros in the EU budget for use in emergencies which can be allocated with the approval of EU member states and the European parliament.

Annan starts reshuffling UN staff for reform push

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 3 (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Monday chose the high-profile British head of a key agency as his new chief of staff, the start of a reshuffle aimed at instituting U.N. reforms and combating scandals.

Mark Malloch Brown, 51, is administrator of the U.N. Development Program, the largest U.N. agency, with programs in 166 countries. An outspoken official and former World Bank vice president, he replaces Iqbal Riza, 70, of Pakistan, who announced his retirement two weeks ago.

"This is a first in a series of changes or a shuffle that may happen," Annan

told a news conference, without elaborating, in announcing the appointment of Malloch Brown, considered a heavy hitter in the U.N. system.

Annan also needs to replace American Catherine Bertini, the undersecretary-general for management, who wants to leave her post in the spring for other career choices.

He is searching for a replacement for Norwegian diplomat Terje Roed-Larsen, the U.N. coordinator for the Middle East peace process. But U.N. officials said that Kieran Prendergast, the undersecretary-general for political affairs, would not go to the Middle East as some reports said.

The openings give Annan an opportunity in his last two years in office to put in place U.N. reforms he has advocated and tackle the damage caused to the world body over corruption in the Iraqi oil-for-food program, which U.N. officials believe is exaggerated but nevertheless need to confront.

Annan said Malloch Brown would be valuable in at the center of U.N. work as well as "revitalize the U.N. system and ensure it is better equipped to deal with the scale and complexity of 21st century challenges."

Malloch Brown will remain head of UNDP as well as chief of staff while the tsunami emergency continues in

Asia and until a replacement is found.

He left with Annan on Monday for Jakarta, Indonesia, and a Thursday meeting with Asian leaders and an aid appeal.

Malloch Brown made clear that he would be outspoken on problems facing the United Nations, unusual in that post.

"I think that a modern, global public organization of this kind has to understand that there are many news cycles a day, that to get your message out requires both a vigorous, rapid response," he said.

He also referred to dissatisfaction among staff that senior officials were not held accountable for their actions.

One such case is the retention of

Dutchman Ruud Lubbers, the Geneva-based U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, accused of sexual harassment.

"It has been a subject of wide commentary that staff morale is not at its highest at this time, and we face also, in the weeks ahead, recommendations that may come from Mr. Volcker," Malloch Brown said.

He was referring to a preliminary report expected in January from Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, who is heading an independent probe of corruption in the oil-for-food program that Republican hard-liners have used to call for Annan's resignation.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan listens to a question at a news conference at United Nations headquarters in New York City, Jan. 3.

REUTERS

Words of Wisdom

Parents and family elders are not providing good role models, either. Many adults spend their time chewing qat and watching satellite TV programs that represent the lowest common denominator, the children's recreational needs are mostly neglected, leaving them to wander off into the streets and mix with bad company.

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

OUR
OPINIONKissing Yemen's
press freedom
goodbye

Yemen's press freedom has slipped again by the latest judicial court verdict against two journalists, the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Hurriya newspaper Abdulkareem Sabra and one of the newspaper's reporters Abdulqawi Al-Qubati. They both got two-year jail sentences with hard labor.

The world has watched Yemeni journalists work tirelessly to help free our colleague Abdulkareem Al-Khaiwani only to find another two journalists being imprisoned.

Journalists, intellectuals and diplomats are all asking where Yemen is heading.

Apart from the horrifyingly negative impact that this action has on Yemen's image globally, it effects our daily work as journalists, and destroys our hopes for improvements to press freedom.

It is also damaging Yemen's developmental efforts because the media is fundamental to increasing public awareness, which should be the driving force behind human development.

Police forces surrounded the house of Sabra, and treated him like a dangerous criminal. These kinds of incidents have been occurring regularly since President Saleh declared that he would delete the paragraph in the press law that deals with the imprisonment of journalists.

What is even more disappointing is that this comes a time when we thought that Abdulkareem Al-Khaiwani would be released. Journalists had argued that his imprisonment was unprecedented but now we see the same scenario being repeated, and on a larger scale.

Where is President Saleh in all of this?

Why does he not act and act swiftly to save the country's press from this injustice?

Or was all of this done with his consent, despite the fact that he was the person who pledged to protect journalists from imprisonment?

Did he change his mind?

If so, why?

I cannot hold myself from asking who could be next?

Could it be me?

Could it be one of the journalists that I know?

I hope that we can all wake up and see that there is something wrong and act quickly to do something about it.

It is a matter of life or death for the freedoms that we have worked so hard to gain and maintain. If we fail, we might as well close our newspapers and return home.

This could be the end of the democratic journey, and then we can kiss our press freedom good bye!

The Editor



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

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The colours
of Washington

By JOSEPH S. NYE

Condoleezza Rice's replacement of Colin Powell as US Secretary of State shows that America's recent presidential election continues to produce powerful reverberations. But understanding what that election tells us about America is important not only for Americans, but for the world.

This year's presidential vote proves that America's democracy is healthy, but that some things could be better. Contrary to the election in 2000, when President Bush lost the popular vote and barely won the vote in the Electoral College, Bush prevailed this time by 3.5 million votes. While some Democrats remain bitter, there is little serious questioning of the legitimacy of Bush's victory.

America remains closely divided into red states (Republican) and blue states (Democrat). If 100,000 votes changed in the red state of Ohio, John Kerry would be the president (albeit with a minority of the popular vote).

The Electoral College was included in America's constitution to protect small states in a federal system, but it now means that the political campaign focuses largely on the dozen or so battleground states where public opinion is closely divided.

More fundamentally, there is something unseemly about electing presidents without a popular majority. So it is time for a serious debate about amending the constitution to abolish the Electoral College.

Some observers also complain about the divisive negative rhetoric and advertising that characterized the campaign. But this should be seen in historical perspective.

In the era of the Founding Fathers, newspapers were extremely partisan, and George Washington was dismayed by the harshness of political language. For much of its early history - to say nothing of the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction - the country was as closely divided as it is today, and bitter

campaign rhetoric reflected the closeness of the competition.

At the same time, despite negative advertising by both sides, the three nationally televised debates raised important issues in a serious format and were widely viewed. In general, an incumbent president with a growing economy is likely to be re-elected. In that sense, what was surprising about Bush's re-election was how thin his majority was.

In large part, this was because of the unpopularity of the Iraq War. Kerry tried to make the war, the low rate of job creation, inadequate healthcare, and Bush's tax cuts for upper income groups the central issues of the campaign, but some observers felt that this never added up to a clear message.

Bush countered with concerns about security against terrorism and cultural populism on issues such as gay marriage and abortion rights. In the end, security and cultural populism trumped economic populism.

Interpretation of the election has been influenced by exit polls in which voters were asked (after they voted) about which issues mattered most to them. The largest number (22%) answered "moral values," comparison to 20% who cited the economy and 19% who mentioned terrorism.

Social conservatives interpreted this to mean that they won the election for Bush, and that their agenda should dominate his next term.

But a Pew poll taken a week after the election indicated that the category "moral values" encompassed a wide range of issues besides abortion rights and gay marriage. In fact, polls show that 25% of the public support gay marriage and 35% favor legal civil unions for gay couples (the position advocated by Kerry). Nonetheless, for the 37% who oppose gay marriage, particularly in the red center of the country, the issue helped mobilize Bush supporters to come to vote.

A larger question is whether the US is hopelessly divided. The election map of red and blue states has given rise to Internet jokes and cartoons about the

two blue coasts seceding from the red center of the country. Some call it "Coastopia."

But the division is not that sharp. Many states in both camps were won by narrow margins, and if one colors the map at the level of counties rather than states, much of the country looks quite purple. Cities versus suburbs and rural areas is a better description than coasts versus heartland.

Indeed, public opinion polls show that most Americans are clustered in the moderate center of the political spectrum rather than at the two extremes. But political elites, such as party activists and members of Congress, tend to be more extreme than the public.

At first, this seems puzzling, because they should have an incentive to move to the vote-rich middle. But many members of Congress represent districts that are safe for their parties, and the threat to their re-election comes in party primaries that are dominated by the more activist and extreme wings of the parties.

This tendency is reinforced by the rise of cable television, which attracts viewers by means of contentious "infotainment" programs, and Internet bloggers, who engage in fierce polemics with no editorial filter. Reforms to alter the boundaries of Congressional districts to make them more competitive would help alleviate this problem, but few incumbent Congressmen will vote for changes that might increase their risk of defeat.

The closeness of the result suggests Bush won less of a mandate for change than he seems to believe. Faced with difficult questions in foreign, fiscal, and social policy, he would be wise to turn toward the center rather than conciliate his conservative base, but it remains unclear whether the politics of conviction or of pragmatism will prevail.

Joseph S. Nye is Distinguished Service Professor at Harvard and author of *The Power Game: A Washington Novel*.

Responding to 2
letters to the editor

ALAWI ABDULLA ABU BAKIR
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There are two letters I like to reply to; the first is a letter from Nijole King that wrote and I quote:

"Where's the outrage from the Arab community that the Aid worker was executed in Iraq? She was aiding the Iraqi people for 30 years and was also married to an Iraqi. But a Marine shoots an insurgent and we have hysteria in the streets. I honestly don't believe the people of the Middle East want democracy. It sickens me!"

Nijole, maybe you need to remember what the Aid worker lived for and one of them isn't asking the world to be outraged but to build bridges and help each other, instead of being angry and shouting at each other, asking to be outraged. What will make a difference is building bridges. Arabs like me have two choices, shout about every injustice that happens, innocent killing or we roll our sleeves up and make things happen and...leave to people like yourself to write a letter about how outraged you are. Being outraged will benefit no one, whatsoever. What will? Courage with action, getting to know the Arab community where you live to understand, to build bridges and bring communities together but that's what we call 'work, effort and commitment.'

An American died defending Palestinians. Remember? Now, was there a lot of outrage because the murder of the American hero? Damn right there were but why didn't you hear

about it Nijole? Because the media will show what it wants to. Go to Occupied Palestinian and talk of the American hero and you will see tears roll down their face and see how they loved and still love her, and respect her courage. But you won't get it shown on the western media only for a few snippets or a year later in a documentary.

Start learning how the mechanics of media works because you've just let them take your brain in a doggy bag and assumed what they wanted you to assume - that Arabs weren't outraged. Of course they were but it wasn't televised, written in western papers but it was televised in Arab media. In my city alone, they were debating on it in Mosques, Arab youths talking about the injustice of it for hour, days, weeks and so forth. Many got together to write to newspapers, and none were printed in western papers.

Now, According to the letter by Faid on the Yemeni Youth and how they shout, and cause chaos on Eid. I guess you're an adult Faidur Rahman Tariq. Have you rolled up your sleeve to give them an alternative? Have you tried for a year, before the coming of Ramadan and Eid to build relations with these youths, get to know them, talk to them and then work together to create something that they can all join in?

We didn't have what you mentioned because we took time to build trust to educate the Yemeni youths about 'adaab'. We gave them an alternative! That takes time, takes a lot of love for the youths and a lot of trouble to find out what they want, then go out into world after a hard days work to fight

for what the Yemeni youths need. They are our future generation whether one likes it or not.

Adults, many moan about how kids hang around corners at night and yet, if we can stop moaning about them, and get to know them, gain their trust by building something for them, find out what they want then they won't be hanging in the streets. Instead of blaming them, give them something. I was like that myself years ago and I remember how adults said the same thing you've said. Show them what Eid is about! Do something through out the whole year to build up to Eid and see the difference. They don't know any different because like me, no one showed us how, what and when. Even Islam wasn't taught to me by my elders, I taught myself because the Hypocrisy I saw many a adults, elders that shouted about Islam and only thing we saw that was about Islam was the Islamic Calligraphy on the wall and they're 'salat' and 'adaab' was out of the window. Make Eid special for them. Show them what it's really about instead of giving up on them and doing what many elders do; complain about the Yemeni Youth.

There's the arts council, other donors that can provide you funding if you put time into it, get advise and get the youth to work with you make next Eid special and invite not just Muslims but non-Muslims.

It takes work, effort and...real love for our people. The youth are the future, we cannot afford to keep blaming them. Time we turn the negative and make be brave and make it happen.

COMMON
SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haiji

In the wake of the Asian tsunami:
Whatever happened
to Islamic solidarity?

The devastating and tragic consequences of the South Pacific Earthquake and the tsunami that followed at year-end 2004 is a mind boggling catastrophe of enormous proportions. Never has a natural calamity been so widespread in impact and so exacting in human lives and habitats. Spanning more than one third the circumference of the Earth, the Tsunami that hit South East Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and even as far as the East African underbelly has yet to be determined in terms of the cost in human lives and livelihoods. The possibility that over a quarter of a million souls vanished in one small instance of time is indeed frightening and shocking. Any human being with a heart is bound to feel alarmed by the humble strength of mankind when matched against the unlimited powers of natural forces that are beyond man's full understanding and control. Even with the sophistication of the communications systems that man has developed and the rapid speed of information flow, nature again showed that man is weak and humble and even helpless in projecting some of the volatile inklings of nature and where their span will reach. Indeed, we take it for granted that we are very much still at the mercy of the Lord Al-Mighty and are easily subjected to becoming victims of nature's fury at any moment without the least warning. A quarter of a million people of different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities and religious persuasions have been made equal by the sheer power of the elements as land and water combined to create a formidable force of monumental dimensions. The tragedy of South Asia is so huge and so sad just by the immediate deaths caused that it is impossible to even come up with a clear picture of the devastation beyond the staggering death counts that rise by the thousands day by day as earth and rubble are removed from the affected sites. God knows how many people are wounded or now turned handicapped, many of whom will also be rolled into the death counts, because the logistics, in the aftermath of the torrential flooding and tidal waves, have literally become impossible for bringing the badly needed medical supplies and foods that these wounded people might find hope for survival in. No, this is no simple localized natural disaster, this is an international catastrophe that truly deserves unqualified concern of the entire international community, because in all likelihood, it can be repeated in any vast chunk of the world, any time that the Lord Al-Mighty lets nature display its mighty arsenal of destruction, to remind even the most arrogant of men that they are no more than helpless weak souls, who have a bad understanding of the realities of the world they live in and that they are fooling themselves if they feel that their arrogance is merited by their prosperous economic well-beings and their possession of vast stockpiles of man-made weapons of destruction. With one sudden twist of the elements of nature, it is God in the end who decides who continues to exist and struggle for the minimum requirements of living and whose turn has come to turn in the towel and face the adjudication of the Divine.

Tragedies like the tsunami of South Asia are expected to ignite in every human being the humanitarian call for "what can I do to mitigate the suffering of those who have been fated to become the tragic victims of such an immense natural calamity?" This is the time for all human beings to assess their true worth in this world and see how much of it can be put to good use by remembering that any wealth or assets possessed by any human beings are really the possessions of the Lord Al-Mighty under trust with their worldly owners. This trust entails that those who hold title to wealth must seek avenues for making sure that these assets are utilized in areas that are in the domain of goodwill and philanthropy as well as the enhancement of the economic welfare of the society and the international community.

One cannot help but acknowledge that there are many in the international community, who have shown that they are ready to share their resources and capacities to help bring relief to the unfortunate victims of the South Asian Tsunami and immediately announced their willingness to allot a certain amount of their means to help these unfortunate victims. Lead by the Government of Japan, which has always shown that it is indeed a bona fide leader in providing aid to the unfortunate, as Japan has always the highest share of its GDP, compared to other wealthy or industrialized countries amounting percentages that range from 2-4% (the United States hardly surpasses the 0.5% level) that is allotted as aid to less fortunate countries. But nevertheless, one is bound to say that any declaration of commitment by any country is worth taking note of.

To come closer to home however, one is also bound to feel disgust and even anger at the very poor and inexcusable showing made by Moslem countries, especially those that have been fortunate to be entrusted with considerable material wealth, without any real productive inputs on their part to produce that wealth. The observer is inclined to believe that our rich Arab and other Moslem states were expected to be the first to declare vast sums of funds and resources to their millions of fellow Moslems, who are the overwhelming majority of the poor victims of this sad tragedy. But, alas, their hypocrisy has truly been made apparent and their faith is at best lukewarm if not absent, because they chose to ignore the ownership of God Al-Mighty to all that they believe is their rightful possession and closed their eyes while their fellow Moslems are forced to rely on the petty crumbs of non-Moslem nations that have shown more humanitarian sensitivities than what these selfish wealthy Moslems have shown. What ever happened to all the talk of Moslem solidarity and the brotherhood of the Nation of Islam? Are we truly forgetting ourselves and the universal destiny that should be our main quest? How can we claim pride in being Moslems when these so called guardians of Islamic doctrine have elected to be stingy with what is not really theirs in the first place? It is no exaggeration to say that the least that these selfish hoarders of mismanaged wealth were expected to dish out was the equivalent of at least US \$ 10 billion as a start. They have it and they are never going to put it to any useful endeavor anyway. Moreover, it will hardly dent their façade of wealth and splendor, which they know they will never take with them when their fated end comes!

Presented by Mohammed Khidr

Main Headlines

- Yemeni-Saudi meeting soon for the two committees of social affairs and labour
- Government sources: In the new year focus will be on strategic projects and tackling issues of unemployment
- President Chirac calls for establishment a humanitarian force for quick response to disasters
- Parliament continues its discussion of 2005 budget
- Negotiations on opening a first mine for lead and zinc in Yemen
- Yemeni-Eritrean committee convenes in Asmara in February
- Away from both governments, Yemeni-American Center of fighting terror
- New sentences in cases of opinion, Khaiwani freedom hostage to judicial movement
- Arab countries observe departure of the last Arab leader
- John Abi Zaid visits
- International Transparency Organization warns Bajammal government against consequences of corruption aggravation
- Under what internal events it is facing,
- Do Saudi newspapers need double the kingdom adversaries?
- MPs bodyguards prevented from entering the parliament building

Annas weekly, 3 January 2005.

Main headlines

- Diesel shortage in capital secretariat, rise in cooking gas price
- Eman University in a press release: What mutamarnet has published, mere lies
- Sheikh al-Ahmar demands interrogation with Bajammal's guard because they know who tried to attack him
- JMP mention that al-Khaiwani issues confirms the country's need for a comprehensive political reform
- Bajammal denies his responsibility for the dose
- Teachers' Union calls fro rejecting the dose

Writer Ali al-Fakieh says despite that the year 204 has seen the opening of the world conference of democracy and human rights attended by 280 participants from 52 countries in addition to tens of representatives of civil society organizations, the joy did not last long. The authority changing its face so that press freedom has faced a year full of violations, trials and imprisonments has surprised the local community. At the end of February, press circles were suddenly surprised with kidnapping the journalist Saeed Thabit following his election as member of the council of the journalists syndicate. A few days later, he was put into political security prison and then sent to prosecution on charge of fabricating news regarding attempted assassination of Colonel Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, commander of the republican guard. After standing trial, he was sentenced to deprivation of practicing writing for six months.

Before that incident, immediately at

the conclusion of journalists conference journalist Najeeb Yabli was detained on charges of writing an article. The year has also witnessed many incidents of detention and harassments against journalists. During the year of 2004, the Shoura weekly newspaper and its editor in chief Abdulkareem al-Khaiwani were accused of offending the president of the republic and the national unity. He was then tried and sentenced to one-year imprisonment and the suspension of the newspaper for six months. A few days before the end of the year 2004, three court convictions of imprisonment were issued against four leading journalists, in addition to other sentences against other journalists. Thus, the year 2004 was a dark one for press and freedoms in general. Some have explained the authority dealing with press in that manner in order to make it busy in defending itself and to remain accused so that it would not go beyond certain lines the authority deems as red.

26 September weekly, organ of Yemen Armed Forces 30 Dec.2004.

Main headlines

- FM: Sudan and Ethiopia welcoming Yemen's initiative, encouraging for its success in settling disputes
- In compliance with high-ranking directives, Allocation of land plots and houses for the youth, building railroad and implementation of industrial strategic projects
- Vice-president asserts the opening of larger areas for oil investment
- The political editor of the newspaper says the styles of irresponsible instigation and mistaken mobilization resorted to by the some, political parties or individuals for pushing some people

to violate the law and order and to resort to violence are unacceptable means. Accordingly, the attempted attack by guards of some parliament members on the Prime Minister Abdulkader Bajammal and his two deputies, Alawi al-Salami and Ahmed Soufan during their presence at the parliament, came as a result of irresponsible fomenting and wrong mobilization. Such acts are done for narrow-minded political and partisan aims and at the expense of the supreme national interest.

No doubt, that inappropriate and unacceptable behavior that has been repeated does contradict the simplest legal and ethical rules that should be observed at the parliament. The venue of the event is that where it is supposed to be the venue where the foundations of the state of order and law are laid.

Al-Shumou weekly, 1 January 2005.

Main headlines

- Parliament and opposition have not yet comprehended rule of democracy game
- YSP faces problems of influence and sharing its leadership
- An article by Abdulrahman Dubwan mentions that at this time the woman is the major premise of discussion, whether through the call for her emancipation and the way of presenting her to the society or her participation in the political action and her influence inside the society. In addition, there are other ideas bearing various names and a big argument took place about understanding their meaning and impact of their application, in addition to the possibility of putting into force those visions and ideas inside the Islamic

S K E T C H E D O P I N I O N

By Samer A.

society.

Those ideas have always been associated with comparison between the woman's rights in Islam and the woman's rights according to concept of globalization and other positive laws. Here we are not talking about this argument but there are some conducts that emerged lately. They are the outcome of certain ideas we have previously mentioned, may be the result of ill understanding of these ideas.

We are not against the woman or with depriving her of her rights. On the contrary, we highly appreciate and feel proud the woman would take part in building the society that is the possession of all. This society is governed by laws and foundations. Out of this, the behavior of the man and the woman is equally subjected to regulations, laws and principles of our religion away from extremism and fanaticism.

Al-Thawri Weekly, Organ of the YSP, 30 December, 2004.

Main headlines

- The Central Committee approves, The 5th General Conference in June
- YSP bloc refuses it, JMP holds the president responsible, The Parliament resumes discussion of the state budget
- Washington warns its nationals against visiting Aden
- The newspaper's political editor says that when the Eritrean president Afwerki came to Yemen some weeks ago, the Yemeni media's tone was, as it is their manner, to beef up goals of the visit, hoping the turning of the past chapter with the Eritrean neighbor. However, that exaggerated praise did not last but a

short time and then disappeared at Afwerki's statements at joint press conference with the Yemeni president when he announced that the goal of his visit was not exceeding a discussion of an agreement intended for regulating fishery between the two countries. Fishing question has always been a reason for tense relations especially that it has included retention of fishermen and continued skirmishes.

Sana'a settlement inside a grouping of underdeveloped countries along with Khartoum, Addis Ababa and Somalia, may be the best position under a world classification following September 11. Such a grouping would raise importance status of those countries as they are states possessing all reasons for terrorism, and failure in development. This common classification that grouped those countries would give it a meaning to be confined within a framework of fighting terror and putting pressure on them to adopt democratic and social reforms that will narrow spaces of terror and grant the peoples long-awaited rights.

A l - W a h d a w i weekly, organ of Nasserite Unionist Organisation, 4 January 2005.

Main headlines

- NUO secretary-General calls on GPC MPs to stand with opposition blocs against the dose
- Political parties, trade unions and other mass organizations call on the people to stand up to the dose
- YR 26 million, violations at Hudeida customs
- Writer Ahmed Saeed says in an article the president has recently received visiting American general John Abi Zaid in his second visit to Yemen since last

September.

Observers have considered that many issues were on top of Abi Zaid's agenda, most important is the question of security stability in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa region in addition to security coordination in fighting terrorism and areas of training and qualification. The agenda would also focus on exchange of information, amid news on security apparatus arrest of an Al-Qaeda-affiliated dormant cell.

The visit comes following conclusion of Sana'a Gathering summit last week in Khartoum. It has been hoped that the Yemeni initiative concerning Eritrea's accession to the tripartite grouping be accepted.

At the time Eritrea is trying, through its desire to join Sana'a Grouping, signing peace accords with Sudan and Ethiopia and breaking the state of regional isolation it is experiencing, political sides in Addis Ababa and Khartoum are still ruling out removal of long long-lived tension with Asmara.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian opposition parties have early this week intensified their political and popular activities to foment the masses against the peace initiative launched by Addis Ababa for ending borders disputes with Eritrea.

American-Western interests in the Red Sea impose on the region's countries many commitments towards the Western presence. Among them are ending tension and guaranteeing security stability in the region. Abi Zaid's visit to Sana'a has coincided with a visit by the Yemeni foreign minister to Eritrea, which observers have described as "blitz and unsuccessful."

It is more probable that the American general would try to bridge the gap among the region's countries and end their disputes in precaution to any events that may affect the situation of the US navy force by Al-Qaeda elements.

In a year of war, murder still top cause of work deaths for journalists

New York, January 3, 2005 – Even in a year of combat casualties brought on by war, murder remained the leading cause of work-related deaths among journalists worldwide in 2004, an analysis by the Committee to Protect Journalists has found.

Thirty-six of the 56 journalist who died in the line of duty in 2004 were murdered, continuing a long-term trend documented by CPJ. The organization's annual year-end analysis reinforced another trend – the killers usually go unpunished. In all but nine cases in 2004, CPJ found, the murders were carried out with impunity.

The toll traverses the globe – from

the Philippines, where eight journalists were slain in a shocking series of attacks, to Mexico, where drug-fueled violence claimed the lives of two journalists, to the Gambia, where editor and press freedom advocate Deyda Hydara was gunned down just days after denouncing a repressive new press law.

Even in Iraq, where crossfire was the leading cause of death among journalists, at least nine of the 23 journalists killed were deliberately targeted.

"The sheer number of journalists killed in 2004 is cause for deep concern," CPJ Executive Director Ann

Cooper said. "But the fact that so many were murdered with impunity is shameful and debilitating. Governments have an obligation to pursue and prosecute those responsible. By failing to do so, they let criminals set the limited on the news that citizens see and read".

Most of the journalists killed around the world each year are local reporters, photographers, editors, and camera operators covering events in their own countries, according to CPJ research. In 2004, nine of the 56 journalists killed were foreign correspondents, and only one was American. Forbes Russia editor Paul Klebnikov,

a U.S. citizen, was gunned down in Moscow in July, making him the 11th journalist killed in a contract-style murder since President Vladimir Putin came to power just five years ago.

Some high-risk spots shifted in 2004, while eight journalists were killed in Latin America – including two on the U.S./ Mexico border and two in Nicaragua – no journalist was killed for his or her work in Colombia for the first time in at least a decade. Colombian journalists told CPJ that dozens of murders over two decades have seeded fear among provincial reporters, causing them to avoid sensi-

tive coverage of the ongoing civil war.

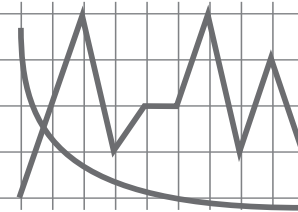
As CPJ reported in December, the 2004 death toll is the highest in a decade. The deadliest year for journalists since CPJ began compiling detailed statistics was 1994, when 66 journalists were killed, mostly in Algeria, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Seventeen media workers were also killed in 2004, 16 of them in Iraq. Such workers play supporting roles as drivers, interpreters, fixers and guards. Two journalists also went missing, including French and Canadian journalist Guy-Andre Kieffer who disappeared in Ivory Coast in April.

CPJ considers a journalist to be killed on duty if the person died as a result of a hostile action, including retaliation for his or her work, in crossfire while covering a conflict, or while reporting in dangerous circumstances such as a violent street demonstration. It does not include journalists killed in accidents, or those who died of health ailments.

CPJ continues to investigate the cases of 17 other journalists killed in 2004 to determine whether their deaths are related to their journalistic work. CPJ staff detailed information on journalists killed around the world since 1992.

YT Business



To be held in Mukalla,

Symposium on environment protection and quality of fish products

By Mahyoub al-Kamali
Yemen Times Staff

Yemen seeks protection of its fish products and maintains their quality as well as the purity and cleanliness of sea environment. The country possesses long shores extending to more than 2500 km and they are full with abundant quantities of various types of fish and marine life.

In this context, the city of Mukalla, provincial capital of the governorate of Hadramout, is to host a symposium on follow-up environment and protection of quality of fish products on 10 to 12 January 2005. Taking part in the symposium would be experts from 90 countries including Arab countries, European Union, and from countries of South-East Asia. The symposium aims at following up the environment of fish

products, the standard of production and how to dealing with means for establishing of investment partnership with the Yemeni side.

Official sources have said the symposium is held in collaboration with forum of workers in sea fishing sector and the common fund of essential commodities and under supervision of the ministry of Fish Wealth, in addition to the center of marketing and investment services of fish products in the Arab region.

In addition, to take part in the symposium are experts from the Food and Agriculture Organisation with the aim of attaining at a regional cooperation regarding fish wealth. Yemen says it is hoping from holding the symposium to make public the existing investment opportunities in the area of fishing and the country's need for funding big investment projects in fish sector.

Official sources also mention that on the sidelines of the symposium meet-

Exchange Rate for the Yemeni Rial

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	185.6000	185.8200
Sterling Pound	356.8200	357.2400
Euro	249.7200	250.0200
Saudi Rial	49.4900	49.5500
Kuwaiti Dinar	629.7700	630.5200
UAE Dirhem	50.5300	50.5900
Egyptian Pound	29.8000	29.8400
Bahraini Dinar	492.2900	492.8700
Qatari Rial	51.0000	51.0600
Jordanian Dinar	261.7800	262.0900
Omani Rial	482.0800	482.6600
Swiss Franc	161.7900	161.9800
Swedish Crown	27.6900	27.7300
Japanese Yen	1.7862	1.7883

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

ings there would be an acquaintance with many of Arab and foreign countries' experiences regarding mechanisms of production and development of national exports of fish.

The Yemeni delegation to the symposium would present it with a number of working papers related to fish wealth in Yemeni regional waters in addition to highlighting what the coasts of Hadramout entertain with major advantages and quality in fishing and kinds of fish.

Yemen exports high-quality fresh fish to some countries of the European Union, Russia and some Arab countries. Nevertheless, the sector of fish wealth in Yemen demands modern mechanisms and technology to raise production efficiency and development of exports in order to get non-inflation financial revenues as well as pumping funds into the state budget to put an end to the chronic financial deficit.

2005 budget:

Economic contraction with no development

By ENG. MOHSEN ALI BASURAH
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY
AGRICULTURE AND FISH COMMITTEE

The government is asked by constitution to present at the end of each year an annual financial statement including basic policies and main indicators of the general budget and its annexes.

The one who looks wisely at the submitted budget will realize that it is not a real one. Its financial statement claims that it was based on maintaining what has been achieved in the financial, economic and administrative reforms and it will go on applying the development programs that meet ambitions. It claims that it is going to reinforce the responsibilities of the local authorities making them play their role effectively in the extended local development and will open vast scope for participation in the development of the private sector.

All countries, including the third world countries, know that budgets are not to be prepared on false basis and predictions. They should be based on real and precise data and each budget aims to make an economic development in all fields especially the productive ones in order to raise the per capita income average.

The financial statement showed that the targeted average gross domestic production for the year 2005 is %4.1. This figure lacks a sense of reliability. The government confirms that the 2004 average gross domestic production was %3.57 which was lesser than that of 2003 which exceeded %4.47. The government said this deterioration was attributed to oil depletion and decrease of its price by %8.6 although it didn't take into consideration the rise in its price in 2004. It didn't point out that the price of the oil barrel rose in 2004 from US\$22 to US\$ 46 a barrel. The parliament however recommended frequently making use of these changes

and save money not for the necessary requirements and narrow limitations but for presenting an additional allotment.

Regarding unemployment, the financial statement doesn't mention its target this year. The 2004 statement mentioned that unemployment average was 10.6 and this figure is also questionable because many impartial statements indicated that unemployment reached 40%. The inflation average in 2003, 2004, and 2005 reached %10.8, %11, %10 respectively. These are the government's figures though the impartial economic reports indicated that the inflation average exceeded %14.7. since the government depends for most of its income on oil that formed %67 of the overall income, despite local and international warnings that oil is getting exhausted. Al-Masilah, Mareb and Al-Gawf fields that form %70 of the local oil are getting exhausted yet the government doesn't apply any actual procedures to diversify the income resources and to protect our homeland from external shocks.

The 2005 budget neither fights poverty nor provides job opportunities. It doesn't improve the income and it neglects its social function when we find %50 of people are beneath the poverty line. The social insurance network doesn't help in this respect because its payment is estimated at US\$ 30 per three months and its strategy is incapable to solve this problem: in most rural areas, political exploitation is found to be practiced to buy the poor people's political loyalty.

The budget doesn't play its role significantly causing the crime record to get increased. The public property's crimes in 2002 were 199, yet in 2003 reached 1340 and the crimes related to private properties were 6773 while those against people exceeded 10269, burglaries were 766 and there were 865 cases of stores' robberies. The registered cases of committed or attempted suicide were 247 in 2003 as it's

unveiled by the statistical book.

In turn, education and health get low allotments though there is namely rises in the budget: education allotments for 2004 was 162.7 billion and now, in 2005, it is YR 177 billion by a 14-billion rise (%8) because the prices increase by more than % 17. Health sector got YR 35.5 billion in 2004 but YR 42.5 billion (with increasing YR7 billion achieving not more than a %17 rise). This doesn't go in harmony with the price rise as well as the disease average such as malaria, and liver virus.

In the sector of security and defense, the rise reached YR19 billion though there is an internal and external stability. It is wished this rise was devoted for staff members of the Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior staff whose salaries are the least of all.

Whoever has a look into the statistics of education and health will be sure that the social function of the budget is getting worse: %47 of the population aged 10 and above are illiterate; %24.3 can only read and write without any qualifications; %9.4 are in the primary education; %9.2 are in the preparatory level; %7.7 are in the secondary education; and %1.9 are in the university level.

The mortality rate in 2003 reached 13011 deaths of children while malaria had affected tens of thousands. The various types of liver virus had affected more than 2 millions. It is worth mentioning that there is an average of one bed for every 65 thousand people.

Marriage average is also getting lesser and lesser: 10934 marriage cases in 2002 but in 2003 there were only 6000.

Concerning the administrative reform, the budget didn't achieve anything. The central and local administrative reform failed during the past years; the imaginary jobs are still as they are and fight against the corrupts haven't been realized yet. The reports of the Central Organization For Control and Auditing (COCA) revealed many cor-

rupts whom haven't yet been summoned by the Public Prosecutor though they owe millions to public corporations. They haven't been sued.

There were some amazing stances. The oil establishments road in Hodeidah (one kilometer long) was done at YR 302 million while it actually costs no more than YR 20 million in other places. There is also the scandal of the sale of oil block 53 for US\$ 12 million while the actual price is not less than US\$ 200 million. Despite all this corruption, there's no auditing. The government confirms that the liters of diesel smugglers are known and they smuggle hundreds of millions of liters of diesel. However, Minister of Interior came to the parliament to say that they are fishermen and they smuggle diesel with barrels on their boats. They don't mention those who smuggle huge weights on ships and where from they bought them and through which ports they smuggled. If those fishermen were the only real smugglers of diesel, we would have abundance of diesel next year. This is not true of course because smugglers are still doing so. Any administrative reform requires a strong determination not tribal leaders without responsible administration.

Moreover, the financial statement doesn't point out that there is a national strategy for salaries though the employees have been waiting for a long time. The parliament's frequent recommendations in this respect are no longer accepted. Such a strategy becomes a must at this time because the least salary an employee should receive to secure his/ her daily livings is YR 50,000. At the time the employee is looking forward to increasing his income, the government insists on increasing the amount of suffering on his shoulders when it lifts the subsidies on the oil derivatives and raises taxes.

What is allotted for the local authority's investment is a little allotment, that is, YR 25 billion. Let's have some examples for that: it is decided that

Sana'a province will get YR 801 million, Taiz will have YR1.750 billion, Hadramout is to get YR1.527 billion and Raymah will get YR 282 million. These are simple figures because they don't fit either for roads, health, education, water...etc. Or they are for the suspended projects. If YR 350 million is to be given to Al-Wahda Hospital in Al-Dhale'e yet the annual allotment for this project was decided to be YR 10 million. That means the project will be completed after 35 years. Is this the entire development?

The vice-minister of public works confirmed that the tenders are not offered to the contractors because the annual allotments are too few. They are executed directly and the harms of such an act is known; it is not the illegal act that's meant here but the carelessness in dealing with contractors and neglecting their rights. There are many complaints in the parliament. There is a contractor who completed his work and he is asking for 7 billion of his rights of which he had got just a billion. Another one was contracted by the local authority to execute a road but as soon as he started doing his work the ministry signed another contract with another contractor. You may find two foundation stones for this road: one is by the local authority and another by the ministry. How numerous are the contractors who come and go to the ministries of finance and public works at the present time. The local authority's duties determined by the government are not practiced in reality. This made an official in the government say at the Local Councils Conference that they are not but talks celebrations since the recommendations of all the three conferences have been absolutely ignored. The administrative function of the budget has been yet achieved in the light of the allotments and obstacles as well.

The financial function of the budget does reveal that the government relies on oil, then on taxes and customs and

the internal and external loans. It neglects many promising sectors such as fish, agriculture, and tourism. Therefore we find the government's share of the interest surplus from the agriculture and fish sectors that exceeded YR92 million. The government has specified YR400million for dams and water barriers for 2005.

The loans that Yemen received, some US\$ 290 million, were divided into the following: US\$19 million (equivalent for %6.5 of the total) was devoted for agriculture; %1.9 of the total expenses while Jordan gives %3.5 of the overall expenses for agriculture while we find that Egypt allotted %10. These simple expenses on being supported by the dry lands made the agricultural average decrease even in grain plantations: the hector produces only one ton while in north Africa it is 4.6 tons. The agricultural average lowered to %3.9 though was planned to be made at least at %6. This is proved when we see the degradation of the agricultural lands and the self-sufficiency of grains decreased from %31 to % 21 and grain imports were increased to reach %79.

Therefore, the oil revenues though it presents danger on the budget, it shows the unreliability of the figures. The government's indications about prices and dollar's value that is somehow stable are not good. The taxes and customs didn't increase but a little equaling the increase of the salaries of employees. The customs and tax evasion is notable and it makes the budget lose billions of riyals especially when the tax collectors are not competent and responsible enough in the money collection administrations.

The conclusion is that the 2005 budget doesn't apply its basic functions either the social, administrative or economical ones, as well as the military and security function. This budget deepens the economical inflation. I'll leave at last to the reader to judge whether it is a development-based or economical inflation budget.

Huge effort needed

Want to preserve Zabid? Here's how

BY ISMAIL AL-GHABERY
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Stakeholders met on the issue of preserving the historic town of Zabid recently at the faculty of education, at the University of Hodeidah.

In attendance were representatives of the local community of the town of Zabid, officials, dignitaries, scholars specialists and supporters who were carefully selected to represent the spectrum of stakeholders on the town of Zabid, in addition to officials at the national and international levels, plus expatriates researchers.

Following is a summary of the some of the recommendations coming from the two-day meeting.

Administration

- To declare a National and regional Campaign to safeguard the historic town of Zabid to be launched in 2005 and to declare Zabid the Capital of Yemeni Culture for the year 2005 with the aim of intensifying efforts to safeguard the town and carry out human resources development and preservation projects in the city with the help of the Ministry, Ministry of Planning and International cooperation and the Council of Ministers).
- To speed up the process of issuing the historic cities conservation laws by the concerned government authorities) Ministry, GOPHCY, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Council of Ministers, parliament).
- To speed up the creation of an independent technical unit which could be named (The Heritage House) and which would service as an independent (financially and administratively) Unit which can be

supported internationally for two to three years and would be mandated to carry-out the implementation of the conservation Plan.

- Call upon the Ministry of Local Administration and the Governorate of Hodeidah to revive and strengthen the administrative role of the Historic town of Zabid and to increase financial allocations to the town to enable it to play the required role.
- Call upon the education of Judges, Prosecution office and security officials of their role in implementing the penal code related to building violations in Zabid specially those who don't obtain building permits from GOPHCY's office.
- Remove the concrete columns and leveling of the open space and to prevent any new construction in this area by looking for a large building, to restore this building and to give it the function of the branch office for the Ministry of Public works and Roads.
- To speed up procedures to remove the hotel building being constructed in front of Al-Shabareeq Gate (governorates of Hodeidah, Ministry of Public Works and Roads, The high committee for compensation, GOPHCY.)
- To halt any building permits by the Public Works department or any other agency inside the historic quarter or within the buffer zone of the town delineated in the town's land use plan and to prevent any new violation, to strengthen monitoring and following over any restoration and rehabilitation work in the city.
- Push for the removal of all small scale violations such as fences, and small constructions and others and to benefit from the experience of

the Old City of Sana'a on this regard).(GOPHCY, the local Council).

- Prepare a short term and long term plan for removal of all types of violations.

Planning

- To speed up the approval and launching of the Architectural Development and Land use Plan for the Historic Town of Zabid.
- To speed up the completion of the study and the launching of detailed plans for the proposed expansion areas outside of the historic town area and to publish the executive code and planning guidelines along with specifications and terms and conditions for building in these areas.
- Completion of preparation of the Architectural Development and Land Use plan for the Historic town of Zabid, its executive by laws and guidelines during the first six months of 2005.
- Pay greater attention to the neighboring areas of the historic town of Zabid from a planning perspective in a similar manner as the attention given to the Historic part.
- To speed up the implementation of works to support the critical parts in Asha'er Mosque and to finalize the implementation drawings for the Old Market and the Asha'er Mosque.

Executive

- Translation of these recommendations a detailed action plan which includes the type of intervention and the main agency responsible for implementation as well as the sub-agency responsible for follow-up and to define required costs and deadlines for implementation and completion of

Part of the old city of Zabid appears behind a walled garden

- tall the tasks.
- To prepare an urgent plan for the conservation of the architectural fabric of the town.
- Search for financing should be carried out to finance the initiation of the implementation of the Old Market plan to revive the economic situation of the town of Zabid.
- To speed up the completion of the Sewerage and Sanitation projects for the town.
- Follow-up on the Office of the Public Works and the Social Fund For Development to finance a project for the pavement of the street network.
- Call up the Social Fund For Development to carry out a study for the production of traditional building material in an affordable manner and specially for bricks.

- Call upon all government agencies and International organizations to support the effort for the restoration and rehabilitation of homes in a similar manner as that of the Historic Town of Shibam-Hadhramout with due considerations to the local characteristics of Zabid and its economic conditions.

On-going

- Call upon the General Authority for Tourism Development to adopt tourism project which provides needed tourism facilities in the town of Zabid in a manner which is suitable to the characteristics of Zabid as an historic town and to come up with a tourism guide for the towns' tourist attractions and historic landmarks.
- Call upon the Ministry of Public Works and Roads represented by the General Authority for Slaughterhouses and Meat markets to speed up the implementation of a central slaughterhouse for the new town of Zabid to provide new work opportunities and a value added economic activity.
- Call upon industrial companies in the public and private sectors to contribute to the support of the textile industry and handicraft industries in the town of Zabid and to help in the marketing of these products with particular emphasis on the construction of a textile plant in the town of Zabid.

Training

- Within a qualification program, specific training and qualification

program targeting Conservation agencies should be created.

- Qualification of specialists to prepare restoration and rehabilitation projects for homes, and historic building and landmarks as well as historic areas).
- Qualification of staff on the preparation and management of conservation plan for the Historic cities..
- Qualification of traditional builders and handicrafts persons.
- Call upon the Faculties of Engineering, Architecture Department, Civil Engineering Departments, the Faculty of Literature's departments of antiquities and history to include curriculums related to the conservation of the urban cultural heritage as part of their academic curriculums and the direct graduation thesis for students on the conservation of Zabid in Particular for the year 2005 in coordination with the GOPHCY, GOAAM and the Local Council of Zabid to prevent repetition of selection of projects.

Communication

- Call upon all media organization (officials and private) to intensify their offerings by highlighting the value of conservation of the urban Cultural heritage as a source of pride and Yemeni identity and as an important part of the comprehensive human development plans with special emphasis on the historic town of Zabid, especially in the media organizations 2005 program schedules.

General view of Zabid showing the castle in the foreground

Al-Saeed lecture on Yemeni history

YEMEN TIMES
TAIZ BUREAU

The Al-Saeed Foundation for Science and Culture held a lecture titled "Writing on History of Yemen" delivered by Professor Abdullah Ali al-Kumaim. The lecture was introduced by Mr. Faisal Saeed Farae Mudhaji, the General Manager of the Foundation.

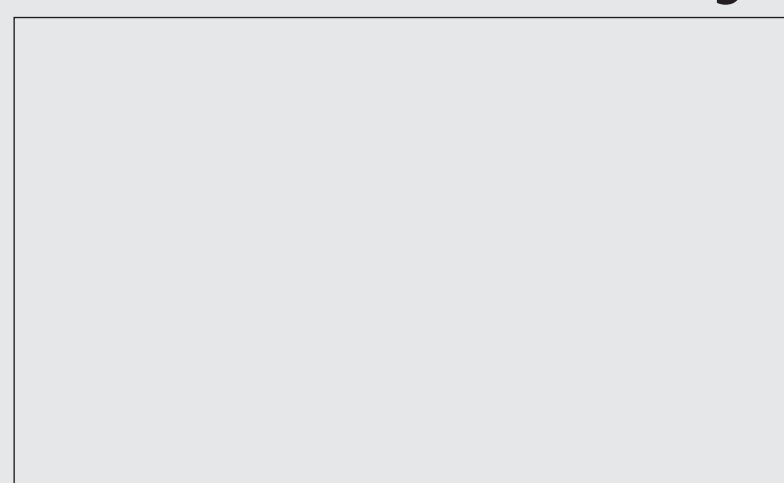
Mr. Faisal Saeed Farae applauded the efforts of Mr al-Kumaim in completing his first historical book, titled "This is Yemeni History" which is as a qualitative addition to existing collections.

Al-Kumaim presented his lecture, tackling the question of forgery and cheating that took place since first writer began writing in the 2nd century Hegira, saying that the pre-Islam histo-

ry was clean, and the Yemenis used to preserve their history carved on rocks and on stones.

The most everlasting history is the one contained in the holy Qura'an, and that the Yemeni had transferred their civilization via immigrations ten thousand years ago, indicating that the deluge mentioned in the holy Qura'an story of the Prophet Noah had originally began in Yemen, in particular, the Qa' Sana'a. In addition, Noah's Ark landed in Sana'a, which was titled Capital of Sam bin Noah.

The Yemenis have invented al-Musnad script, which was used by the Prophet Houd's writer. Al-Musnad letter invention was not Hemyarite or Sabaeen but an ancient invention of the Yemenis; it is the original letter that all other writing letters are attributed to, including cuneiform writing. Later it moved to other regions and by their



names "Pharaohs" as the Pharaohs ruled Yemen and Egypt four thousand years ago. Then they kicked off by it from Saber, Wadi Dhahrah, al-Jawf, Sana'a, and Hajjah. They created a unity between Yemen and Egypt. The lecture was enriched by discussions by a number of Taiz University professors, especially Dr. Abdullah al-Dhaifany. Mr al-Kumaim, the lecturer responded to many questions raised during the event.

Nabors Drilling International LTD invites all qualified female applicants for the vacant post of "Executive Secretary". The Candidate must be:-

- Yemeni national
- Fluent in English and Arabic both spoken and written.
- Must have at least five years of experience in the preference with accounting and finance background.
- Pleasant personality and flexible to deal with different nationalities.
- Internet knowledge.
- Good organizational skills.

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Attention Administration Manager**

**The deadline for receiving applications will be one week after this ad.
Response will only be made to short listed candidates.**

Historical developments and Future prospects:

The Yemeni community in Britain

BY MOHAMMAD SIDDIQUE SEDDON
RESEARCH FELLOW, THE ISLAMIC
FOUNDATION, LEICESTERSHIRE, UK

The relationship between Britain and Yemen was developed through British trading exploits in India via the East India Company (EIC), founded 1600. The first recorded British vessel to land in the port of Aden was the EIC's, "Ascension", in 1609.

The British needed a refueling station to and from Indian and Far East and a port to facilitate trade into the African continent.

The first attempts to settle the lower Arabian Peninsula was in Mocha. Coffee and spices were traded from the port to Britain and Europe, but the British failed to maintain control.

In 1835, Captain Haines visited the ancient port of Aden and noted, "[it] might be made the grand emporium for the export of coffee and gums etc., as well as the channel through which the produce of India and England might be thrown into the rich provinces of Yemen and the Hadhramawt."

But Haines also realized the strategic potential of the port and commented that, "The trade would also be open to the African coast, the distance being so trifling: from thence, gums, coffee, hides, frankincense, myrrh would be thrown into the Aden market and the trader thereby be enabled not only to return with the produce of Yemen, but of what might return him a good profit from the African coast."

By 1839, Aden had become a British Protectorate after a negotiated treatise with local tribal shaykhs. Initial attempts to establish a coaling station by the EIC were slow, but when in 1844, local hostilities between Hussain, the *Shareef* of Mocha, and the Imam of Yemen, traders abandoned the port for the safety of Aden. The port was hurriedly developed as traders from America, Germany, French, Persia, India and Somalia shifted their products through Aden. Although British ships provided the bulk of transportation of products from the east to the West, it was not until 1857 that the first British trader, Captain Luke Thomas, was established.

Through their British Protectorate status local Yemeni sailors, via *muqadems* and *muwasits*, began to be employed on British vessels sailing to Europe and Britain. By 1850, Joseph Salter noted that there were, "more than 10,000 Asiatics [sic] and Africans ...annually visiting London docks alone." Certainly by the 1880s there were established communities of Yemeni sailors in the port cities of London, Liverpool, South Shields and Cardiff.

Early Yemeni Communities in Britain

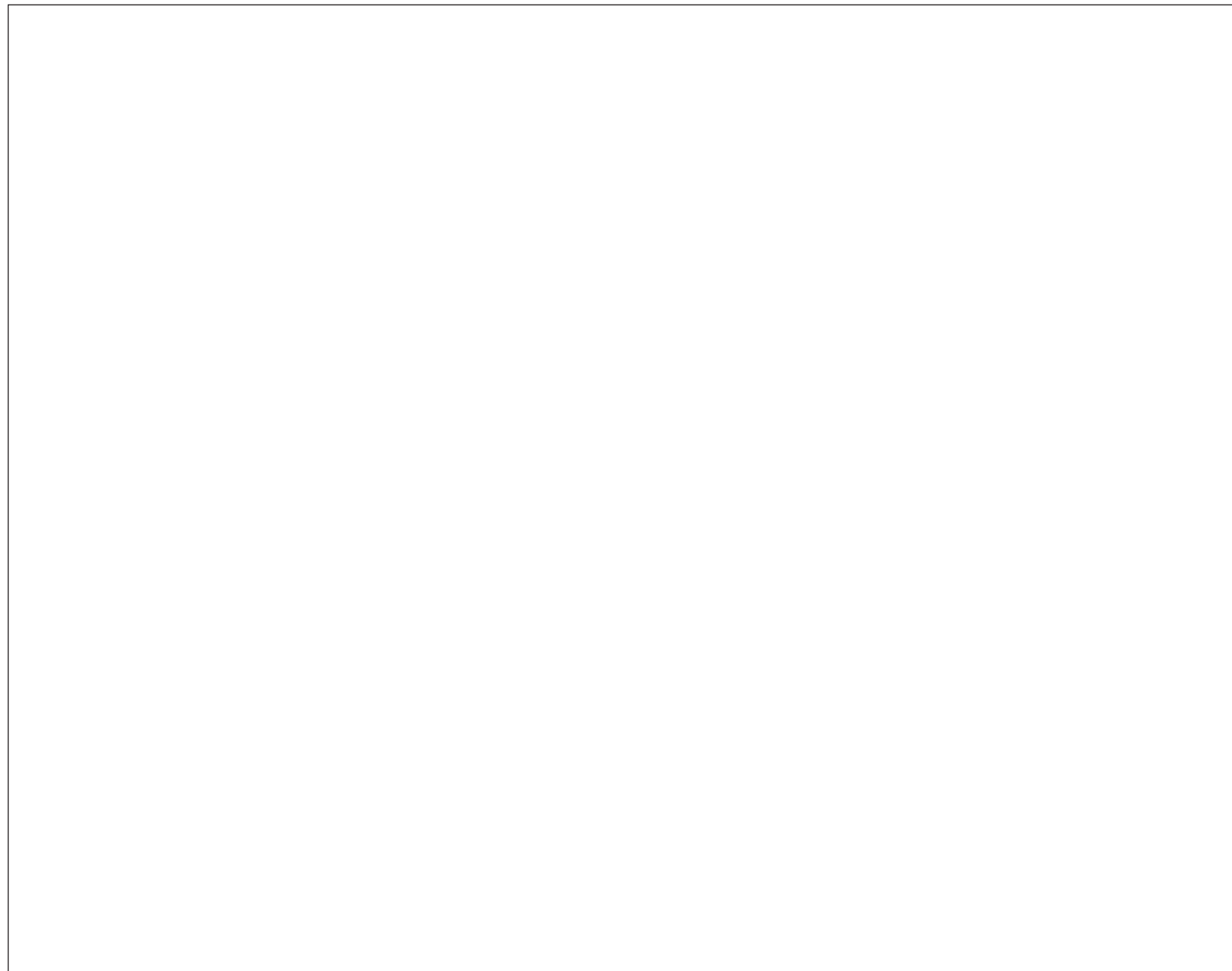
The appearance of Yemeni sailors throughout the major port cities of Britain precipitated "Arab-only" boarding houses because 'coloured' seamen were prohibited from staying in the same lodgings as white sailors. However, despite the racial discrimination against them, in the Arab boarding houses Yemenis could eat *halal* food and maintain their religious and cultural observances.

By the 1920s, South Shields local city Council had granted licenses for no less than 60 Arab boarding houses. Further, Yemeni sailors also began to marry local British women and settle in the docklands communities. These mixed marriages caused some concern and issues were raised concerning the so called 'problem' of mixed-race, or 'mongrel' children.

During the First World War more than three and a half thousand Yemenis lost their lives on British vessels shipping vital supplies to British troops in Europe and beyond. The Cardiff Yemeni community lost one thousand Yemenis alone.

Post-war Yemeni migration from Britain

After the First World War the development of the Yemeni communities in Britain was effected by three major economic, social and technological changes. Firstly, economic depression and mass unemployment meant that many Yemenis became the victims of racism and social exclusion. In the docks, Yemenis were accused of 'steal-



Birmingham Mosque

ing' jobs from white workers.

Secondly, the introduction of the Coloured Seamen's Act, 1925, saw "Adenese Arabs" (Yemenis) discriminated against through a quota system that restricted the number of 'coloured' sailors employed on any particular vessel. The Act also required that all coloured sailors report to and register at a local police station within seven days of arrival to Britain.

Thirdly, technological advances in the shipping industry meant that ships engines could now be fuelled by oil rather than coal. This meant large scale unemployment for Yemeni sailors who were mostly employed as coal stokers, or 'donkeymen', shoveling coal into the steam engine furnaces.

As a result of these developments most Yemenis migrated from Britain to the Middle East, to take up jobs in the developing oil-related industries. From those Yemenis who stayed in Britain, many made an inward migration from the port cities to the industrial cities of Birmingham, Sheffield and Manchester.

Community Formation

As more Yemenis began to marry local wives, facilitating the religious education and cultural needs of the mixed race, or *muwallad*, children became a priority. But, the lack of any real community structures or institutions was apparent and no real developments were made until the appearance of a religious scholar from the Yemen migrated to Britain with the expressed objective of religious instruction among the Yemeni Muslims and their families.

Shaykh Abdullah Ali al-Hakimi came to Britain via Algeria where he had stayed for some time under the tutorage and guidance of a great North African Sufi shaykh, Mustafa Ahmad al-Alawi. After hearing of the plight of the migrant and their children, shaykh al-Hakimi sought permission from his spiritual guide to take the *tariqa* to Britain.

Al-Hakimi first worked amongst the Yemenis in South Shields, which had a long-established docklands community. He established Qur'anic, Islamic instruction and Arabic language classes for Muslim children and their convert wives. Religious identity became an outward expression and many women began to wear the hijab in addition to the community holding public Islamic processions on Eid and the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

Many new migrants were influenced by Islamic reformist movements and Arab nationalist movements and these influences began to change the religious and political demography of the British Yemeni communities.

Further, in 1936 the success of the development of the South Shields' religious and cultural identities lead to the purchase of a former public house, The Hilda Arms, on Cuthbert Street, which was converted into a mosque known as the, Zawiyah Alawiyah Islamia Mosque.

Shaykh al-Hakimi then systematically established *zawaya* throughout the Yemeni communities of Britain. He also propagated an anti-Imamate movement and established a newsletter in Arabic, Al-Salam, which promoted a revolt against the Zaydi Imam ruler, Yahya. It is suspected by some that the shaykh was eventually assassinated by members of the pro-Imamate movement on a visit to the Yemen in the 1950s. However, despite his untimely death, as a result of his efforts a situation of steady development continued amongst the British Yemeni communities until the Second World War.

After the Second World War the economic development of Britain was aided by the immigration of thousands of male colonial and commonwealth subjects. These single-male transient workers came from the Indian sub-continent, The Caribbean and the Yemen. The migrants provided a steady and conscientious labor work-force largely performing the tasks and duties that indigenous workers did not want to do.

As a result of this second wave of Yemeni migration to Britain, the existing Yemeni communities in Birmingham, Cardiff, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester and South Shields were transformed. Many new migrants were influenced by Islamic reformist movements and Arab nationalist movements and these influences began to change the religious and political demography of the British Yemeni communities.

For example, the *zawaya* of the Alawi sufi order declined as new Yemeni migrants began to spread more

is second to none.

But, in some much smaller communities where the development skills are absent from within the community, then aspects of discrimination, underdevelopment, social decay and exclusion become an alarmingly increasing feature. However, in communities where development skills exist, despite the community's relatively small size, capacity building, equal opportunities in employment, education and service provision all feature. There are at least two examples of such communities from the Yemeni communities in Britain.

In terms of the history of Islam in Britain, the Yemeni community is important in that it represents the oldest British Muslim community which in the cities of Cardiff and South Shields is now entering its seventh generation.

Community Development

Throughout the independence and unifications struggles of the former North and South Yemen, Yemeni politics has played out in the British Yemeni communities in microcosm. In Britain, where migrants from a particular tribe or region of Yemen dominate, the transnational politics or trans-local tribal problems often divide the community.

Transnational politics can become a particular problem when it comes to the specifics of the community development of British Yemeni communities. Coupled with a lack of specific skills in community management, development and capacity building within some of the communities themselves some British Yemeni communities have become what Fred Halliday describes as 'invisible Arabs'. My own doctoral research among the Yemeni community in Manchester has revealed a significant difference between the official population size of the Yemeni community based on both the 1991 and 2001 census figures and the population size according to my demographic studies undertaken during my ethnographic research amongst the community.

The discrepancy in the actual and the official population of Yemeni communities in Britain has a real knock-on effect in terms of the amount of funding and service provision they receive from local authorities and service providers. In cities where the community constitutes a large minority like Birmingham, community development

is second to none. Unfortunately, at the same time that Yemeni dependents were joining their husbands and fathers in Britain, there was also an influx of educated professionals and postgraduate students coming to Britain to extend their studies. With the help of the Yemeni government, the students set-up cultural classes throughout the Yemeni communities in Britain. However, as political instability and hostilities increased between the divided Yemen, funds to support the migrant Yemeni communities evaporated.

developmental needs. Their cultural needs were largely met through self-help projects such as the establishment of places of worship and cultural centers, but specific needs such as religious instruction and Arabic language classes for children was lacking.

Fortunately, at the same time that Yemeni dependents were joining their husbands and fathers in Britain, there was also an influx of educated professionals and postgraduate students coming to Britain to extend their studies. With the help of the Yemeni government, the students set-up cultural classes throughout the Yemeni communities in Britain. However, as political instability and hostilities increased between the divided Yemen, funds to support the migrant Yemeni communities evaporated.

Despite this negative development many communities had developed enough skills to tap into local government funding for minority community projects and as a result of their efforts capacity building and community development continued in many communities. However, in smaller communities where there is a certain degree of 'invisibility' of the Yemeni populations, the developmental situation is reversed.

For example, in Eccles, Manchester, the Yemeni community received no funds from local government for community development, equal opportunities or employment training. The facilities that are available and centered in institutions established and run by other minority communities. This is worrying because the Yemenis constitute the largest ethnic minority community in Eccles but funding is based on population statistics and the 1991 and 2001 census data shows that there are officially only around 250 Yemenis living in Eccles which translates to 1.5 per cent of the population of Eccles. My own ethnographic research estimates a population of around 1,000 Yemenis, which translates as 9.8 per cent of the total population. This obvious disparity between the official and actual population statistic has a huge impact on the politics of minority community funding, social inclusion and development.

In contrast, Birmingham has a Yemeni population of around 14,000 and this large minority presence has translated into very positive funding and support from local, central and European governments that has provided a well-developed, multi-functioning community centre that has just received a total of around 4,000,000 pounds in development funding.

Clearly, the socio-political and economic situation of the Yemeni community in Britain is quite diverse and some communities have developed far greater than others. However, beyond the intra-dynamics of community development amongst British Yemenis, there are greater inhibiting factors between the Yemeni community and the wider British society. These are firstly, racism and social exclusion based on the superficiality of a persons skin. Racism has not really been effectively tackled by British governments and their institutions and the reality of a diverse, multi-racial, multi-cultural and religiously plural Britain has not been reflected in the political realm.

Secondly, the phenomenon of Islamophobia, 'the fear of Islam', has risen as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11. This has resulted in physical attacks on Muslim and the mosques. In Manchester an elderly Yemeni was beaten by some youths who accused him of being Usama Bin Laden. The mosque was also set on fire in a religious-hatred motivated attack.

Thirdly, the 'loyalty' of the British Yemeni community has come under much scrutiny particularly after some young British Yemenis were caught in the Yemen and suspected of plotting terrorist attacks. The British involvement in the invasion of Iraq has placed a question mark over the British Arab allegiances and belonging.

All of the above issues cannot and will not be resolved in the immediate future and the resilience and pragmatism of the Yemeni community against all the problems that they have faced in their one hundred and thirty-year presence in Britain probably means that the link between Yemen and Britain and Britain and the Yemen will continue for many years to come.

LeBron proves to be spark for resurgent Cavaliers

LONDON (Reuters) - Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James has been described as "The King," "The Chosen One" and "The Gift."

As if those heady epithets were not enough for someone who only turned 20 on December 30, James's presence in the Cavaliers was also seen as one of the main attractions in the sale by Gordon Gund of controlling interest of the

franchise for a reported \$375 million on Monday.

Not that the National Basketball Association's (NBA) 2003/4 Rookie of the Year could soak in too many accolades -- nor enjoy his birthday -- he was nursing a fractured cheekbone courtesy of Houston Rockets center Dikembe Mutombo's elbow.

The 2.03m swingman was listed as a "day-to-day" proposition by Cavaliers medical staff after he sustained the injury last month, but turned up for their game against the Charlotte Bobcats on Monday wearing a protective mask.

"That's the best present I could have received," Cavaliers head coach Paul Silas told the club's Web Site.

"Your worst fear is that he's going to be out for a long time."

James played 41 minutes and scored 26 points in their 94-83 victory, ensuring Cleveland (18-12) held their one-game Eastern Conference Central division lead.

It has been a remarkable turnaround for the franchise since they won the top pick in the 2003 draft lottery, just as the media hype surrounding James's entrance to the professional ranks straight from St Vincent-St Mary's High School in nearby Akron was reaching its peak.

Such was the interest, his school's games were transferred to a bigger venue at a local university and televised by cable network ESPN.

On the same day the Cavs earned the top pick, James signed a \$90 million endorsement contract with sportswear company Nike --

before he had played a single minute as a professional.

Gund was so delighted for his team, who finished the 2002-03 season tied with the Denver Nuggets for the league-worst record of 17-65, that he posed with a Cavaliers jersey with James's name emblazoned on it.

The draft was not held until June 26, more than a month later, and the Cavaliers duly fulfilled the dream match of the highly-rated local boy playing for his "hometown" club.

On the court James led the team to a 35-47 record but off it is where his presence really counted.

According to a report in the Cleveland Plain Dealer at the end of his first season, when he averaged almost 21 points a game and won the Rookie of the Year title, the team's attendance was at a franchise high and television ratings were 300 percent up on the previous season.

Merchandise sales increased 500 percent and James's replica jersey was ranked number one in sales.

Reporters from 21 countries were also accredited to cover the team last season.

James's golden year did not continue, however, when the highly-fancied U.S. team could manage only the bronze medal at the Athens Olympics.

This season, despite the loss of fellow Olympian Carlos Boozer to the Utah Jazz in a bizarre contract dispute, Cleveland have got better under James, who seems to have raised his game to a new level.

His play this season prompted SI.com (Sports Illustrated) basketball columnist Marty Burns to describe him as the "best all-round wing man in the Eastern Conference" and in December he became the first Cavalier to be named the NBA's Eastern Conference Player of the Month.

The city of Cleveland, which has been told by new owner Dan Gilbert the franchise will not be moving, is holding its breath that James can push the team to even greater heights.

Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James has been described as 'The King,' 'The Chosen One' and 'The Gift.' As if those heady epithets were not enough for someone who only turned 20 on Dec. 30. James's presence in the Cavaliers was also seen as one of the main attractions in the sale by Gordon Gund of controlling interest of the franchise for a reported \$375 million on January 3. James is seen during play against the New Jersey Nets in this December 7 file photo.
Reuters

South Africa takes control of third test

CAPE TOWN (Reuters) - Fast bowlers Makhaya Ntini and Charl Langeveldt have claimed nine wickets between them as South Africa seized control of the third test against England in Cape Town.

South Africa were 184 for three in their second innings at stumps on the third day on Tuesday, a lead of 462 after they had earlier skittled England for 163 and declined to enforce the follow-on.

Jacques Kallis was 60 not out with Boeta Dippenaar on 44 in a grinding stand of 83 for the unbroken fifth wicket.

Kallis, who scored 149 in South Africa's first innings total of 441, batted for 217 minutes, hitting four fours and a six from 117 balls faced.

Debutant Langeveldt, who bowled with a fractured left hand sustained while batting on Monday, took five for 46 from 16 overs. He will probably miss the remainder of the series.

Ntini, who took four for 50 from 19 overs, began the England slide on Monday as England slumped to 95 for four and continued it in the seventh over of the day when night-watchman Matthew Hoggard edged a ball to Graeme Smith at first slip.

In his next over Ntini jammed Andrew Flintoff with a rising delivery that the all rounder slapped to Herschelle Gibbs at backward point

having scored just 12.

Seven overs later England were 128 for seven when Geraint Jones, who scored 13, steered a ball from Langeveldt to Smith at first slip.

Graham Thorpe, who was six not overnight, laboured to 12 off 65 balls before flicking a Langeveldt delivery to Jacques Rudolph at square leg.

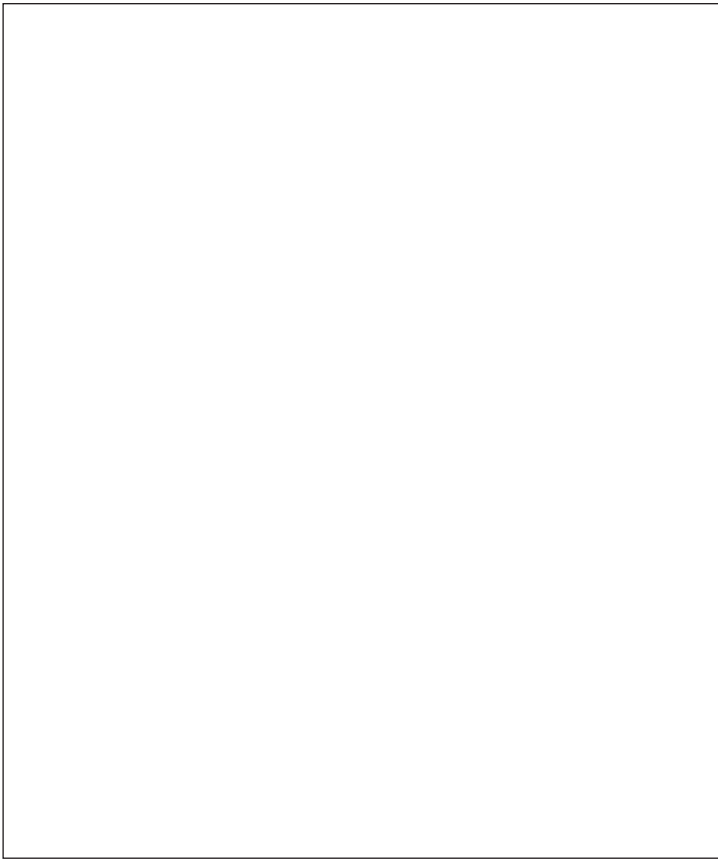
Simon Jones was bowled off the toe of his bat by Langeveldt for a duck, and the innings ended when Steve Harmison edged a ball from Langeveldt to Smith at slip to go without scoring.

After South Africa elected to bat again rather than put England in, fast bowler Hoggard struck with the 13th ball of the innings, trapping Smith leg before for two.

Gibbs hit four boundaries in his 24 before edging a ball from Flintoff to wicketkeeper Geraint Jones — it was Flintoff's 100th test wicket.

South Africa slipped to 101 for three in the second last over before tea when Jacques Rudolph, who scored 23, drove a ball from pace bowler Simon Jones into the covers where he was caught by Robert Key.

Toiling England squandered a chance to remove Kallis when Marcus Trescothick dropped a difficult catch off the bowling of left-arm spinner Ashley Giles at slip.



South Africa batsman Jacques Kallis hooks a delivery against England on day three of the third Test at Newlands in Cape Town Jan. 4. South Africa are 184 for three wickets in their second innings, a lead of 462 runs, at the close of play on the third day of the third test against England at Newlands. REUTERS

Chelsea to sign CSKA's Jarosik on loan

PRAGUE (Reuters) - Premier League leaders Chelsea have agreed to take CSKA Moscow's Czech midfielder Jiri Jarosik on loan, Czech news agency CTK says.

The 27-year-old must pass a medical before joining Chelsea until the end of the season and the contract would give coach Jose Mourinho an option to sign the player, the agency said on Tuesday.

Chelsea refused to comment. Mourinho has said he may bring in a midfielder on loan during the January transfer window after Scott Parker was ruled out for two months with a broken foot.

CSKA bought Jarosik from Sparta Prague in 2003 and had said they wanted to keep the player for their UEFA Cup campaign.

The Czech international will not be able to play for Chelsea in the Champions League after playing for CSKA against the London side in the competition earlier this season.

Jarosik would join Czech national goalkeeper Petr Cech at Stamford Bridge.

Auburn defeats Virginia Tech in Sugar Bowl

NEW ORLEANS (Sports Network) - Jason Campbell passed for 195 yards and a touchdown, Auburn's defense solidified its status as one of the nation's toughest, and the third-ranked Tigers completed the first perfect season in school history with a 16-13 victory over No. 9 Virginia Tech in the Sugar Bowl.

Campbell, who earned MVP honors in a defensive battle, was good enough when he had to be. He ended 10-of-15 passing and sparked a 97-yard scoring drive in the third quarter with a 53-yard completion to Anthony Mix that set up Auburn's only touchdown of the game.

The Tigers (13-0) intercepted Virginia Tech quarterback and ACC Player of the Year Bryan Randall twice, including once late in the fourth quarter as the Hokies (10-3) were driving.

Randall, who ended 19-of-36 for 281 yards, burned Auburn on the next

Virginia Tech possession when he connected with receiver Josh Morgan for an 80-yard touchdown.

But it was too little, too late for the Hokies. Campbell kneeled out the clock on Auburn's undefeated season, and the Tigers celebrated what will likely be a No. 2 ranking behind the Orange Bowl winner.

"I hope you all push for us to be national champs," Randall pleaded with the media afterwards.

And while it's possible that someone will throw the Tigers a No. 1 vote after USC and Oklahoma battle Tuesday night, not even a co-national championship like the one shared by the Trojans and LSU last season is likely for Auburn.

"We are one of the best teams in the country. Someone's going to pick us as national champs, and that's all we want," said Auburn's Tommy Tuberville, the SEC coach of the year.

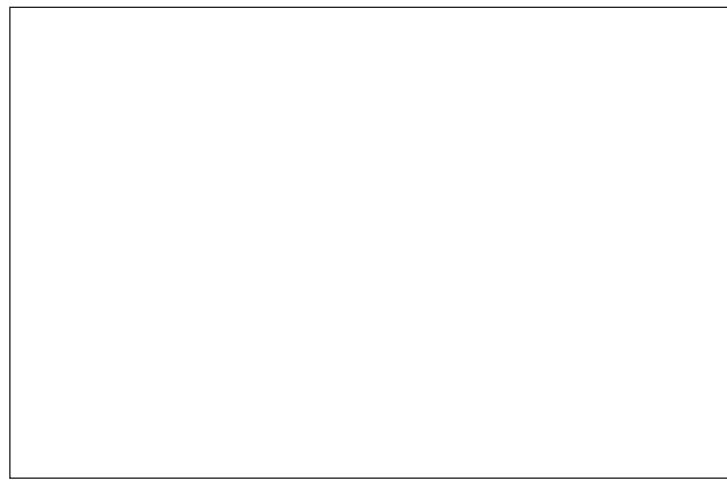
"Neither is better than us...we'll play them anywhere any time.

"There's no reason we shouldn't play one more game after all the bowl games."

Auburn's eight-play drive on the first possession of the second half extended a nine-point halftime lead to 16-0 when Devi Aromashodu caught a five-yard touchdown pass in the back of the end zone.

Virginia Tech squandered its second good scoring chance of the game when Brandon Pace missed a chip-shot 23-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter. The opportunity was set up by cornerback Jimmy Williams' interception late in the third.

Auburn running back Carnell "Cadillac" Williams fumbled on the ensuing possession, and this time Virginia Tech cash in when Morgan slipped by two would-be tacklers to turn a short gain into a 29-yard touch-



Auburn's defense solidified its status as one of the toughest, and the third-ranked Tigers completed the first perfect season in school history with a 16-13 victory. Reuters

down reception that got the Hokies within 16-6.

Randall's pass on the two-point conversion fell short in the end zone, and Virginia Tech's ensuing onside kick attempt also failed.

A 44-yard punt then pinned Virginia Tech at its own three-yard line. After passing plays of 20, 10 and five yards, a scrambling Randall was intercepted by Tigers linebacker Derrick Graves at the Virginia Tech 43.

Randall made up for it after another Auburn punt when he fooled the Tiger defense with a pump-fake and found Morgan sprinting through the secondary for the final TD.

There was just 2:01 remaining on the clock and Virginia Tech failed on another onside kick attempt.

Auburn gained 66 yards in its

first two plays from scrimmage, but settled for a 23-yard John Vaughn field goal and 3-0 lead at 8:44 of the first quarter.

An interception by Tigers safety Junior Rosegreen on the ensuing Virginia Tech possession set up Vaughn again, and he was good from 19 yards after Auburn spent a pair of ponderous timeouts at the goal line.

Faced with a similar 4th-and-goal situation midway through the second quarter, Virginia Tech opted to go for it. But fullback Jesse Allen dropped Randall's on-the-numbers pass, squandering Virginia Tech's only real chance to take a lead.

Auburn followed with a 12-play, 92-yard drive and extended its lead to 9-0 on Vaughn's third field goal of the game, a 24-yarder with 1:50 to play before halftime.

Vaughn's three first half field goals tied the Sugar Bowl record set by Alabama's Tim Davis in 1964.

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

BY Eugenia

Aries
(Mar 21 - Apr 19)
You are ready to tackle the world and to make a difference in any way you can for the underdog. Your mind should be on money and making it work for you.

Taurus
(Apr 20 - May 20)
Someone you are close to may not be thinking the same way you are. Don't forge ahead until you know that everyone is in agreement. Communication will help you avoid mistakes.

Gemini
(May 21 - Jun 20)
Everything will depend on how you handle matters today. Play a straight game and you will be treated fairly. Misleading someone will backfire.

Cancer
(Jun 21 - Jul 22)
You have to cast your fate to the wind and put your dreams in motion. Your creative ideas will pan out if you are persuasive in your presentation.

Leo
(Jul 23 - Aug 22)
Don't count on being told the truth, but at the same time do your best to convey the way you really feel. Upset may be the result, but it's better to be honest.

Virgo
(Aug 23 - Sep 22)
Follow your heart even if someone is trying to convince you to follow his or her plan. Be happy with your decision and prepared to go it alone if necessary.

Libra
(Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Plans can be put into motion and money can be made if you are creative and persistent. A change in your professional direction or in your position is apparent.

Sagittarius
(Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Not everyone will be willing to help you out. Pick and choose your allies carefully. The people you think are on your side may not be genuine.

Scorpio
(Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Everything appears to be moving fast. Don't let down your guard, or you may miss vital information. You don't have to make a snap decision.

Capricorn
(Dec 22 - Jan 19)
Clear up any government or red tape issues that are pending. Straighten out your books and prepare to make changes that will help you financially.

Aquarius
(Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You have to watch someone who is eager to step into your position or take over anything you are involved in. Being too trusting will lead to disappointment.

Pisces
(Feb 19-Mar 20)
You'll be far more popular with friends and acquaintances than you will with family. Try to stick to the truth even if you are trying to make something sound more engaging.

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Conjoined Polish girls separated in Saudi hospital

RYADH, Jan 3 (Reuters) - A medical team in Saudi Arabia on Monday successfully separated a pair of Polish conjoined infant girls who shared a spine and intestines. The twins, 14-month-old Daria and Olga Kolacz, underwent a complex 15-hour separation operation at the King Abdul Aziz Medical City in the capital Riyadh.

"They have been successfully separated," said Doctor Abdullah al-Rabeeh, who carried out most of the surgery.

"There were no complications. Our expectation is that they will do well but there will be many days to come which are critical."

Rabeeh said doctors were still performing reconstructive surgery on the twins, which should be completed within a couple of hours.

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Abdullah paid for the surgery. A Saudi doctor brought the case to Prince Abdullah's attention after he learnt about the twins from an Internet chat room.

The procedure was the sixth of its kind at the Riyadh hospital and the ninth in the kingdom.

Polish twins, 14-month-old Daria and Olga Kolacz, wait for an operation to separate them at King Abdul-Aziz Medical City in Riyadh Jan. 3. A medical team of 50 in Saudi Arabia are to take part in the complex surgery to separate the twins, who share a lower spine and intestines. The cost of the operation was financed by Crown Prince Abdullah.

REUTERS

Saudi doctors perform surgery to a pair of Polish conjoined infant girls at King Abdul-Aziz Medical City, Riyadh Jan. 3. A medical team of 50 in Saudi Arabia took part in a complex surgery to separate the twins, 14-month-old Daria and Olga Kolacz who share a lower spine and intestines.

REUTERS

