

In the Conference on 'Good Governance' in Jordan

Yemen commmits to more reforms

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni government committed to implementing financial, administrative, and judicial reforms during its participation in the international conference on 'Good Governance' held during 6-7 February in a Dead Sea, Jordan and organized by the Jordanian government with the partnership of the UNDP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

In his speech representing Yemen, Prime Minister Abdulqadir Ba Jammal asserted the commitment of Yemen reminding the delegates that it was Yemen who made the pioneer step of reforming laws and legislations during the period just before and after Yemen's unification in May 1990.

"The Yemeni experience in uniting two countries and reforming and rephrasing laws to cope with new era is indeed a unique experience in mod-

ern history. It is so because it represented a true public willingness that conformed to a historical political leadership represented by H.E. Ali Abdullah Saleh." PM Ba Jammal said.

Even though the Prime Minister did not give specific obligations or described particular steps that would be taken in implementing the declaration of the conference, but he asserted Yemen's commitment to reforms that would help comprehensive development of the country.

In the conference which was inaugurated by H.H King Abdullah bin Hussein of Jordan, focused on six main themes that would require reform and extra focus to achieve good governance that would enhance developmental efforts in the Arab world. All of the six themes were of interest to the Yemeni delegation which was composed of legal experts, government officials, NGO representatives, and the Yemeni media.

Prime Minister Abdulqader Ba Jammal addressing Jordanian and Arab media representatives.
Photo by PETRA

2 - Enhancing the role of civil society and the media in public sector reform. This will require the governments to facilitate the role of the civil society to help it ensure that reforms are being implemented by the state. It also implies that civil society and media would have to present ideas and projects that would allow them to help the government reform itself in the fields of e-government, public service delivery and governance of public finance respectively.

3 - Civil Service and integrity reforms, which focuses on reforms in structures, hierarchy, and civil service.

It also emphasizes on integrity when dealing with citizens and establishing means to allow the public to report to authorities on cases of improper behavior in the public sector.

4 - Transparency, e-governments, and facilitation of governmental procedures is achieved by educating and training public sector employees about the importance of transparency and allowing public access to information. Emphasis was made on the importance of access to information and use of the media and civil society to raise awareness of the rights of citizens to know.



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5- Management of funds and resources was also a major topic during the conference and participant countries have this issue a great deal of importance and raised it more than once in the final declaration linking it to anti-corruption efforts and transparency in the public sector.

6- Public services management dealt with the issue of partnership between the public and private sector. It also focused on the importance of encouraging private investments by broadening the base of services offered and facilitating them.

By the end of the Dead Sea conference, Yemen and the other participant countries agreed on a "collective leadership" that will oversee the imple-

mentation of the projects adopted in the meeting.

So far, the UNDP provided most of the funding for the studies conducted, estimated at \$15 million. Individual projects will be implemented by concerned countries with funding from various sources.

"The Arab world does not lack money for projects," Jordanian Justice Minister Salah Bashir told reporters.

"What countries need is institutional potential to realise development and deal with change...If the goals of the pan-Arab project are achieved, people in the region would see results manifested in the prevalence of accountability, transparency and good administration."

Reporters attending press conference held by Yemen Prime Minister Abdulqader Ba Jammal.
Photo by PETRA



Reform in specific areas

The commitment of Yemen and other countries is considered an obligation to start measures in the six areas that the final declaration announced:

1 - Judiciary reform, which includes training of judges, ensuring independence of judiciary and judges, computerization of the courts' operation and increasing judicial staff, etc. Yemen's Minister of Justice Adnan Al-Jifri, who attended the conference, had said that major judicial reforms are taking place in Yemen. He noted that his participation is a sign of the commitment to follow up the reforms and learn from experiences of other countries, including Jordan.

Regional information officer resource visit to Yemen

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Henry Mendelsohn, Regional Information Resource Officer for this region, concluded a ten day program to Yemen - Jan 29th to Feb 7th. During this trip, Mr. Mendelsohn traveled across Yemen visiting educational institutions and presenting a series of information literacy lectures on "Evaluating & Developing Websites", "Search & Research: Using Export Websites", and finding "International & Government Information on the Internet". The University of Technology (Sana'a), Queen Arwa University (Sana'a), American Corner - University of Dhamar (Dhamar), University of Taiz (Taiz), Aden Community College (Aden), Faculty of Education (Mahweet), and the Military Academy in Sana'a hosted the visitor.

The occasion also served as a means to introduce and promote the wide array of services and programs offered through the Information Resource Center and the Public Diplomacy Office of the American Embassy in Sana'a. The services and programs offered ranged from the tai-

lored - towards the specific needs of the requesting institutes - and readily available information literacy and capacity building training programs to the various cultural and educational exchange programs provided mainly to the government and non-governmental institutes and the general public.

Mr. Mendelsohn held exploratory discussions at the respective institutes on establishing more American Corners in Yemen. Information for learning more about the Middle East Partnership Initiative grant opportunities, including full contact information, were also provided. The meetings and informative sessions presented an excellent platform where venues for bi-lateral cooperation and prospects of fruitful partnerships were discussed. Moreover, and in alignment with the strong commitment of the of the US Government towards education, a promising outcome had been the prospect of an initiative towards bridging the digital divide in Yemen through partnering with local educational and technical institutes and offering a comprehensive PC literacy program.

1st credit card issued in Yemen

By PETER WILLEMS
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The International Bank of Yemen (IBY) has added more products and services for its customers as it continues to lead the development of retail banking in the local banking sector.

This week, IBY launched a Visa card which the bank claims to be the first real credit card available in Yemen. Until now, financial institutions have been offering debit cards, but with IBY's Visa card, customers

can pay what is owed with small monthly payments.

"The Visa card we are issuing is actually the first credit card in Yemen," said Ahmed Nagi, Head of Card Center at IBY. "Instead of a debit or charge card other banks are issuing, this is a real credit card that carries with it all the unique features that will give our customers many advantages."

IBY has also become a Principal Member of Visa, now responsible for issuing cards for other banks operating in Yemen instead of using other banks abroad, such as in Bahrain.

For more details see page 10.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CARS AGAIN.



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Yemen to close 4,000 religious schools

NEWS AGENCIES

The Yemeni government is set to close 4,000 religious schools allegedly run by "suspicious" organizations, an official has said.

According to a government school survey, some of the private schools are affiliated to scholars and political parties, said Yahia Al-Najjar, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (Waqfs).

"It showed that many others were being supervised by foreign and local charities on suspicion of being funded by outsiders under the guise of beneficence," Reuters quoted the official as having said.

The Yemeni government decided in 2004 to shut down non-governmental schools against a backdrop of bloody clashes between security forces and followers of rebel leader Hussein Badrudin Al-Houthi, who was killed along with dozens of his supporters in September.

Curricula

Najjar said a close scrutiny of curricula taught in these schools showed they preached violence and ran the risk of destabilizing society.

"The curricula include books written by hardliners and extremists - including Hussein Al-Houthi - who don't tolerate the other," he said.

The official further said a large number of foreign teachers did unpaid work for these schools.

"This, in fact, raises many question marks and the government decided to take it into consideration."

The would-be closure seems part of a broader government's policy aimed at cracking down on private religious education.

Minister of Education Abdel Salam Al-Jawfi vowed in October to shut down unofficial schools or place them under the government supervision.

In 2002, the government decided to oversee religious schools administratively and financially and merge their

budgets into the ministry of education's finances.

Yemeni authorities had temporarily closed Al-Iman University in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and asked its president Sheikh Abdel Majid Al-Zandani to expel 500 foreign students in line with the counter-terror policies.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has been cooperating closely with Washington's in its so-called global war on terror.

During a 2001 visit to the White House, he inked a security cooperation pact on tracking down Yemenis allegedly linked to Al-Qaeda.

Parliament Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmer has accused the US of using the "fighting terror" slogan as a thorn in the side of Arab and Islamic peoples.

Several Arab and Muslim countries have come under intense pressures from the Bush administration to change religious curricula viewed by Washington as stirring anti-American sentiments.

Yemen is arms meeting co-ordinator

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Yemen is chosen as regional co-ordinator of a workshop on small arms issues - organized by the Permanent Peace Movement Society in Lebanon and the Regional Network for Controlling the Misuse of Small Arms.

The workshop will concentrate on the importance of the research for following up the spread of small arms spreading. It was related to the UN special program for following up on arms studies.

Discussion carried out in a recent

meeting in Beirut focused on the network tasks and the upcoming program, which will be carried out specially on governmental contact points.

The coordination will take place with the governmental authorities and also the Disarmament Department of the Arab League.

An Arab League representative will also participate in the meeting.

Thirty persons have participated in a recent workshop representing Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and also the representatives of Holland and Britain.

HOOD calls for release of Guantanamo detainees

BY YASSER AL-MAYASI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) sent a letter to President Saleh requesting Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Human Rights to join with HOOD in calling for the release of Guantanamo detainees.

HOOD Organization called on these bodies to help it establish a team to help

bring back Yemeni detainees from Guantanamo Bay, as well as many other detainees in other prisons around the world on the accusations of being involved with terrorism.

The letter confirmed that many countries including Britain, Sweden and Morocco could recover their citizens who were detained in these prisons, particularly after the US courts issued their verdict on the unlawfulness of Guantanamo detentions.

Campaign against street traders

BY TAIZ BUREAU

The Public Works Bureau in Taiz and its branches in al-Mudhaffar, Cairo and Salah districts are launching a fierce campaign against on-streets sellers, iron box merchants and those whose goods are displayed in front of their shops. The Public Works Office used heavy machinery to remove the violations amidst enraged sellers who denounced the acts considering it an attempt to deprive them of livelihood and undermine their lives.

Yemen Times met with Eng. Mansour al-Bahr, Director of a PW office, who said that this procedure is done according to the directives of the leadership of the governorate and the local council. "We want to ameliorate the face of the city and remove the defects of Taiz streets in order to brush up the "dreamy Taiz", and become like other modern cities.

Asked about alternatives to solve the possible unemployment of the sellers, he answered that there are popular marketplaces where hawkers and with-

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Yemen wants Guantanamo inmates repatriated

Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Kurbi has reiterated calls on the United States to repatriate Yemeni prisoners held at its base in Guantanamo, Cuba.

We want the U.S. government to implement international law and hand over to the Yemeni government its nationals held in Guantanamo and Afghanistan in order to be tried at home, Kurbi said, commenting to the

press Monday.

There are an estimated 100 Yemeni nationals held at Guantanamo, in addition to one detained in Afghanistan and two Islamists, notably Mohammed Moayed and his companion Mohammed Zayed, who are being tried in the United States on charges of supporting terrorist organizations.

Since we received information about the existence of Yemeni prisoners in

Guantanamo and Afghanistan we have been urging the U.S. authorities to repatriate them, Kurbi said.

Washington has been ignoring our demand and the demands of many other countries that have prisoners in Guantanamo, he added.

He said the Yemeni authorities were still verifying and investigating the identities of the prisoners who hold Yemeni nationality.

MEPI e-learning project enters new phase

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

The E-learning project funded by the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) for selected Yemeni High Schools has entered a new phase of training. Twenty-five administrators and teachers from five Sana'a area high schools attended training from Jan. 29 - Feb. 2.

The training was administrated by a trainer from IEARN (International Education and Resource Network) and was overseen by EDC (Education Development Center, Inc.) representatives. The training developed entirely in Arabic, centered on the inclusion of Internet technologies for research and collaboration for the enhancement of the daily teaching curriculum. The current

phase of the training builds on earlier training in student-centered instructional techniques.

To celebrate the conclusion of this phase of the training, a graduation ceremony was held at NCC in Sana'a on February 3. Present at the ceremony from the Yemeni Ministry of Education were Mohamad Said, Director of Training, and Assistant Deputy Minister Mohamad Zabara. Political/Economic Officer Noah Siegel and Information Specialist Esam Ghorbani attended from the American Embassy.

The administrators and students will continue intensive collaborative training until they return to train the teachers at their own schools. These "train-the-trainer" techniques ensure that each teacher in the selected schools is able to

incorporate student-centered instructional techniques and include effective e-learning within their class.

Initial training continues this month at five selected e-learning schools in the Aden area. The two-year, US\$ 1.7 million pilot project will eventually include 24 schools throughout different regions of Yemen.

Son kills father, brother kills sister

TAIZ BUREAU

In two separated gun incidents, a Mawyah District man was accidentally killed by his son, and a Khadir girl was accidentally killed by her brother who was playing with his machine gun.

In the first death, Naji Mohammad Al-Daboos was killed by his son Hamdi.

While the son was cleaning his gun, he accidentally shot his father in the head as he was standing in front of him.

In the second case, the Yemen Times had previously reported that it was alleged that a lion killed Aneesa Ali Ahmad, 21, from the area of Khadir.

In fact, security authorities have since determined that the brother shot her dead, but fearing the consequences, the brother alleged along with some sheikhs in the area that the victim was devoured by the so-called Tahish Al-Houban, a wild lion in the area.

International donor community supports water strategy

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

At the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, on 18 January 2005, representatives of key donors active in the water sector in Yemen signed a Declaration of Support for the National Water Sector Strategy and Investment Plan (NWSSIP) for 2005 to 2009.

Copies of the Declaration the donor community congratulates the Ministry of Water and Environment on the successful development of NWSSIP and declares its preparedness to support NWSSIP's implementation.

NWSSIP has, for the first time, condensed all relevant sector issues in a single strategy document, including an action plan and an investment pro-

gramme, and has thus laid the foundation for an integrated solution vis-à-vis the imminent water crisis and related challenges. NWSSIP is seen by the donors as an important step towards an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach.

NWSSIP is also in line with and builds further on national development objectives, as laid down in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and will assist in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for the water sector. NWSSIP will form the basis of the sector's input in the MDG-based 5 year Development Plan for Poverty Reduction (DPPR) 2006-2010.

US Institute's regional director visits Aden University

ADEN BUREAU

Dr. Abdul-Karim Yahya Rase', Rector of Aden University, has met at his office Mrs. Sabrina Sabra, Regional Director of the US Institute. The two sides discussed the possibility of training English language teachers at the institute or sending them to study abroad in US universities.

Dr. Rase' welcomed the delegation, confirming his appreciation of cooperation with the institute, and readiness to provide facilities.

The meeting was attended by the director of the US institute, Aden Branch and Dr. Nafisa Saeed, academic coordinator.

On the other hand, Dr. Rase' conducted a visit to the Faculty of Engineering observing students, from different specialties, during final term exams for 2004-2005. The number of students sitting to exams in different scientific areas was 300 students on the Bachelor program and 20 on the MA one.

(URGENT) JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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First workshop on clean development mechanism

BY ISMAIL AL-GHABRI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) organized on February 8-9, 2005, in Sana'a the first workshop on the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in collaboration with the UNEP. The workshop lasted for two days in which over 35 participants partook from governmental bodies, NGOs and research establishments including Yemeni universities. In the opening ceremony, Eng. Mahmoud Shidiwah, President of the EPA, talked about the importance of the workshop which is the

"first of its kind to be held in Yemen." He said that Kuto Agreement on Climatic Change, ratified by Yemen, will come into application mid February, 2005. He thanked the UN for its help to Yemen in the environmental realm.

Dr. Sami Kamal, of the Denmark-based UNEP, indicated that CDM is a collaborative means established under Kuto Protocol. "It has the capacity to push forward the developing countries to achieve sustainable development through environment-friendly investments implemented by the governments of the industrial countries and the private sector."

He added: "Kuto Agreement will go

into practice at the middle of the current month which will give a strong impetus to the CDM and the opportunity to be applied in the developing countries all over the world."

He stated that Yemen has the potentiality to be one of the pioneering countries in the Middle East in terms of attracting CDM projects and achieving this goal.

The workshop aims to introduce the corporate prerequisites and provide an elaborate explanation on how to apply CDM projects, that is, through training locals to be able to implement and supervise CDM projects.

Clerics banned from sermons

NEWS AGENCIES

Yemeni officials have banned 18 clerics from giving sermons in mosques to reduce sources of terrorism.

Deputy Islamic Affairs and Guidance Minister Yahya al-Najjar issued a Sunday statement saying the decision was part of a government plan that also includes dispatching clerics to advocate awareness on balance, away from

extremist and fundamentalist ideas, whether religious or political. The official added the new plan will complete bringing all mosques and religious guidance centers under government supervision after it had taken control of most of the mosques that had been dominated by extremist political influences in the past years. Al-Najjar said the plan included providing training to spiritual guides and cler-

ics that focused on correcting the wrong ideas in religious Islamic texts. A survey showed last year that the ministry supervised only 6,000 of 72,000 mosques, raising government concerns that clerics would continue to politicize religion and preach extremist beliefs.

Apollo 2005 events

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

To be prepared for 2005, Apollo for International Exhibitions is setting up professional international, and local exhibitions. They are to be carried out such exhibitions in a way that meets the speedy development movement the world witnesses. Amidst all changes Apollo is sure to cope with the development challenges and hit the point when it comes to competition as it cares in particular for the interest of the consumer.

Marketing Director of the Company, Omar al-Nehmy says: "The Year 2005 has an overfraught schedule of commercial shows for several Arab and foreign countries as well as professional exhibitions."

He added: "The organization of the exhibitions comes in consideration to the fact that the private sector is the main partner to the government in the development. The next exhibitions are carrying within more air of modernity and will show the Yemeni public most modern international markets' outputs."

Al-Nehmy concluded: "It is noticed that there is devotion in the recent years to the commercial and professional exhibitions set up at Sana'a Expo Center, modeled after those in neighboring states. This is a positive sign of the Yemeni public's awareness of making use of such exhibitions. It gives them the chance to prove that they are able to compare products and take decisions."

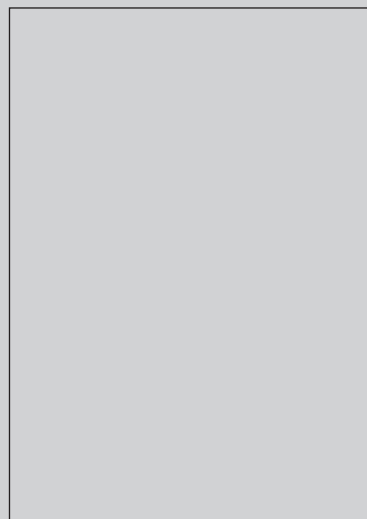
Jordan's exemplary choice

Since the current King of Jordan assumed his constitutional authority in 1999, Jordan has witnessed considerable growth in all the different fields. In short, Jordan has become a model to be emulated by all the countries of the world, in general and the states of the region, in particular.

Many have come to notice that His Majesty King Abdullah undertakes policies that are different from those adhered to by other regimes. An Arab journalist once remarked that Jordan has come to be the exception to the rule followed in the rest of the countries of the Arab World in managing its internal affairs, in introducing reforms and reinforcing democratic rule. HM has realized many of the human hopes, favorable acts and dignifying deeds in dispersed areas of the nation and his field visits to the rural, remote and poorest regions continued earnestly. He has also distributed housing for the poor and the needy, ascertaining that real development must begin at the grass roots level and that good leadership should be the effective tool for propelling the journey towards development forward.

Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances and challenges faced by Jordan, with its limited means and administrative capabilities, King Abdullah has given the political, economic and social reform process special priority, in order to help Jordanians achieve their desires and aspirations for building a truly modern state - a state of institutions and law and a just and equitable society. He also was committed to convening a series of dialogue sessions with the people of his country from all the different strata of society in the Universities and in forums, because he is convinced that a targeted meaningful dialogue is one of his primary pillars for the development and the resurgence of Jordan. Perhaps the economic growth, reduction in the rates of unemployment and poverty and the rise in domestic and foreign investments recently witnessed by Jordan are the most apparent indicators of this. The Jordanian economy has realized strong growth at a rate of 7.5%, per annum which was accompanied by a reduction of unemployment from 14% to 9% and an expansion of investment over the previous year by 30%.

Most analysts attribute the success



His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein

of Jordan in this area to the distinctive geographical position of Jordan, as well as the security and stability factor enjoyed by Jordan under absolute transparency. For the first time in Jordan's history a senior security official judicial officials were brought to trial for corruption. All these achievements have made Jordan an attractive investment center. The King has also exerted all efforts to enter into trade agreements that will bring benefits to his people whether they live in the rural areas, nomadic habitats, camps and cities.

Externally, HM made sure that effective relations are maintained that work towards bringing the world together. He also has not refrained from supporting the Arabs and standing by their side in all the issues confronting the Arab World, especially the Palestinian and Iraqi situations. HM was also not hesitant to send Jordanian Armed Forces personnel as part of UN peace keeping forces, so that Jordan becomes considered a primary participant in calming down numerous centers of tension throughout the world.

A fulfilling career

Good teachers are a gift

BY SADDAM MOHSEN
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FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Deciding to become a teacher, you have already chosen a unique profession based on reward, punishment and challenge which are rarely seen in many other jobs. You will be intellectually stimulated, find real variety, and have the opportunity to be creative. Most importantly, you will play an active role in shaping lives of young people.

Concerning lesson-plans, you should take into account that each lesson must be a dynamic tool that plays an essential part in the process of fostering the development of the human values. Each lesson must prepare them for well-led lives and successful careers in their present and future horizons.

Teaching is not just wasting time and getting salaries, rather it is the process of preparing students for facing their future with confidence as well as developing the economy of a country.

Looking deeper into the concept of well-performed teaching process and its importance, you can understand why it is essential for teachers to have a clear idea about what they are going to do and how better students will be taught.

Bernard Shaw's famous saying, "What we want is to see the child in pursuit of knowledge and not knowledge in pursuit of the child", conveys to us that a teacher must have a strong will to teach and motivate his students. So, students will be equipped with the desire to pursue knowledge.

In order to keep our economy growing, we need a new wave of educated students ready for modern scientific research, teaching and technolog-

ical development. This can not be achieved unless teachers do the job honestly.

The most successful teachers are those who prepare useful classroom presentations in order to meet students' needs and upgrade their abilities. They observe and evaluate the student's performance and ask themselves whether a teaching method they follow is useful or needs modification.

Therefore the happiest day in the life of a teacher is when a student says to him/her: "your class of today pleased me".

To sum up, every teacher should have a strong personality before his students and behave in an ideal way. What is very important in teaching is the desire on the part of the teacher to teach and make his subject interesting.

He is not supposed to teach without encouraging the pupils in order not to hammer on a cold iron without yielding a result.

URGENT

RECHERCHE 81 □

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VACANCY

The European Commission-funded project Support to Health Sector Reform in Yemen at the Ministry of Public Health and Population is advertising the full-time position of a

Project Accountant

The Terms of Reference of the position are as follows:

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- Collection, management and filling of bank statements and other bank documents
- If necessary travel to project districts and Governorates to make payments on behalf of the project
- Any other bookkeeping and financial issues as requested by the project management

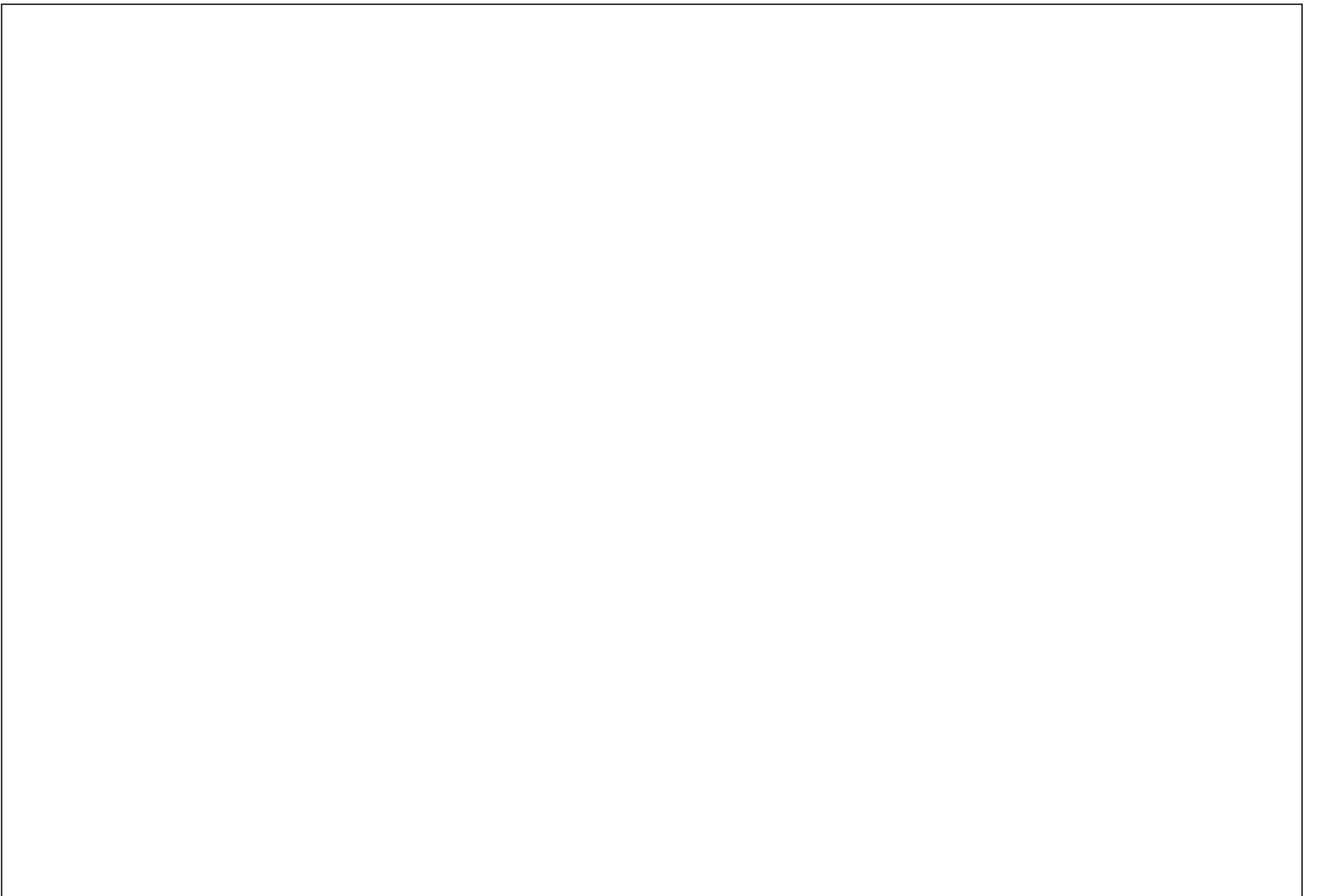
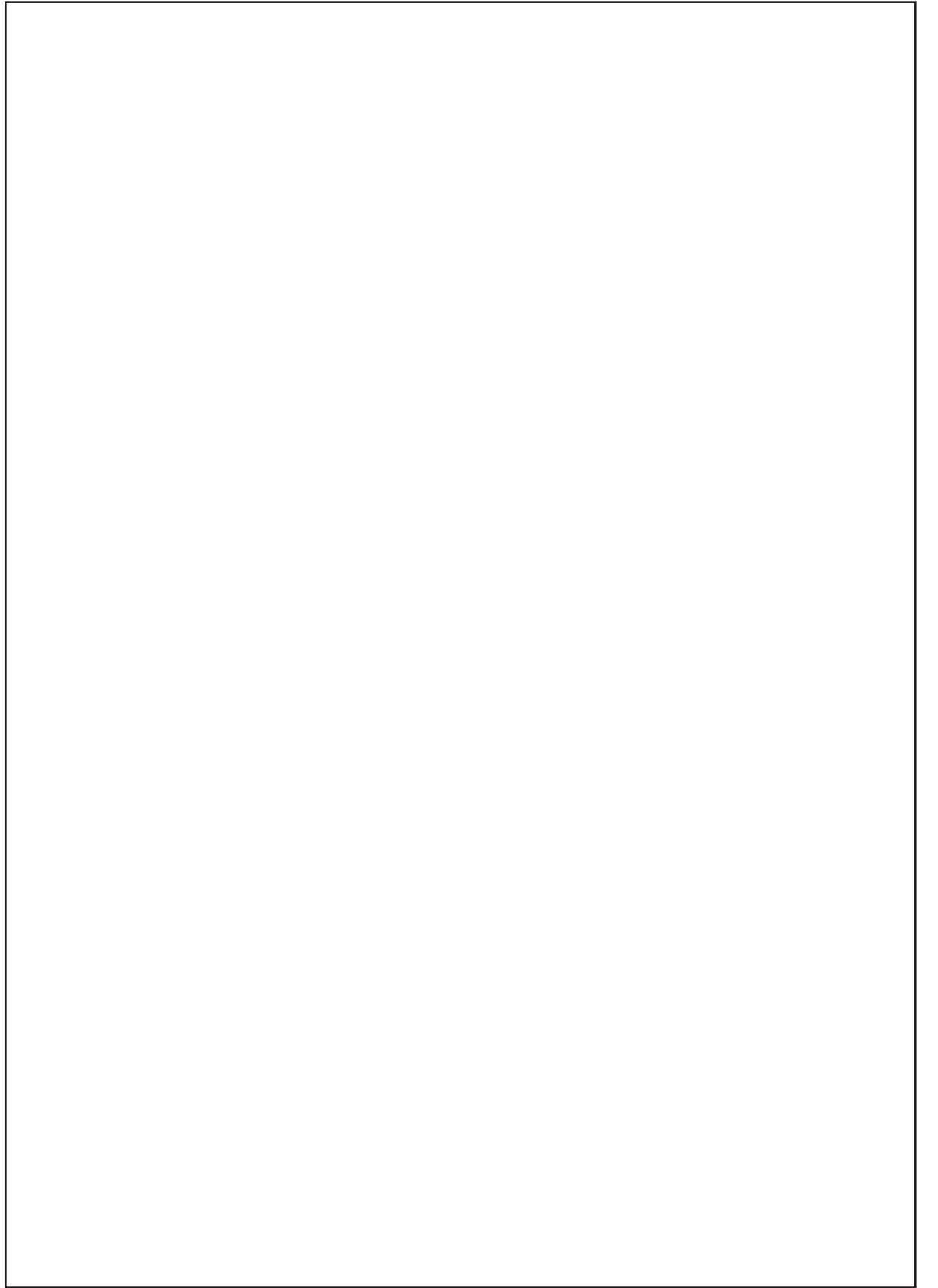
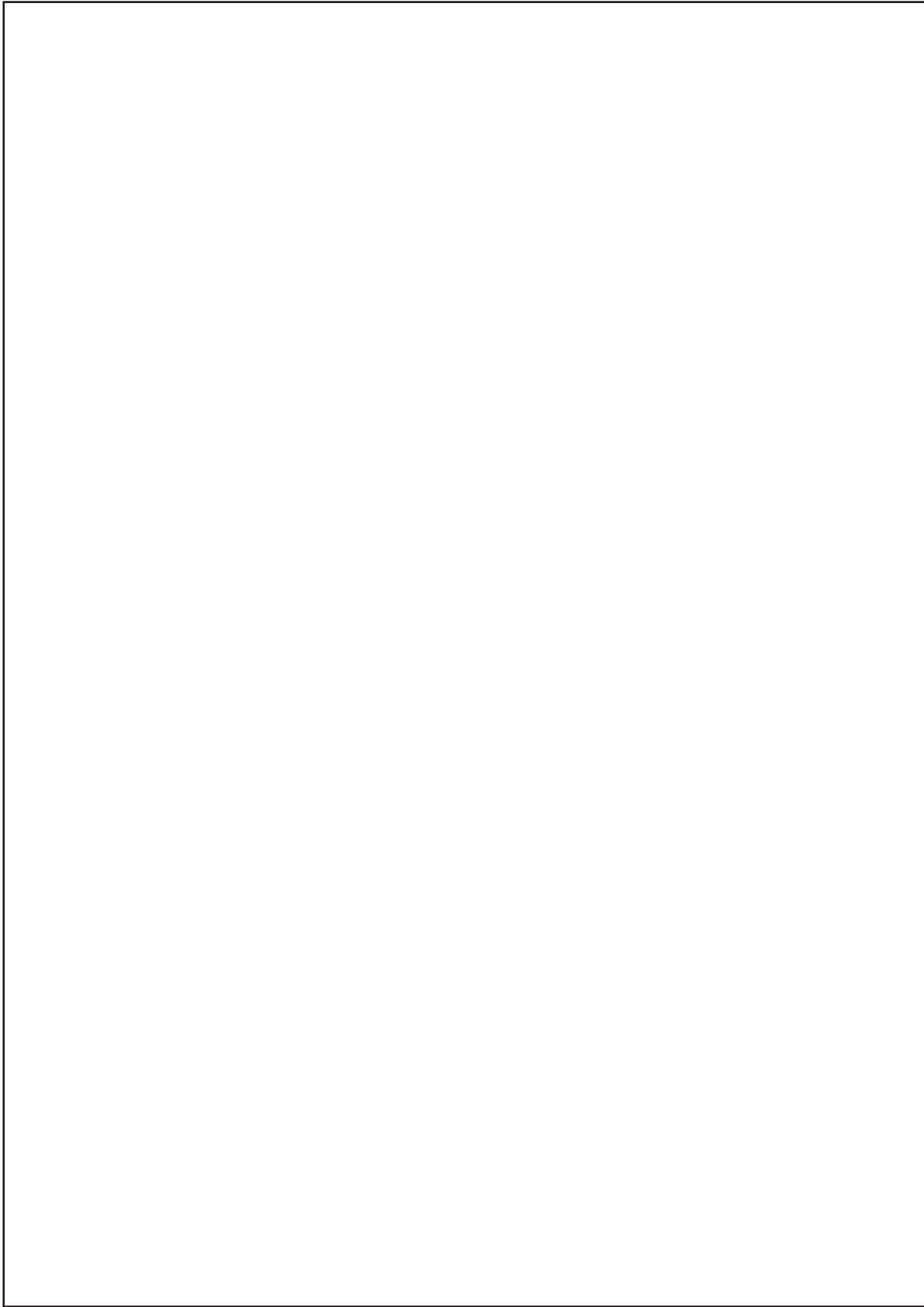
Applicants should be Yemeni citizens, hold a Bachelor's Degree in accounting and have minimum of five years professional experience, preferably with international organizations or projects. Former experience in the health sector would be an asset.

Good command of English (spoken, reading and writing) is necessary, as well as standard knowledge of computer systems and office software.

Employment will start not later than March 1st 2005 and will end on November 30th 2005. The salary will be according to standards.

Applicants are invited to fact an application letter and a detailed CV to the number below. Applicants will be contacted by phone to arrange an interview. Please d not call before you are contacted by us.

Health Policy and Technical Support Unit
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Fax: 01 252 241 or 01 220 593



Israel, Palestinians declare end to violence

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Israeli and Palestinian leaders proclaimed a formal end to more than four years of bloodshed at a summit in Egypt on Tuesday.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to stop all violence. Sharon declared an end to military action at the meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, which was seen as a step back towards peace talks.

"We have agreed with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to cease all acts of violence against Israelis and Palestinians wherever they are," said Abbas at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

"The calm which will prevail in our lands starting from today is the beginning of a new era."

Sharon said: "For the first time in a long time there is hope in our region for a better future for us and our grandchildren."

It was the highest-level meeting between the sides since a Palestinian uprising blew up in 2000 after peace talks collapsed.

The two sides did not sign a formal ceasefire agreement and Israel emphasised it was dealing only with Abbas's Palestinian Authority and not the militants behind attacks.

The host, President Hosni Mubarak, and Jordan's King Abdullah added their

weight to a summit that could prepare the ground for the revival of a U.S.-backed "road map" towards a Palestinian state beside a secure Israel.

The United States has emphasised its new commitment to pursuing peace after the death of iconic leader Yasser Arafat, who was seen by Washington and Israel as an obstacle.

Hope in Washington

"Optimism is certainly justified at the moment as far as the Middle East is concerned," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Italian state television after a brief visit to the region on which she met Abbas and Sharon.

"...I saw that these leaders have understood that it is time to move ahead," she said.

However, Islamic militant factions have so far agreed only to a conditional ceasefire, while neither side shows signs of budging on key obstacles like borders, and whether Palestinian refugees get a "right to return" to land in what is now Israel.

Israeli and Palestinian flags flew side by side in the sunshine at the Red Sea resort. Hundreds of Egyptian police, some with sniffer dogs, were deployed to ensure security.

Violence broke out in September 2000 after the collapse of talks for a Palestinian

state on land captured by Israel in the 1967 war. Some 3,350 Palestinians and 970 Israelis have been killed.

Doubt over militants

But despite Tuesday's announcements, doubt remains over the vital agreement of militant groups behind suicide bombings, rocket and shooting attacks, though they have gone along with a de facto truce.

"There is no sense now in talking about a truce," Hassan Youssef of Hamas told Al Jazeera television. "We have not seen any serious pressures on the Israeli side to take measures on the ground to prove its seriousness."

The factions have said Israel's promise to free 900 out of 8,000 Palestinian prisoners, to pull back troops and end assassinations are not enough.

Although Abbas wants to co-opt the militants, rather than use force to rein them in, Israeli officials said they wanted the groups dismantled and suggested that even continued rocket building by the groups would be a ceasefire violation.

Abbas, then Arafat's prime minister, met Sharon in 2003 at the summit that gave birth to the road map. But the peace plan soon foundered amid violence.

Israel says it is ready to coordinate with Abbas on its plan to withdraw settlers from occupied Gaza and part of the West Bank this year if violence stops and

Palestinian President Mahmoud EEDVWVHVWUHVVDVJUDHOLQLVPHQLVWVHUBOBKURQBLWVBQBLVEKDLUGULQJ their meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh, February 8, 2005. Israeli and Palestinian leaders are expected to announce a ceasefire to halt more than four years of bloodshed and take a new step toward ending decades of conflict at a landmark summit on Tuesday.

REUTERS

Palestinians rein in militants, as they are meant to under the road map.

Palestinians fear Israel aims to cement its hold on the West Bank, and demand the Jewish state abide by a road map commitment to freeze settlement growth and also stop building a barrier inside the West Bank. Israel says it stops suicide

bombings.

More potential pitfalls for peacemaking lie ahead.

Abbas holds strongly to the Palestinian line that a state must include all the West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and that refugees and their millions of descendants should have the right

to return to lands in what is now Israel.

Those demands remain deal-breakers for Israel, which wants to keep major West Bank settlement blocs, sees East Jerusalem as part of its own "indivisible capital" and categorically rules out the possibility of refugees returning to the Jewish state.

Sharon says ends military action against Palestinians

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Tuesday declared an end to military action against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

"Today in my meeting with Chairman (Palestinian President Mahmoud) Abbas, we agreed the Palestinians would stop all acts of violence against Israelis everywhere, and in parallel, Israel would cease its military activity against the Palestinians everywhere," Sharon said in a statement at a summit with Abbas.

Abbas separately proclaimed at the summit hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak a formal end to Palestinian militant attacks on Israelis after four years of bloodshed.

The reciprocal gestures reflected a dramatic brightening of prospects for Middle East peacemaking since the November death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the rise of Abbas to succeed him on a platform of non-violent struggle for statehood.

Sharon's announcement signalled a halt to Israeli army ground incursions and air strikes aimed at killing or capturing wanted militants belonging to groups in Abbas's Palestine Liberation Organisation and Islamist opposition factions.

He did not say whether his pledge covered cases in which Israel had intelligence warnings of imminent attacks. Sharon's government earlier said it would reserve the right of responding

█ Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordanian King Abdullah II during their meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh, Feb. 8.

REUTERS

militarily to such threats.

Sharon reaffirmed Israel's promise to release 900 of 8,000 prisoners within three months — and said he would discuss further releases with the Palestinians — and to pull back troops from some West Bank cities in the coming weeks.

His overall message was upbeat, saying his plan to withdraw from Gaza could kickstart the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan, which charts steps to Palestinian statehood on occupied land but had been stymied for almost two years by fighting.

"(Our) disengagement plan can pave the way to the start of the implementation of the road map to which we are

committed and which we want to complete.

We hope that from today there will be a new period of calm and hope," he said. "For the first time in a long time there is hope in our region for a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

We have to proceed carefully. It is a very fragile opportunity.

Only breaking the back of terror and violence will build peace," he said.

Sharon has said Israel would not embark on road map negotiations unless Abbas disarmed and dissolved militant groups first.

Abbas has called the militants "freedom fighters" and wants to co-opt rather than confront them.

U.S. eyes wider Middle East peace, slams Syria

ROME, Feb 8 (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Gulf states on Tuesday to take a greater role in securing Middle East peace, and accused Syria of supporting terrorists bent on destabilising the region.

Rice told reporters that Damascus had been "unhelpful in a number of ways", complaining that Syria was backing an insurgency in Iraq and undermining the fledgling democracy in Lebanon by refusing to withdraw its troops from the country.

"I cannot say it strongly enough. You cannot say on the one hand that you want a process of peace and on the other hand support people who are determined to blow it up," said Rice, on her first overseas tour since becoming secretary of state.

"While we sometimes make what I would call minimal progress, it is by no means the kind of progress that we need to make," she told a news conference.

Syria earlier this month rejected accusations from U.S. President George W. Bush that it supported terrorism, saying the charge was wrong and baseless.

Despite the tensions, Rice held out hope that a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East was possible and called on regional actors and the international community to take a greater role in the ongoing diplomacy.

She applauded the support of Egypt

and Jordan for Tuesday's summit between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Egypt, which resulted in a ceasefire aimed at ending four years of bloodshed.

"There seems to be a will among the people of the Middle East to want to live in a different kind of Middle East," said Rice.

"If we can get the help of the Gulf states and others to put out the funding to the Palestinians that they have pledged ... then I really think we have a chance this time not just for a peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but for a comprehensive peace for all of the people of the Middle East."

Rice urged other world leaders to join Washington's campaign to get "states that continue to support rejectionists and terrorists (to) stop doing that", while dangling the prospect of further sanctions against Syria if it failed to tow the line.

"We have already used the Syrian Accountability Act to levy certain sanctions against Syria," she said, referring to measures approved by the U.S. Congress in November 2003.

"I would hope that Syria would react in a more positive way so we do not have to go further in that regard."

Syria denies it is destabilising the Middle East and often complains that the world community has failed to oblige arch-foe Israel to quit occupied Arab land, a requirement of several U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Jordan, Egypt to return envoys to Israel - Egypt

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Egypt and Jordan have agreed to send their ambassadors back to Israel, the foreign ministers of the two Arab countries said on Tuesday.

Egypt and Jordan, the only Arab countries to sign peace treaties with Israel, have not had ambassadors in Israel since early in the Palestinian uprising which broke out in 2000.

Israel and the United States have been pressing Cairo and Amman to send them back as a gesture of good will.

The breakthrough came on Tuesday at a Middle East summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made separate commitments to stop violence.

The summit was hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and attended by King Abdullah of Jordan.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said: "The Jordanians and the Egyptians have decided again to allow their ambassadors to return to Israel."

Asked when an Egyptian ambassador would go, he said: "I cannot claim that he is returning tomorrow but he will be returning.... That is a decision."

Suicide blast near army centre kills 21

BAGHDAD, Feb 8 (Reuters) - A suicide bomber killed at least 21 people and injured 27 outside an Iraqi army recruitment centre in Baghdad on Tuesday in the deadliest insurgent attack since last month's historic election, the U.S. army said.

The blast came a day after suicide bombers killed 27 people in attacks in two Iraqi cities. Between them, the three bombs have shattered the lull in violence which followed the poll.

Police said the attacker's target was a truck carrying recruits into the base in a disused airport in Baghdad. The U.S. military said the bomber was believed to have been on foot.

A plume of black smoke rose into the sky above the recruitment centre and ambulances raced to the scene. Hospital officials said all the victims appeared to be young men.

Guerrillas have frequently attacked Iraqis queuing up to join the police and army. Most of those killed in Monday's blasts in the cities of Mosul and Baquba were either policemen or civilians look-

ing for work with the police.

Al Qaeda's wing in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for those blasts and vowed further attacks on "apostates and their masters", an apparent reference to U.S.-led forces and the Iraqis who work with them.

Iraq's security forces have borne the brunt of attacks by insurgents. The U.S. military is trying to build them up into a force capable of defeating the militants but says it needs more time.

The Americans have also said local police forces are the weakest link in Iraq's security network.

U.S. officials say Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will lobby NATO allies at a meeting in France this week to provide more money to help train Iraqi soldiers and police.

NATO countries have sent 84 military officers to Iraq to help in the training process but the United States is pushing to increase the number to around 300.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said he expected an agreement on the issue at a NATO summit in Brussels on

Feb. 22.

"I hope ... that will see some of the countries that haven't been involved in either the conflict or the aftermath join that training exercise," Blair said in London.

Elsewhere in Baghdad, police said a bomb outside a popular restaurant killed one Iraqi, and gunmen ambushed the convoy of an Iraqi politician, killing two of his sons.

The politician, Mithal al-Alusi, who has been a vocal critic of Syria and Iran and was widely criticised in Iraq for visiting Israel last year, survived the attack.

Three Iraqi soldiers and two insurgents were killed in a firefight on a road leading south from Baghdad to the city of Hilla, the Iraqi army said. Eighteen insurgents were arrested.

Five policemen were wounded by a roadside bomb in Baquba, a police source said. In nearby Samarra, police said an Iraqi civilian was killed and three relatives were wounded when three mortar rounds hit their house.

No word on Italian journalist

There was no further word on the fate of an Italian journalist kidnapped in the capital last week.

An Islamist militant group which claimed the kidnapping said on Monday it would release Giuliana Sgrena soon because she was not a spy, but nothing has been heard of her since then.

The group had initially threatened to kill Sgrena if Italy did not withdraw its 3,000 troops from Iraq. Her newspaper, Rome-based communist daily Il Manifesto, has bitterly opposed the Iraq war and Italy's role in it.

Four Egyptian telecommunications engineers who were kidnapped in Baghdad on Sunday are now free, the head of an Egyptian company which employs them said on Monday.

"Two were released when U.S. forces barged into where they were being held in Baghdad and the other two escaped on their own," said Naguib Sawiris, chairman of Orascom Telecom. "The Americans caught one of the kidnappers."

U.S. Army soldiers stands guard as an Iraqi medic covers the bodies of two of the sons of the politician Mithal al-Alusi following an attack against his convoy in %DJKGDGFeb. 8.

REUTERS

Bad weather prevents fresh Afghan crash search

KABUL, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Bad weather prevented fresh NATO search efforts on Tuesday on a mountain near Kabul where an Afghan airliner crashed last week, while the government said evidence suggested that none of the 104 people aboard survived.

The Boeing 737 operated by Afghanistan's only private airline, Kam Air, crashed last Thursday on the 3,300 metre (11,000 feet) Shapiri Ghar mountain, about 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Kabul.

NATO mountain rescue troops reached the snow-covered site for the first time on Monday by helicopter and found human remains but no sign that any of the 104 people aboard had survived.

"Evidence shows that there are possibly no survivors," Afghan government spokesman Jawed Ludin told a news briefing, but added that search operations involving more than 1,000 Afghan and foreign troops would continue and more resources could be sent.

The plane had been flying to Kabul from the western city of Herat, a busy route for Afghan businessmen and foreign aid workers returning to the capi-

The tail of the crashed Afghan Kam Air %RHLQ737 lies on the mountain of Shaperi Ghar, 30km □ PLOHV southeast of Kabul Feb. 7. NATO troops found human remains on Monday on a frozen mountain top near Kabul where an Afghan airliner crashed last week, but there was no sign any of the 104 people onboard survived, a spokesman said. Picture taken Feb. 7. REUTERS

tal for the weekend. Most aboard were Afghans, but passengers included nine Turks, six Americans, an Italian navy officer, two other Italians, and an Iranian. Four Russians and a Canadian were among

the crew. The pilot was Russian and the first officer Canadian.

The aircraft disappeared off radar screens while approaching Kabul airport, which lacks sophisticated elec-

tronic equipment to guide pilots trying to land in bad weather.

Lack of flightaids

Ludin said the airport — on a high plain surrounded by mountains that forces pilots to turn sharply immediately before landing even in good conditions — lacked sophisticated landing aids:

"Attention will be paid to this issue."

Fresh snowfall and poor visibility prevented NATO helicopter flights to the crash site on Tuesday, said a spokeswoman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force peacekeepers.

Major Karen Tissot van Patot said ISAF was standing by to provide helicopter support to the Afghan government search.

"But we have not been able to get any helicopters flying yet," she said. "The weather has been disrupting our plans."

ISAF has said the recovery operation, including an investigation of the crash site, could take weeks.

"This is a day-by-day situation based on the weather," van Patot said.

ISAF has refused to rule out the pos-

sibility of survivors until the whole crash site has been thoroughly searched, but officials say it would be a miracle if anyone had survived five days of sub-zero temperatures on the mountain.

If the deaths of all aboard are confirmed, it would be the worst crash in Afghan aviation history.

Kam Air officials have said the aircraft was turned away from Kabul International Airport due to heavy snow.

However, U.S. Marines pilot Major Clay Baradi told a news briefing on Monday that while the plane would have been cleared to approach Kabul by U.S. military air traffic controllers, it would not have reached a point where it was in contact with the Kabul control tower.

Kam Air deputy director Fada Mohammad Fadayi said on Monday that though the weather had been cloudy and visibility poor, it was difficult to say what caused the crash until an investigation by the government and representatives of countries whose nationals were on the plane was complete.

Militants in Pakistan blow up rail track near Quetta

QUETTA, Pakistan, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Suspected tribal militants blew up a section of rail track in southwestern Pakistan, snapping train services between the city of Quetta and the rest of the country, officials said on Tuesday.

The attack was the latest by the militants seeking greater autonomy in Baluchistan, the country's biggest but poorest of four provinces.

Railway officials said a 3-foot (one-metre) section of track was blown up near the town of Sibi on Monday night, suspending train services to and from Quetta.

Sibi is about 100 km (60 miles) southeast of Quetta.

Repair work had started, the officials said.

Baluchi tribal militants have run a low level insurgency against central rule for decades but they have stepped up activities in recent weeks with frequent attacks on transport routes, power and telephone lines and gas production facilities.

In the worst attack, as many as 15 people died on Jan. 11 when tribesmen fired rockets at Pakistan's main gas field at Sui, about 400 km (250 miles) southeast of Quetta, cutting off supplies for more than a week.

Indonesian prosecutors seek 8 years for Bashir

JAKARTA, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Indonesian prosecutors asked a court on Tuesday to sentence militant Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir to eight years on terrorism charges that include inciting the nightclub bombings on Bali in 2002 that killed 202 people.

Bashir has repeatedly denied the charges, which he says resulted from Western pressure.

His trial began in October and the defence still has to present its side of the case before the court reaches a verdict.

"The defendant is proven guilty of carrying out terror acts as stipulated in the law ... and proven guilty of causing the fires (in Bali) which caused the deaths," prosecutor Salman Maryadi told the makeshift courtroom in a government building being used to accommodate the large number of spectators.

Although Bashir was not at the locations of the attacks in Bali and Jakarta, he had been aware of the plans and did not stop the perpetrators from carrying out the bombings, he said.

The 66-year old cleric, clad in his trademark white skull cap, did not respond to the prosecutors' comments.

Dozens of his supporters shouted in

Indonesian Muslim cleric Abu %DND%DVKL files as he arrives at a government building in Jakarta Feb 8. Indonesian prosecutors asked a court on Tuesday to sentence militant Muslim cleric Abu %DND%DVKL eight years on terrorism charges that include inciting the nightclub bombings on %DQb 2002 that killed 202 people. REUTERS

anger.

"Prosecutors are cruel," they yelled. Prosecutors could have demanded death for the charges, which also link the 66-year-old Bashir to the 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott Hotel in the capital, Jakarta, that killed 12 people.

Officials say Bashir was the leader of

the militant Jemaah Islamiah network.

Intelligence experts describe Jemaah Islamiah as the regional arm of al Qaeda and blame it for carrying out and plotting violence across Southeast Asia.

A previous attempt after the Bali bombings to convict Bashir of leading Jemaah Islamiah failed.

Change, reform seen in 7KDNVL second Thai term

BANGKOK, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's historic single-party majority in weekend elections gives him an unprecedented opportunity for change and he should use it to modernise the economy, analysts said on Tuesday.

The sole grip on power in a nation accustomed to coalition rule allows Thaksin to overhaul an economy that has recovered from the 1997/98 Asian crisis but which remains hampered by corruption and red tape, they said.

Unions and the entrenched interests of a traditional business elite inhibited reforms in his first term but they have now been weakened.

Whereas Thaksin used his first four years in office to encourage Thailand's 63 million people to spend their way to prosperity, his focus should now be on getting its economic house in order, said Sompop Manarungorn of Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

"The Thai economy still has problems and the situation in the next four years is quite different from the last four years, so the need for restructuring and reform to create a good system is very important," Sompop said. Sunday's election landslide, in

which Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party made history with a projected 374 out of 500 parliamentary seats, could usher in a new era of strong, stable rule after decades of coups and collapsing coalitions.

Thaksin's camp is setting its sights high.

"He will change many aspects of Thai society to the point that they are not reversible," said chief government spokesman Jakrapob Penkair.

The size of the victory for Thai Rak Thai, which means "Thais Love Thais", insulates it comfortably against any form of political censure and gives the former telecoms tycoon, the wherewithal to shake up the system.

The prime minister was shaping up a cabinet of new faces from the private sector to oversee issues such as partially privatising state-owned utilities and cleaning up the banking sector, which is still plagued by bad debt, Jakrapob said.

Banking clean-up needed

Credit agency Standard & Poor's said Thailand would become more attractive to investors if Thaksin also used his strengthened influence to improve the way companies are run

and report results.

It said Thaksin should also streamline the legal system, often criticised as opaque, inject more competition into domestic markets and overhaul the educational system to ensure a skilled workforce for the long-term.

"Education reform has been stalling and the prime minister intends to do something about it in a very effective way," Jakrapob said.

Only in the violence-hit Muslim far south, where more than 500 people have been killed in the past 12 months, does Thaksin face a stumbling block after voters rejected all his candidates in the 11 constituencies in the area.

The Nation newspaper said Thaksin would have to change his hardline military approach if he wanted to win back support and end what could evolve into a full-scale Muslim separatist rebellion.

But Jakrapob said Thaksin, who plans a visit to the troubled region next week signalling his determination to tackle the violence, had no plans to change tack.

"There will be no immediate changes in policy," he said.

Zimbabwe brands Nobel laureate Tutu a "sellout"

HARARE, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Zimbabwe's ruling party branded Archbishop Desmond Tutu "a sellout" on Tuesday for attacking its democratic credentials, and accused the Nobel peace laureate of worshipping Tony Blair and George W. Bush as "false gods".

The South African archbishop and anti-apartheid icon has urged African leaders to increase the pressure on their undemocratic counterparts and slammed Zimbabwe as a "huge blot" on the record of the world's poorest continent.

Tutu told South Africa's Sunday Independent newspaper this weekend that Zimbabwe was "making a mockery" of African attempts to improve governance and defend democracy as the continent tries to secure more aid from rich countries.

President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party — sensitive to criticism ahead of March 31 parliamentary elections — reacted angrily on Tuesday, saying Tutu was a "vassal of imperialism" who was attacking Mugabe on behalf of Western opponents, and adding that Harare did not need aid from the West.

Zimbabwe's Herald newspaper quot-

ed ZANU-PF administration secretary Didymus Mutasa as saying Tutu was aggrieved with Mugabe's government on behalf of white minority interests in the region, and said there were worse democracies in Africa.

"If he were to put his clerical mind to this, and pray to the real God and not false gods (British Prime Minister) Tony Blair and (U.S. President) George Bush, he would know that the democracy we have in Zimbabwe is second to none as it was secured through precious blood," he said, referring to the 1970s liberation war which led to independence in 1980.

"Comrade Mutasa said such comments from a sellout like Tutu were not surprising as the 'embittered little man' used to pray for apartheid South Africa in the same way he continues to pray for white minority interests today," the newspaper said.

Mugabe, 81 later this month and in power since independence in 1980, is blamed for plunging one of Africa's most promising economies into a severe crisis through controversial policies, including the seizure of white-owned farms — a policy that has damaged its key agricultural sector.

S.Lanka rebels say ambush to severely hit peace bid

WELIKANDA, Sri Lanka, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Tamil Tiger rebels on Tuesday accused Sri Lanka's military of ambushing and killing one of its top political figures, and said the attack would severely damage efforts to forge lasting peace after two decades of civil war.

E. Kousalyan, political head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) eastern wing, was shot dead along with three companions late on Monday in a government-controlled area in Sri Lanka's restive east.

A driver and a pro-rebel former member of parliament were also killed. Kousalyan was the most senior rebel killed since a 2002 ceasefire left the Tigers' bloody fight for autonomy in the north and east in limbo.

"Definitely it is going to (cause) severe damage between the parties," S.Puleedevan, secretary general of the Tigers' Peace Secretariat, told Reuters from the rebels' northern stronghold of Kilinochchi.

"It really is a setback for the whole (peace) efforts and the confidence-building measures," he said.

"The Sri Lankan military intelligence and the paramilitary groups are always working together targeting the LTTE members."

Sri Lanka's military has denied any

hand in the ambush, and suspects a breakaway rebel faction led by renegade commander Karuna — who used to dominate the area — was responsible.

The attack took place near the village of Welikanda on a remote stretch of jungle road 500 metres from a no-man's land that separates rebel-held and military-held areas near the Tigers' eastern stronghold of Batticaloa.

Police said they suspected two unidentified gunmen ambushed the van in which Kousalyan was travelling, spraying the vehicle with automatic weapon fire.

Well-planned attack

"This is the most serious attack since the ceasefire," said Timo Telen, a member of a Nordic team monitoring the truce.

"I hope the government and the LTTE will work to ensure that the situation will not escalate."

Reuters correspondents who visited the scene said the van had veered off the road into a paddy field. Two police informants who said they happened to be nearby at the time of the attack pointed to where Kousalyan had been sitting.

The van was full of spent bullet casings, suggesting the gunmen fired from point-blank range.

The bodies of Kousalyan and his three Tiger companions were laid out at a

morgue in the nearby town of Polonnaruwa.

Each had been hit by around two dozen bullets. Kousalyan had been shot in the head.

"This attack was planned ahead and was carried out with precision," said Inspector Saman Perera of Welikanda police.

Bickering between the rebels and the government reached fever pitch late last year.

The Tigers threatened in November to resume a struggle that has already killed more than 64,000 people on both sides of

the ethnic divide.

But the rebels said they had put aside politics after Asia's devastating tsunami to concentrate on reconstruction, stoking hopes Sri Lanka's worst natural disaster could pave the way for long-elusive permanent peace.

Peace talks have been deadlocked for nearly two years over the Tigers' central demand for interim self-rule.

The rebels want the right to govern what they regard as their homeland of Tamil Eelam to be enshrined in the constitution before they will discuss lasting peace.

A Sri Lankan police home guard stands near a bullet-ridden van used by the slain top Tamil Tiger rebel political wing leader E. Kousalyan in Welikanda, Sri Lanka Feb. 8. Kousalyan was shot dead along with three other rebels in a government-controlled area in the eastern district of %DWLFDORREUTERS

Teenage girls jailed for murdering drunk man

LONDON, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Two teenage girls who kicked and stamped to death a drunk middle-aged man who they said made "inappropriate sexual advances" at a party were jailed for life on Tuesday.

Maxine Breakspear, 19, and Rochelle Etherington, 18, were found guilty at the Old Bailey in December of the murder of 42-year-old James Dalrymple from Northern Ireland.

The girls said Dalrymple rubbed his hand up one of the defendant's legs and

asked for sex at a party at his house in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

Sentence had been adjourned until Tuesday for reports.

"However irritating his behaviour was or offensive his language, the fact is he died an unlawful death in his own home," Judge Peter Beaumont told the girls.

"You will have to bear that responsibility for the rest of your lives."

Both girls were ordered to serve at least 13 years before being eligible for parole.

EU eyes closer ties, wants war crime help

BRUSSELS, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The EU may decide in May to open talks with Bosnia on an agreement leading to closer ties, but only if the Balkan state steps up cooperation with the Hague war crimes tribunal, the EU Commission president said on Tuesday.

The European Union's executive Commission is due to decide in May whether the former Yugoslav republic has done enough to reform politically, economically and in terms of human rights to start talks on a Stability and Association Agreement.

This would give Bosnia a range of commercial and political advantages and could also be a first step towards eventual EU membership - to which the bloc is committed.

Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told reporters after meeting Bosnian Prime Minister Adnan Terzic that increased cooperation with the U.N.

tribunal was the key to a positive decision on starting the talks.

He said last month's transfer to The Hague of Savo Todovic, a commander of a Bosnian Serb wartime prison camp where several hundred Muslims were killed, was a positive sign of cooperation.

"Now we need to see more positive steps in that direction," he said.

"If that's the case ... by May we can take a decision on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia.

A lot has to be done from now to then, but I believe it's possible."

Asked specifically what the Commission would need to see before reaching its May decision - which would still have to be agreed by EU leaders - Barroso replied:

"Increased cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is the key element.

This is the most important part."

French deputies delay vote on 35-hour work week

PARIS, Feb 8 (Reuters) - French deputies postponed until Wednesday a vote to ease France's 35-hour working week laws, a key reform of the conservative government fiercely opposed by unions and left-wing opposition parties.

The vote was due on Tuesday but party leaders at the National Assembly said they agreed to delay it until Wednesday afternoon after the Socialist and Communist parties introduced amendments and procedural measures that prolonged debate.

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has said he will listen to complaints voiced in marches which brought at least 300,000 public and private sector staff onto the streets on Saturday.

But parliament decides the law, not demonstrators, he said.

"I don't despise demonstrations but I ask union leaders not to despise parliament.

The debate will continue as planned - that's democracy," Raffarin said in a radio interview on Monday.

Opposition deputies denounced his stance.

"The prime minister is trying to provoke us with these comments," said Jean-Marc Ayrault, president of parliament's Socialist group.

Raffarin hopes to use his centre-right majority to vote through the bill

to allow staff to increase overtime and work up to 48 hours a week, the maximum allowed under EU law.

The Socialists cut the working week from 39 hours in 1998 in an effort to reduce high unemployment.

But employers' groups, the main driver behind the reform, complained that without an equivalent cut in pay, companies simply became less competitive.

Raffarin says his plan will allow people to work more if they want to earn more.

The new-found flexibility will be good for companies, pay packets, jobs and the economy, he said.

Ministers say no-one can be forced to work longer hours as managers must first agree new working practices with unions.

But labour organisations say that unemployment at almost 10 percent gives employers the possibility of increasing hours with no extra pay.

Having been soundly thrashed in regional and European Parliament elections last year, the cash-strapped government is concerned voters might punish it further by rejecting the European Union constitution in a referendum before the summer.

The debate over the 35-hour working week has gathered steam since some French workers - like some in Germany - agreed last year to work longer hours in an effort to save their jobs.

Danish poll seen rewarding PM for tough asylum laws

COPENHAGEN, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Danes voted on Tuesday with an early exit poll showing centre-right Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen set to win a second term on the back of a popular crackdown on asylum-seekers and cuts in Denmark's high taxes.

An online exit poll by Zaper predicted a clear win for Rasmussen and his right-wing allies with 99 of the 179 seats in parliament versus 76 for the centre-left bloc.

The 52-year-old Liberal leader, who began election day handing out croissants to commuters, called a snap election three weeks ago to capitalise on what he called a broad feeling "that things are going pretty well in Denmark".

"There is a fair chance that the government can win but it is going to be a close race," he told Reuters after voting.

Rasmussen, who came to power in 2001 and sent troops to Iraq to help in the U.S.-led war, has warned that a Social Democrat victory would "loosen up" tough asylum policies which he boasts are being copied by European leaders like Britain's Tony Blair.

"I think the government is going to stay because people only care about how much money they have in their pockets," said Bob Olsen, a student voting at Copenhagen's City Hall.

Four million people were eligible to cast ballots in a vote due to end at 1900

GMT, with definitive results by 2230 GMT.

Laws passed in 2002 make it harder to bring foreign spouses into Denmark and to qualify for asylum, and have cut immigration sharply.

Immigrants account for two percent of the electorate.

The Social Democrats, facing their worst election in decades - 90 years by one calculation - have fallen in line on Iraq and asylum, though leader Mogens Lyketteft said he would seek a "more positive moral and economic integration" of immigrants.

He warned that the welfare system his party founded is in danger from Rasmussen's tax cuts "and that frightens me".

"Not an alternative"

"I don't have faith in Lyketteft to continue the current development with lower taxes and a healthy economy.

He's not an alternative," said a 37-year-old software developer voting for the Liberals in the town of Haslev, south of Copenhagen.

Lyketteft, a 59-year-old former minister, had a late surge of support but not enough for an upset win, analysts said.

Most newspapers were in little doubt: "The centre-right bloc stands to win a clear victory today," read Berlingske Tidende.

Police were on the alert after an intelligence warning that Denmark's role in Iraq raised the risk of a terrorist

Mogens Lyketteft, top candidate of DHQPDU Social Democratic Party, gives autographs to children on his way to a polling station in Copenhagen Feb. 8. REUTERS

attack.

Although support for the war is waning and six out of 10 people now want the 500 troops withdrawn, Iraq has taken a back seat in the campaign to the immigration debate.

One party favouring softer asylum laws, the Social Liberals, were seen doubling their vote while the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party, which is not in the ruling coalition but helps it out in parliament, was seen keeping its 22 seats.

"I think it is unreasonable that the parties who oversaw the mass influx for many years should deride us when we have made sure the stream of immigrants has ceased," bristled DPP leader Pia Kjaersgaard when under attack in a debate late on Monday.

Turkish-born Onder Cekic, 31, said he voted Social Liberal: "I like them more than the Social Democrats and the Liberals and I especially don't like the Liberals' new laws on immigration."

U.S. to return last French Guantanamo detainees

PARIS, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The United States has agreed to hand over to France its last three citizens held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, a French government source said on Tuesday ahead of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Ridouane Khalid, Khaled ben Mustapha and Moustak Ali Patel could be returned to France in the next few days, said the government source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The three men were captured in 2001 or early 2002 after the U.S. intervention against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and taken to the military camp as suspected Islamist militants.

Rice is due to meet President Jacques Chirac and make a keynote speech on Tuesday during a visit designed to repair ties between the two countries strained over the U.S.-led war in Iraq in 2003, which France opposed.

The visit comes as part of her first trip to Europe and the Middle East as Secretary of State.

On their return, a French judge could launch an investigation into the three men for "criminal association with a terrorist enterprise" if it is deemed they entered Afghanistan to enrol in an al Qaeda paramilitary training camp.

Rice urges Europe to join U.S. in democracy drive

ROME, Feb 8 (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Europe on Tuesday to lay aside differences over the Iraq war and join the United States in a campaign to spread democracy worldwide.

Rice, on an eight-nation tour aimed at repairing transatlantic ties frayed by the invasion of Iraq, told reporters the United States and Europe were natural partners in fostering global peace.

"This great alliance, which has had a really glorious past, now can have an even greater future in sustaining an effort on behalf of those who are seeking to liberate themselves from tyranny and to build democracy," she said.

The top U.S. diplomat has been eager to find common ground with Europe on her first trip as secretary of state and will use a speech in Paris later on Tuesday to lobby the continent to help promote what she calls the West's "shared values".

Rice had no difficulty in winning backing from Italy, a fervent U.S. ally which has some 3,000 troops in Iraq - the fourth largest foreign contingent there after the U.S., British and South Korean forces.

Italy's support has stood in stark contrast to German and French opposi-

tion to the war, but Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini said it was time to lay aside old divisions.

"I believe that between Europe and the United States there can be no reason for controversy or argument, because freedom is certainly the value which in the last war (World War Two) the U.S. restored to Europe," said Fini, standing beside Rice.

War or peace

European diplomats have welcomed U.S. overtures to mend the partnership, especially after the Jan. 30 election in Iraq.

They have also praised Rice for leading a renewed U.S. peacemaking role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a top foreign policy priority for many European nations.

But many Europeans have also wondered if the U.S. rhetoric on freedom heralds plans to use force to topple leaders Washington sees as undemocratic, such as in Iran.

Rice, the first black woman secretary of state who grew up in the segregated U.S. south, has made her pitch for promoting democracy as if she were repeating campaign stump speeches.

On Tuesday, she defended the

United States against accusations that it was hypocritical to promote freedom when it has been criticised worldwide for abusing its prisoners in Iraq.

"Being in a democracy does not mean bad things will not happen," said Rice, adding that the United States had prosecuted U.S. soldiers accused of rights violations.

Rice ended her visit to Italy with a meeting with Vatican Secretary of State Angelo Sodano. Planned meetings with Pope John Paul and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi were cancelled because both men are suffering from influenza.

Rice's choice of France for the "major" speech of her trip showed she wanted to insert herself into the debate in Europe over transatlantic ties to persuade even those most reluctant to put the war behind them.

"She felt Paris was one of the places where there's a lot of debate and discussion about the U.S., about Europe, about common goals, about how we achieve our agenda," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said before the trip.

"She wanted to be part of that discussion and put her ideas into the mix."

US, Russia to cut trade in rocket launchers-media

MOSCOW, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The United States and Russia will sign a deal this month to curb the trade in shoulder-fired missiles, a weapon coveted by militants, Russian media quoted a defence official saying on Tuesday.

"An ... agreement on cooperation in strengthening control over portable rocket systems will be signed on Feb. 24 in Bratislava," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Colonel-General Anatoly Mazurkevich as saying.

U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian head of state Vladimir Putin are due to meet in the Slovak capital on Feb. 24 for a summit.

Mazurkevich, head of international relations at the Defence Ministry, was

quoted as saying the deal would be signed by Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the sidelines of the summit.

He did not reveal any specifics of how the trade in the missiles would be controlled.

Shoulder-fired missiles, which can be carried and fired by one man, have been favoured by insurgents worldwide since Washington supplied its Stinger system to anti-Soviet mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

U.S. media reports say insurgents in Iraq have been using Russian-built versions of the anti-aircraft missiles to target U.S. military helicopters.

While Russia's military has said separatist fighters in Chechnya use the U.S.-made missiles to fire on its aircraft.

A failed attempt by al Qaeda-linked attackers to shoot down an Israeli airliner as it took off in Kenya in 2002 also used shoulder-held missiles.

U.S. officials last month expressed concern about reports - denied by Moscow - that Russia was to sell its advanced SA-18 Igla shoulder-fired missiles to Syria.

Washington says insurgents enter Iraq via Syria, and that Damascus provides assistance to Hizbollah, a Lebanon-based militant Islamist group.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice smiles as she looks over her shoulder during a meeting with Italian Foreign minister Gianfranco Fini at the Villa Madama in Rome Feb. 8. Rice on an eight-nation tour wants to repair transatlantic ties frayed after President George W. Bush invaded Iraq over objections of traditional allies such as France and Germany. REUTERS

Words of Wisdom

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

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

OUR
OPINIONArab media can
help development

The conference held in Jordan on Feb. 6-7 on "Good Governance: for Development in the Arab Countries" was a step forward in identifying the importance of initiating genuine reforms to achieve comprehensive development in the Arab world.

One of the important issues discussed was the role of the media in good governance although remarkably, none of the Arab delegations attending the conference were keen to emphasize the role of the media. The emphasis only came from the donor countries that were present. In one of the speeches of a Western donor country, the speaker stated that Arab governments should enable the media to assess and monitor progress in the reform process.

A US representative highlighted the clear links made between the media and Arab governments, saying "benchmarks must be set and monitored to measure the progress of Arab countries in implementing those reforms."

In my opinion, it is an excellent idea to start a project involving independent media outlets in the Arab world to help create and implement a mechanism to effectively measure and comment on progress made in reform measures.

It was obvious from the high-level participation of the Yemeni delegation to this conference that Yemen is committed to endorsing the reforms and implementing the steps mentioned in the final declaration. As a newspaper then, we should report this to the public and list the different tasks that the government is expected to carry out and the goals that it still needs to achieve.

The Yemen Times has formulated a project to allocate a half page on a regular basis to a table that illustrates how far the Yemeni government has gone in implementing certain reforms. This will accompany a graph to reflect the level of seriousness and dedication of the government in implementing those reforms.

The reform process in Yemen will be like a race between many contestants. Each contestant is a governmental sector trying to achieve reforms. Each contestant starts from zero (or whatever level it is currently at) and must reach the finishing line (goal achieved). This goal could be an elementary goal, which can then be enhanced to another higher-level goal.

Having a very wide readership, particularly within educated local and international communities, the Yemen Times can have great impact on the image of the Yemeni government showing whether it is genuinely progressing or just giving empty promises.

If this process succeeds, I believe that it can be duplicated to match the needs of each individual country. Then we can use those statistics, which are obtained using reliable sources and scientific methods, to formulate general reports to indicate the progress achieved for Arab countries as a whole. However, without some assistance from international organizations and cooperation from the governmental sector, this project may not succeed.

Stay close! The project could be underway soon.

The Editor



Independent Cultural, Economic & Political Weekly
First English Newspaper in Yemen, founded in 1991
by Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Saqaf

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Is the KSA serious or not?

Toying with democracy

By Mai Yamani

Democracy is supposedly on the march in the Middle East. But Arab dictators are afraid of true democracy, with its civil liberties and competitive elections, so they conjure up potions that protect the status quo by selecting bits of Western political models and adding some religious interpretation to ensure a patina of Islamic legitimacy.

Saudi Arabia fits this description to a tee. Its rulers – some of the most autocratic in the world – say that democracy is incompatible with Islam. So they prefer the term "participatory government."

But a majority of Muslim scholars, including such eminent men as the Sheikh of Al Azhar in Cairo and the influential Qatar-based Sheikh Qaradawi, believe that Islam is compatible with democracy, at least as they define it: respect for the rule of law, equality between citizens, a fair distribution of wealth, justice, and freedom of expression and assembly. What remains debatable and contentious is the right of citizens to choose their leaders.

Yet pressure to democratize is mounting, in part due to the smaller Gulf States, which compete with each other in democratic reforms. Qatar and Oman have elected consultative councils and enfranchised women. Parliamentary elections occur in Kuwait and Bahrain, and at the end of last year, Sheikh Mohammad al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, in the U.A.E., suggested that Arab leaders must reform or sink. Iraq's elections have turned up the pressure even more.

So, threatened as the regional hegemon, Saudi Arabia has joined the reform race by announcing partial municipal elections to consultative bodies in which the royal family already appoints half the members. The first election will be held in the capital of Riyadh on February 10, followed by the oil rich Eastern region and the southern Asir region on March 2 and Mecca and Medina in the western Hijaz region and

al Jouf, in the Northern Region, on April 21.

The government describes this as a "new political era." But women remain excluded from the vote, despite attempts by several to participate in areas that the Wahhabi religious authorities deem acceptable to the "nature of women." Moreover, in accordance with Saudi tradition, the ruling family appoints a Prince as chairman of the General Committee overseeing the elections – a sign not of wider political participation, but of business as usual.

Despite efforts led by Crown Prince Abdullah to urge participation, voter registration is low, which suits the government well, as high turnout could lead to the development of an electoral culture. Low turnout, by contrast, could convince western audiences that, despite the Saudi state's best efforts to jump-start democracy, its people are satisfied with the status quo.

Saudi intellectuals attribute the lack of voter interest to the absence of free expression and assembly, which frustrates genuine political participation. Moreover, leading reformers have been jailed since last March for signing a petition asking for a constitutional monarchy, which has reinforced the general lack of trust in the government's agenda.

The most crucial questions concern reform of the al Shura (consultative council). Can it become a real parliament? Would it be elected? Currently, the King appoints its members. They do not issue legislation and they rarely even propose any. The King proposes, they discuss. They cannot debate the budget or military deals, nor can they question financial allocations to the regime's countless princes.

In addition, there is the National Dialogue, started by Crown Prince Abdullah in 2004 as an acknowledgement of pluralism and diversity that brings together different religious sects – Salafis (Wahhabis), Sufis, Shi'a. But the religious authorities have not legitimize its discussions, so nothing has changed: the Shi'a, for example, still cannot practice their religious rituals, be

witnesses in court, or even work as butchers.

Indeed, the "King Abdul-Aziz Center for National Dialogue" is utterly divorced from domestic realities and serves as a mere propaganda center whose participants believe that they form part of the state's message to the outside world. The last meeting was entitled "Encounter with Youth: Reality and Aspirations," which amounted to a display of grand speeches by the authorities informing the country's youth that conditions are ideal.

Such gatherings are unprecedented to the extent that they bring together groups that never talked before. But political expression remains constrained. Demonstrations are illegal, and there are no venues for political expression outside the Internet, which has created a community of alienated and embittered Saudis. Hundreds of angry Web sites have cropped up, the most extreme preaching the ideology of al-Qaeda and its ilk. Spurred by unemployment, political uncertainty, and falling living standards, young Saudi men are easily recruited by extremist groups.

If Saudi Arabia's rulers were serious about "participatory government," they would encourage liberals, moderates, and pragmatists. Instead, they repress, censor, silence and even imprison the moderates and appease the religious radicals. The authorities have killed some of the more violent jihadis in their "war against terrorism," but they fear that a wider crackdown, however necessary, would alienate important tribes and clans.

Despite cynicism, apathy, frustration, despair, and violence, some Saudis still hope for the emergence of a prince on a white horse who will place the kingdom onto the path of reform. But there is no such prince; there are only the old ones, clinging to power without legitimacy and toying grotesquely with their people's aspirations.

Mai Yamani is an author and Research Fellow at the Royal Institute for International Affairs.

From opportunity to
reality in the Middle East

Richard N. Haass

It has been a long time since the words "opportunity" and "Middle East" appeared in the same sentence. But now they are. Even better, this optimism may have some basis in reality.

One important reason for this change in attitude is, of course, Yasir Arafat's disappearance from the scene. Like the Thane of Cawdor in Shakespeare's Macbeth, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it."

Arafat never grew beyond the man who appeared at the United Nations decades ago with both an olive branch and a gun. His unwillingness to jettison terror and choose diplomacy proved his undoing, as he lost legitimacy in the eyes of both Israel and the United States. The result was the failure to create a Palestinian state.

But it is not simply Arafat's passing that provides cause for optimism. We now have a Palestinian leadership legitimized by elections, one that appears to be opposed to using terrorism as a tool to achieve political aims. Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has a good record of questioning the wisdom of the intifada that has taken too many lives and caused only misery and destruction on all sides of this enduring conflict.

Changes in Israel are also contributing to the mood swing. There is a growing awareness in Israel that the current situation – one of open-ended Israeli occupation of lands mostly populated by Palestinians – is inconsistent with Israel's determination to remain a secure, prosperous, Jewish, and democratic state.

The formation of a new Israeli government, one more centrist in its composition and support, is another positive development. Israel is now led by a prime minister who has the ability to make historic choices and a government inclined to support him.

But opportunity is just that. Middle East history is replete with examples of missed and lost chances to make peace. The challenge now is to break this pattern and turn today's opportunity into reality.

This requires that the promised Israeli disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank succeed. But "success" entails more than departing Israelis. It also requires that Palestinians demonstrate that they can govern responsibly and that they can put an end to terrorist violence emanating from Palestinian soil.

What happens in Gaza after Israel leaves will have a profound impact on Israeli politics. If Gaza turns into a lawless failed state, one that is a base for attacks on Israelis, it will be extremely difficult to persuade Israel to withdraw from other areas that it now occupies. But if Palestinians in Gaza demonstrate that they can rule themselves and be a good neighbor, a key justification for Israel's continuing occupation elsewhere will weaken.

Palestinians will need help if things are to turn out right in Gaza. The US, Europe, and Arab states such as Egypt, along with Russia and the UN, all have a responsibility to assist Abu Mazen. Palestinians need financial and technical help to build up a unified and capable security establishment, to revive a moribund economy, and to build a modern, transparent political system.

It is also important that the Gaza withdrawal be a beginning, not an end, to the political process. There must be a link between what takes place in Gaza and a comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian question if Mazen is to persuade a majority of his people that diplomacy and compromise deliver more than violence and confrontation.

Here, too, there is an important role for America to play. In fact, the US has already begun to do what is required. In a September 2004 letter to Israeli

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, President George W. Bush reassured Israelis that it was "unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." The framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue "will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel."

These promises meant a great deal to Sharon as he faced domestic political challenges. What is needed now is a parallel letter from Bush to Abu Mazen. Such a letter could spell out the US commitment to a viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines, with compensation provided by Israel wherever territorial adjustments are agreed. The US would also commit itself to provide resources to help construct a modern society and economy. Help would also be extended to settle the Palestinian refugees, whether in Palestine, other Arab countries, or, in special cases where Israel agrees for humanitarian reasons, in Israel itself.

In return, Palestinians would need to pledge to reject the use of violence and terror once and for all. The US should not, however, make the establishment of a full Palestinian democracy a prerequisite for territorial return and peace. To delay negotiations until Palestinian democracy matured would only persuade Palestinians that diplomacy was a ruse and give many a reason to turn to violence. After more than a half-century of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, translating opportunity into reality will be difficult enough without introducing new requirements that, however desirable, are not essential.

Richard Haass, a former Director of Policy Planning in the US State Department, is President of the Council on Foreign Relations.

COMMON
SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haiji

Worshippers
of death

While there are many agnostics who might disagree with this, but religion has an integral part of the socio-aesthetic attributes of mankind since any history has ever been recorded. One is almost convinced that religion is instinctively engrained in the mind set of homo sapiens that without this inert desire to link with the supernatural human existence would be devoid of any moral and conscientious attributes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that even the spiritual inclinations of the most primitive of cultures are more evident in what ever remains are left to attest to their being. Even the still existing innocent Tasudai, probably the last people to keep themselves out of touch and out of tune with all the commotions and transformations that have set the pace for man's tumultuous domain on this planet.

Yet, religion has also been the source of much of the tragedy that has accompanied human existence over the ages. Yes, temptation may drive many men to assume some inkling of power or sway over the religious persuasions of the constituencies that surround them or share some or all their views on the best way of siding with the Divine. This in turn gives rise to the corruption of the true values that spiritual instinct would regard as anathema to the real purpose of religion and of course the corruption of free minds that are instinctively able to discern in their subconscious the difference between right and wrong and good and bad. So, religion is not at fault for many of the calamitous behavior of mankind as some skeptics about religious belief would like to suggest. It is really men, who have mistakenly set themselves on a spiritual pedestal that allows them to make use of religion to further their own mundane aspirations.

When viewed openly and with a sense of fair analytical evaluation, there is no evil in any religious persuasion, especially those religious persuasions that have managed to collect sizable constituencies throughout the world. Having said then, it is safer to assume that the three monotheistic religions have probably more in common than they have differences and there is no real human excuse to regard religion as a cause d'être of human conflict whatsoever, unless non-religious aspirations have found in religious dogma fruitful fuel for inciting men to "defend" this creed against the dangers brought on by adherents of other faiths. These dangers are more likely the imaginary and often mischievous creations of those who have given themselves disguised benevolence and through their own persuasive capabilities managed to enlist followers to join with them. They might taken on various titles to depict their avowed commitment to launch their faith as the supreme faith and through systematic nurturing of their followers will use all means at their disposal to enlist the forces they need to deliver their spiritual trusteeship over all mankind. The fact of the matter is that religion is innocent of such arrogance and would more likely have its argument against any human being who sought to use religion as a pathway to some social prominence.

We see fundamentalist activism within many religions and even as human mores have become mature, there is no major religion without its strong advocates who insist that they are the bearers of the passage to Heaven on Judgment Day. Some of these fundamentalist movements rely on traditional and generally peaceful means to propagate their beliefs. There are also fundamentalists, who have gone much further. These latter missionaries are cause for worry because they tend to think that they are empowered to use violence in any way they deem to fit as long as it serves their cause. We have the new American evangelical right for example, which is unabashed about using all the power and means of the United States to deliver mankind and to create "a free world". Notwithstanding this hostile Christian persuasion (whatever happened to "turn the other cheek"), the thousands that have died under cover of the War on Terror are fuelled by this misconception of religious values and garnered by a strong taint of arrogance.

Then we have the Jewish fundamentalists, who have brought it upon themselves to displace an entire people from their homeland under religious pretexts that unjustly assume that God Al-Mighty would sanction the deliverance of a "promise" at the expense and to the life detriment of other people. Again, disguised chauvinism and arrogance of power.

Then again, we have Moslem fundamentalists, who have totally misrepresented Islam and made blood a token sign of their masochistic rendition of misconceived dogma. Even the spelt blood of their own is sanctified by these belligerent religious demagogues who have been scientifically nurtured to view death and blood with a lusty craving that is not only anathema to Islam but counterproductive in delivering the message of the Religion of Peace.

One is sometimes astounded by the ability of extreme followers of fundamentalist dogma to harness all the resources that they need to unleash their drives as they deem fit, without regard to the awesome waste of valuable resources that could be used for the betterment of their own constituencies and mankind as a whole. The fundamentalist Christian War in Iraq has cost billions of American taxpayers' money that could have eliminated poverty in the United States first and then carried over to the poor Latin American states that sit at their doorsteps. One study recently showed that Islamic fundamentalism has been fuelled by the funneling of US \$ 100 Billion to spreading and organizing the extreme fundamentalist network that has wreaked more havoc and energized more hatred against Islam than God, with all his mercy, could ever be willing to forgive. What is the outcome? Ignorant fundamentalists at war with each other and against the peace and welfare of mankind that God truly wants to see.

Presented by Mohammed Khidr

A l - W a h d a w i weekly, organ of the Nasserite Unionist Organisation, 1 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- Seven people killed in clashes between tribes and security forces in Mareb
- Iraqi elections, stabilization of occupation
- Riyadh bans Yemeni product from entering Yemeni products
- Yemen receives ten French gunboats
- Donor countries reduce their aid due to corruption
- Kuwait rejects Yemen accession to the GCC
- Military campaign to release the kidnapped Saudi and his wife
- Tremors in Dhouran area in Thamar
- Yemeni students in India suffer from academic and living situations

The newspaper's political editor writes that no one denies that the Iraqi elections are suffering from violations and have no goal other than more concentration of the American occupation.

The occupiers realize the necessity of the presence of an Iraqi government, though not legitimate, implementing the conclusion of long-term agreements and pacts. The evidence was the presence of the American logic of force and interest in those elections.

Democracy is an Iraqi demand and it is important that all the people of Iraq take part in making their future. This will not come without stability and full sovereignty. The abstention of majority of the Iraqis from taking part in the elections farce that has been directed by the American administration has been apparent and has refuted the lies promoted by the American occupation media.

Al-Sahwa weekly, 3 February 2005.

Main headlines

- In al-Mouyad trial, American prosecution abandons the strongest of the charges against him
- Physicians and pharmacists threaten an all-out strike
- Three states object to Yemen joining the GCC
- 148 cases of violation against public property
- Yemen signs with development partners a document of principles for the achievement of effectiveness of using aid
- Military pensioners stage demonstration in front of the presidency
- Muslim scholars committee skeptical of legitimacy of Iraqi elections
- Yemeni students abroad complain of their bad conditions
- Millions of Yemeni riyals deducted from salaries of teachers in Sana'a.

On absence of countryside women from development plans, writer Abdulhafidh al-Hatami says the major problem facing the Yemeni woman is not issues like early marriage and circumcision, because these can be overcome by improvements to the level of education of rural girls.

More important to Yemeni women in both rural and civilized areas, is access to the basic essentials and health care.

26 September weekly, organ of Yemen Armed Forces, 2 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- The president inaugurates development and strategic projects
- Yemen foreign ministry praises the holding of Iraqi elections

- Getting rid of old fishing boats at Aden port
- Al-Qirbi: Yemeni-Italian understanding on importance of supporting the new Somali government
- European, African leaders and officials to visit Yemen in February and March
- World Bank president to visit Sana'a on 13 February
- Chairman of board of Total Company discusses in Sana'a exportation of Yemeni gas
- Execution of Free Trade Zone and activation of Arab Investment Agreement
- Mareb governor: Committee for investigating into shootings between security members and citizens
- Retained Saudi citizen in Saada released.

The political editor of the newspaper, commenting on the Iraqi elections, says the restoration of sovereignty and independence and return of security and stability form the basis on which Yemen has built its stance towards the situation in Iraq. That was also the grounds on which Yemen built its welcoming of the parliamentary elections held in Iraq at the end of last January.

Iraq is considered pivotal in showing the direction of the entire region. Yemen hopes that Iraq's elections will be a positive beginning for the region, providing a climate suitable for political reform, democracy, and development, and enhancing opportunities of stability and peace.

Al-Mithaq weekly, organ of the General People's Congress, 7 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- The President opens a number of service and development projects in Hadramout
- Human Rights minister reviews in Cairo Yemen's experiment in enhancement of civil rights and rebuilding rule of the law
- International conference on fighting terror discussed connection of money laundering and smuggling weapons and drugs with terror
- Endowments completes its supervision on mosques and religious guidance centers this year
- Suspicious societies finance 4000 violating religious schools
- In a bid to government encouragement of investment, a partnership agreement signed for production of cement in Hadramout

The newspaper editorial is devoted to talk on the governorate of Aden mentioning that then developmental renaissance the city of Aden has been seeing since the beginning of the last decade, has restored to the city its important status. Former policies intentionally have tried to deface its real image and its name had not been mentioned but associated with destruction and catastrophes.

The attention paid by the Yemeni political leadership to the city and

rendering it into an economic capital of Yemen and center of the free zone have led to breathe life into it. Thus, it has become today the best place for big investments and the preferred site for tourists, local and foreigners. Last week then president of the republic inaugurated many projects and laid foundation stones to other projects.

On the 16th of this month, Aden would be the venue to one of the most important Arab conferences. Under auspices of the president, the seventy-fifth session of the Arab League Economic and Social council would hold its meetings in Aden. The meeting is to be attended by Arab ministers of economy, industry and trade. Selecting Aden as venue for holding the meeting has its indications for the status the city is occupying and its developmental situation.

A l - T a g a m o u weekly, organ of the Yemeni Unionist Congregation party, 7 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- Sheiks beat ministers, expel and assassinate heads of state
- Four thousand religious schools run by suspicious societies
- YUCP condemns terror in Kuwait and praises Iraq elections
- Parliament hinders efforts of ending the phenomenon of carrying weapons
- Due to ignoring its demands, the Physicians and Pharmacists Union announces a number of protest activities

Writer A'arif Muhsin al-Khaiwani says in an article the political life in Yemen does not dedicate itself to data of work for national interest and does not possess a motive for fruitful political action that can represent a positive action in the political practice and express the serious consideration of the present problems. Among those problems are those representing tension in economy and its deterioration. Among the other problems are the inflation of corruption, continuation of public property exhaustion, rush of the state officials towards achieving illegitimate wealth, through practicing commercial work, incapability of absorbing unemployment, and making the democratic experiment incapable of going forward. In addition, there is the further practice of authority in doubling political; congestion and being aloof from thinking in following the course of the road of modernisation and democracy. There is also the suppression of the rights of writers and journalists and the work for weakening the opposition. All that was, is still forming a source of dispute with the authority, and deepens continuation of opposing it.


Annas weekly, 7 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- American judiciary refuses Al-

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- A'nsi's translation of Al-Mouyad's discussions with the FBI
- Physicians and pharmacists to declare comprehensive strike on 16 of this month
- Al-Hajz population of Amran exposed to security campaign
- A big gang for smuggling Yemeni antiquities seized
- At Riyadh conference, Yemen presents its experiment in fighting terror
- Dr Hosni al-Jawshaie writes saying at the beginning we have to differentiate between the mixing that some imperialist states try to impose as a fait accompli and mix between terror

and legitimate resistance. What happens in the occupied countries like Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya of legitimate resistance against a foreign occupier is not terror but rather legitimate resistance allowed by all Muslim scholars. Terror is the attacking of innocent people and killing them without having any guilt committed by them, launching explosions here and there, as happened in the events of 11 September in America and before that in Cairo and later in Spain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and others, all those are acts of terror. Focusing on terror as a phenomenon that must be solved militarily would not

resolve the problem but would rather complicate it. In the attempt to solve it and deal with it, it should be taken into consideration that those youths are psychologically handicapped and they must be treated and there must be channels of dialogue opened with them. The democratic margin for the Islamic and Arab peoples must also be widened. The freedom of forming political parties must be launched to absorb energies of those youth through those parties. Those parties should be allowed to take part in the political and democratic process seriously and properly, away from deceit presently practiced by many of Arab rulers.

**Ministry of Finance
Civil Service Modernization Project
Implementation Project Unit**

**Accounting & Financial Management Information System 06□
Request for Expression of Interest of International Advisor for the AFMIS Conceptual Design**

The Government of Yemen, GOY, is conducting a Civil Service Modernization Project, CSMP, which comprises, among other component, the computerization of a Financial and Accounting management Information system, AFMIS that is supervised by the Ministry of Finance, MOF, through a Project Implementation Unit, PIU, and funded by the International Development Agency, IDA, and the Government of Yemen.

AFMIS is designed to address three major parts of public finance management reform; those are budget preparation, budget execution and accounting. AFMIS is a main component of the whole modernization project, and will accommodate certain agreeable sets of reform steps in the public expenditure process, of Yemen, both at the Central and Local Authority Levels. The system in its first stage will be rolled out the three large spending units, and ultimately to all other governmental spending units. At this stage of implementation it has been agreed between the GOY and World Bank that technical assistance (TA) is needed to mitigate potential project implementation risks in the areas of Project management, conceptual design and third-party testing. To address these needs and help ensure that the target milestones of the AFMIS component are met, the Bank has proposed deploying the above-mentioned three advisors, and this TOR is the subject of the international technical assistance advisor needed to help in producing a conceptual design document.

Responsibilities

1. The International Advisor for AFMIS Conceptual Design. Will help the MOF develop a conceptual design document that sets out a coherent model for the budget management framework on a whole and shows how the proposed AFMIS would fit into this overall framework.
2. Mainly, the International Advisor should produce a model that provides clarity about the new framework to concerned officials, the project implementation team and the contractors.
3. The International Advisor must be a ware of the great deal of the necessary details work that has been done in developing AFMIS technical and functional specifications by building on this work and towards a coherent and internally consist framework incorporating revision to these specification in particular the conceptual design should produce a conceptual Model to:
 - Clarify the deliverables, modules and sub-modules to be provided as part of an integrated system and specify the central role of the general ledger.
 - Specify the accounting basis to be followed for initial AFMIS implementation and describe a transition path for any move in the long term to full accrual accounting.
 - Specify the GFS 2001 compliant budget classification to be implemented as part of the AFMIS emphasizing that this can be done while remaining on a cash basis of accounting.
 - Develop and obtain approval of the chart of accounts to be implemented as part of the AFMIS.
 - Clarify the accounting process relating to receipts and payments and the manner in which are to be reconciled with CBY data;
 - Describe the budget execution functions currently undertaken by the CBY that are to be taken over by the MOF; and
 - Clarify whether the system is to be based on centralized or distributed database architecture.
 - Show the inter-relation among the various or sub-modules.
 - Provide business process description for each modules and sub-modules including input, process, and output, for each module.
4. The international consultant will directly report to the Head of the Steering Committee, and the Manager of the AFMIS PIU. Copies of all documents should be sent in parallel to the project PIU, the project advisor on project management and the head of the steering committee.

Qualification and experience

- M.S/PHD in public finance with extensive knowledge in IT for AFMIS implementation.
- Perfect English Language
- At least 10 years proved knowledge and experience in AFMIS Conceptual Design for Public Sector.

Deliverables

- AFMIS Conceptual Design Document submitted to the Minister/Vice Prime Minister and the World Bank
- Conceptual design finalized and approved by the World Bank and the Government of Yemen.

Scope of the Mission

- 6 months period of short term assignments.

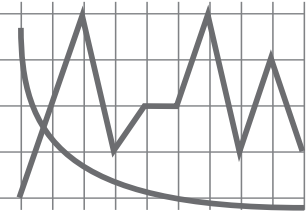
The consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank guidelines selection and employment of consultants by World Bank borrowers (current edition, January 1997, and revised in September 1997 and January 1999, May 2002 and May 2004.

Males and Females will be accepted in this position

Candidates who have the necessary qualification are invited to submit their Curriculum Vita with a copy of their qualification no later than 28 of February, 2005 to the following address:

**Ministry of Finance, AFMIS Project Coordinator's Office
OVDILD6DQDD□Jemen
Tel: 504164, 504161 or by email: afmisyemen1@yahoo.com**

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Currency	%LQJ	Selling
US Dollar	186.6600	186.8600
Sterling Pound	349.9600	350.3300
Euro	240.0000	240.2600
Saudi Rial	49.7700	49.8300
Kuwaiti Dinar	638.9000	639.5800
UAE Dirhem	50.8200	50.8800
Egyptian Pound	32.0700	32.1100
%DKUDD	495.1200	495.6500
Qatari Rial	51.2900	51.3400
Jordanian Dinar	263.2500	263.5300
Omani Rial	484.8400	485.3600
Swiss Franc	154.1100	154.2800
Swedish Crown	26.4800	26.5100
Japanese Yen	1.7943	1.7962

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

Total: Yemen to export 6.5 million tons of gas

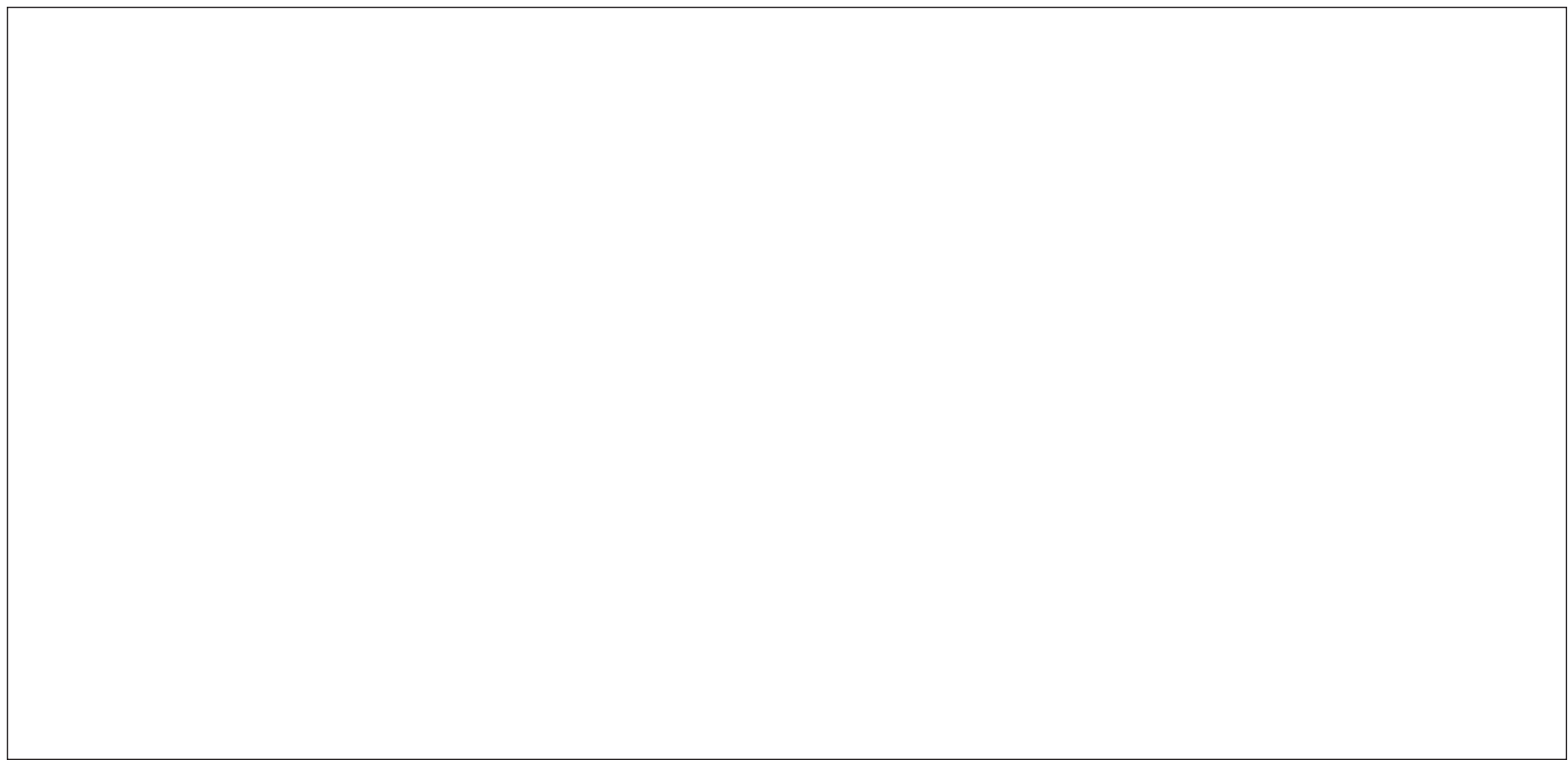
By MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

During a recent meeting between the Yemeni President and the president of the French company Total, the latter Yemen could soon be exporting 6.5 million tones of liquefied gas.

This development comes after an agreement was reached for selling the gas to a number of Korean and European companies.

The Total president also said that an agreement was concluded to sell 2.5 million tons of liquefied gas to a Belgian company, two million tons to Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS), and two million tons to Total. He says that the next stage of the project is to finalize arrangements for the exportation of Yemeni gas by building the necessary installations.

The Yemeni president confirmed his support for the completion of the



Natural gas refinery in Yemen.

project, renewing his welcome for French investments in Yemen.

Yemen is also seeking to increase its present oil production, which already exceeds 450 bpd. It has granted seven new oil sectors to international companies. Sources in the oil industry told The Yemen Times that these sectors are located in the Mareb-Shabwa basin, and in an area near the Omani border.

The Ministry of Oil says that it is working on granting big facilities to investors for search and exploration of oil and gas in areas in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.

Oil minister Rashid Saleh Barabah says that the Australian Oil Search Company, working in Sector 15 in the Arabian Sea will be digging two wells in the last quarter of this year. Mr Barabah added that his ministry will dig between 100 and 120 exploratory wells this year, mentioning that Yemen is looking for international companies to take part with local investors.

Yemeni-Ethiopian relations to improve

By YEMEN TIMES
TAIZ BUREAU

The Economic Representative of Ethiopia Mr. Tesfage Negassa, and some businessmen from Taiz have held a meeting to discuss the potential for increased commercial relations between

Yemen and Ethiopia.

The General Manager of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Taiz, Mr. Mufeed Abdo Saif, told The Yemen Times that Mr. Negassa, has agreed on the formation of a commercial and industrial delegation to identify investment opportunities in Ethiopia and market Yemeni products in Ethiopia.

Continued from page 1

1st credit card issued in Yemen

“Along with us being the first to issue Visa cards here in Yemen instead of having to have cards sent from other countries, we are now the Principal Member of Visa so that other banks can issue new cards locally through IBY,” said Ahmed Al-Absi, IBY’s General Manager.

With the Visa credit card, IBY offers Visa Electron, a debit card that is recognized worldwide, IBY is expecting to see a large increase in business in the near future resulting from connecting Yemen to the rest of the world. Yemeni cardholders will be able to use credit cards and Electron at the bank’s ATMs and businesses using the point-of-sale strategy implemented in Yemen by IBY and in foreign countries. Tourists and foreigners living in Yemen will also be able to use their Visas in the local market.

“We are currently connecting our ATMs and points-of-sale to the international Visa network. Anyone from all over the world can use them here in Yemen, and those who get Visas at IBY can use them all over the world to get cash and make purchases,” said Nagi.

Also in the making is IBY to become a Principal Member of another leading credit card company, MasterCard. According to Al-Absi, the deal should be finalized within the next six weeks.

IBY was the first local bank to allow customers to make purchases at retail outlets using plastic instead of cash.

Ahmed Al-Absi, General Manager of International Bank of Yemen

Since the point-of-sale operation was established last June, up to 350 businesses have joined. With the bank’s new relationship with Visa and MasterCard, it expects the number of point-of-sale locations to increase dramatically. Nagi said that the number of

businesses taking part will jump to 1,000 in the next six months.

For IBY to stay out front in retail banking, it has established a research and development department to continuously bring out something new for its customers. Al-Absi said that the

department is currently working on 60 new products. One example is for Yemeni-American citizens that have retired in Yemen to soon receive their social security funds by having it sent to their IBY accounts instead of having to travel to the US Embassy in Sana’a.

“Those who have retired in Yemen will no longer have to take a trip to the US Embassy to pick up the check and deposit it in a bank,” said Al-Absi. “The money will be credited online at IBY, and the customer will be able to simply go to an ATM, in let’s say Rada or Taiz, and get the money.”

IBY has been aggressive in expanding on ATMs nationwide. It now has 30 ATMs standing in many of the country’s governorates – the largest number of ATMs held by a bank in Yemen - and aims to have 100 by the end of the year. For the convenience of wiring money, the bank plans to increase its Western Union outlets from 80 to 200 to reach more customers by next June.

IBY’s retail strategy has shown strong results. Its fee based income out of total income jumped from 15% in 2003 to 60% last year. The bank’s gross profits doubled: From \$900 million in 2003 to \$1.8 billion in 2004.

“Retail banking is the future of the banking industry,” said Al-Absi. “Banks around the world have focused and capitalized on retail banking in recent years. We have to take the necessary steps to be the leader of retail banking and modernize the banking sector in Yemen.”

Request for Expressions of Interest B, □

Yemen Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Sector Monitoring, Evaluation and Data Management Systems Assessment, Implementation Strategy Development

The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), an external partnership program of the World Bank, has received a grant from the Royal Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation for technical assistance to the Yemen rural water supply and sanitation sub-sector (RWSS-TA). A portion of this grant has been designated for consultancy services to carry-out the following two phase assignment: 1) detailed assessment and analysis of RWSS monitoring, evaluation and data management systems; 2) preparation of an M, E and data management systems implementation strategy and action plan.

The WSP – Yemen intends to prepare a short-list of qualified national consultancy firms for contracting consideration. National companies interested in preparing their EoI must provide detailed information indicating company qualifications to provide the required services by submitting: full descriptions and corresponding documentation of similar assignments completed, experience in similar conditions, availability to take up the assignment, key applicable skills, company brochures, references and main competencies of the principal and/or key proposed staff. Consultant firm selection will be carried out in accordance with World Bank guidelines under the Consultants Qualifications (CQS) Selection method. The selected firm(s) will be asked to submit a combined technical and financial proposal prior to being asked to negotiate a contract.

Consultancy Terms of Reference can be obtained from the World Bank Office – 6DQDD Yemen by or before 14 February 2005. Final Expressions of Interest, including required documentation should be presented no later than close of business on 28 February 2005.

Water and Sanitation Program – Yemen
Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Technical Assistance
c/o The World Bank- Yemen, Hadda, St. no. 40
Sana’a, Yemen

Yemen 2nd in regional free market economies

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

International banking organizations have announced that Yemen occupies the second position among regional free market economies because of its adherence to the instructions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The Central Bank of Yemen says

that bank reserves reached US\$5.7 billion by the end of last year, an increase of \$US690 million from the previous year. The balance of payments achieved a surplus of around \$US745 million, and the percentage of foreign debt decreased by six per cent of the total domestic product.

The banking sector also achieved increases in deposit balances to YR576 billion, an increase of more

than Y.R.100 billion, and private sector loans increased to YR183 billion, an increase of YR83 billion.

The capital of banks operating in Yemen has increased from YR31 billion to YR37 billion. The inflation average decreased from 6-13% in 2003, to less than 10% in 2004.

The banking sector has also witnessed improvement in automatic cash machines, the number of which are expected to reach to 260 this year.

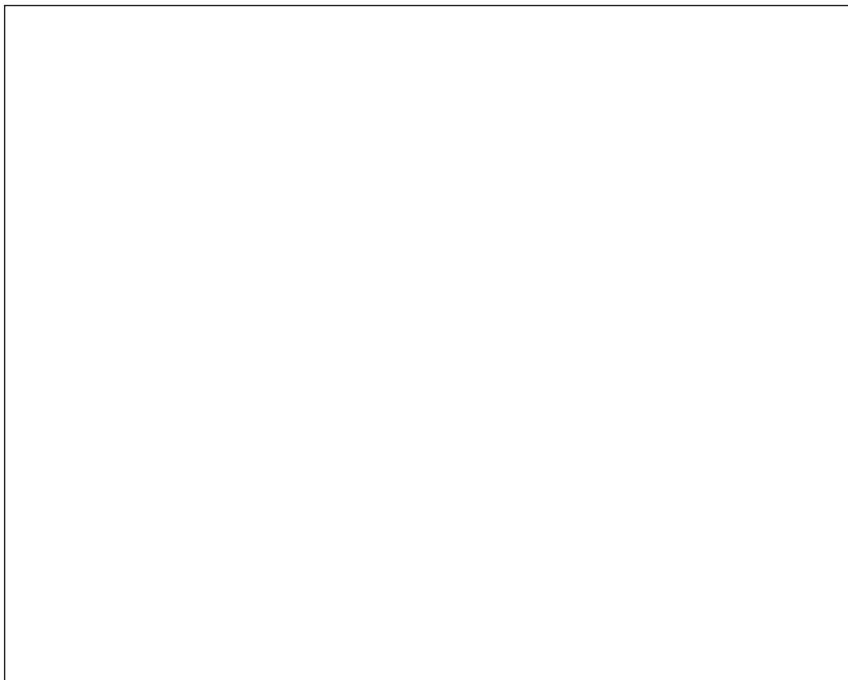
Water crisis to be discussed

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The al-Sa'eed Organization for Science and Culture is preparing to host a scientific symposium under the title "Taiz Water between Reality and Ambition" between Feb.14-15.

The symposium is sponsored by the Governor of Taiz, Judge Ahmad Al-Hajiri and in cooperation with the Environmental Studies and Social Services Center, part of Taiz University and the Ministry of Water and Environment represented by the Local Corporation for Water and Sanitation at the governorate.

It is expected that work of the symposium will start on Monday Feb. 14 at al-Sa'eed Cultural Forum. The symposium is scheduled at a time the water crisis is increasing. The symposium is due to discuss a



Mareb dam

number of parameters related to the biology and hydrology of the area and the ways of dealing with it.

In his speech, Faisal Sa'eed Far'e, Deputy Head of the Preparatory Committee said "because of the chronic water crisis experienced in Taiz, extensive efforts are being stepped in cooperation with the official sides represented by the Environmental Studies and Social Services Center to bring forth possible solutions for the crisis. Efforts were devoted for the sake of holding the symposium that deals with different biological problems from which the population suffer." He added "the symposium will attempt to study the negative influences of water crisis that may hinder development programs"

As many as 25 professors from different Yemeni universities and other organizations will take part in the symposium.

A proud history

Ancient granaries show Yemeni spirit

By ISMAIL AL-GHABERY
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Yemeni people have learned from the time of ancient civilizations the importance of underground granaries to save surplus crops for future needs.

Underground granaries are works that the Yemenis left to show Yemeni civilization before Islam.

The granary is a wide space dug and carved in a rocky surface.

Mostly, the mountains fots are the plots for the underground granaries and the places where to build their homes, to keep away from valleys (wadis), not to be swept off by its floods.

The granary is done in a way similar to the shape of a big jar, narrowing the neck and the bottom of the hole whereas its belly is broadened in the middle.

Granaries are not same in volumes even though some of them are similar in shapes. The biggest contain more

than 1000 kilograms.

The underground granaries are used for preserving the grains, wheat, maize and malt crops.

After filling in the granaries with crops in an organized order, they cover up the open hole with a smoothed piece of stone, sealed with clean and smooth clay, to avoid any damage to the crops.

Granaries may preserve the crops inside it for three years and bit more. The granaries preserve itself and the crops inside it by the higher degree of the heat which doesn't allow any kind of bacteria to live.

Some of the Yemeni families think of and add some salts onto the saved crops or some coals to secure longer life of the crops.

Judge Ismail al-Akwa' in his reviewing the book titled "Eyes Stability to the history of the Pleasant Yemen" by Ibn-al-Badee', has explained, If a man returned to open a granary in two months, and got down inside the granary directly, he'd lose his skin due to the higher degree of the heat inside there."

From our field research in numerous

Yemeni zones, it is found that there are two types of granaries: the first is a small or medium. It is dug up mostly inside the domestic homes of the Yemenis and sometimes besides the homes.

The other type is bigger - such one is owned by the Government systems, sometimes, owned by the shiekh of the tribes. The crops kept inside such bigger granaries are the yields taken from the people as levies and duties or against penalties imposed on the guilty ones, or the crops which are taken as supplies for its official forces and staff etc.

Such parties (government or shiekh) dig up several underground granaries somewhat close to each other and connect them to each other through internal tunnels, to securing the transfer of the crops, once the first location is filled up.

As well, the ancient civilizations used to dig several underground granaries on the surfaces of the castles and towers surrounded by walls, which they use during war time.

Even though most of the granaries spread throughout most of the Yemeni

areas were done by the Hemyarites, the civilizations that came after the Hemyarite civilization went on using those same underground granaries for the same purposes.

The people didn't stop using such granaries until the industries and factories started in the modern era.

It is worth mentioning too that the ancient Yemeni civilization used to master carving, engraving insides of rooms, the stairs, and the faces of the rocky walls forming their homes with shelves, and also water tanks, besides carving small confidential chests within the walls for keeping monies and precious jewels without being visible to others, in a way looking like a wall picture.

The Yemenis used to engrave holes in the house grounds, also used as a place for putting spices and grains. And they would engrave tiny holes close to each other used as vessels for cooking materials such as salt and spices, in the kitchen.

So, the ancient Yemeni civilizations didn't surrender to the hilly nature of the country, but went on surviving despite its ruggedness.

Difference between culture & knowledge

By NAWAL ZEID
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

A huge difference between knowledge and culture is often realized. Success is the basis of knowledge and it is our sound weapon. Knowledge helps us attain high social prestige and achieve ambition by hard work and success.

Education increases our realm of knowledge. Knowledge itself is enlightenment and this is a real fact but only for those who want it to be so.

For the successful person, knowledge helps him make every thing in life as well as to shape his culture as he likes. The knowledgeable person can make a strong personality of himself.

But, what will be there if science and knowledge come together?

Culture is useful thing in the human life and is always found in our every day life. Being educated and ignorant is out of benefit and this does not mean illiteracy, rather it is the ignorance of matters. Every thing is to vanish if do not care.

Most of the issues and problems surrounding us are neglected except for some whimsical visions due to the lack of culture and awareness of our daily affairs.

Life is beautiful but it is we who

make so difficult and complicated because of our incorrect deal with it.

Culture is based on the intellectual success through which we can manipulate ourselves and deal with others with more understanding.

In our societies, there are a great number of people who are educated and successful and possess the capital as well as the high prestige but, their impression and thought of life is surface; they usually do things seriously wrong, why?

Because they are not equipped with culture and understanding of matters of life. Our ailing and wounds helps us seek culture for the sake of culture and knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Numerous people, however are uneducated, enjoy culture in every aspect of their life and seem to better understand others and evaluate things.

Others, on the other hand, can not deal with life aspects well as they feel satisfied with knowledge and success and do not pursue culture and if there is any, it is temporary.

Being the generation of the era we have to possess a considerable amount of scientific and intellectual culture. Being culture-seekers we have to practice it in dealing with ourselves as well as to benefit from faults generated by dealing with others.

Sam Yemen International School is seeking to employ highly qualified and experienced teachers in the following specializations:

- MATHEMATICS TEACHER** (Higher secondary level, I.G.C.S.E system, required for extra classes).
Qualifications: (M.S c).
Experience: Not less than 3 - 5 years.
- PHYSICS TEACHER** (Higher secondary level, I.G.C.S. E system, required for extra classes).
Qualifications: (M.S c).
Experience: Not less than 3 - 5 years.
- SCIENCE TEACHER** (Higher secondary level, I.G.C.S. E system, required for extra classes).
Qualifications: (M.S c).
Experience: Not less than 3 - 5 years.
- ART TEACHER BPDOHD**
Qualifications: Graduate.
Experience: Previous teaching experience required.
- MUSIC TEACHER BPDOHD**
Qualifications: Graduate and should be able to teach with notes.
Experience: Previous teaching experience required.
- OFFICE SECRETARY BPDOHD**
Qualification: B.A (required professional typist in Arabic and English and photoshop designing with 3 years experience).
Experience: Previous teaching experience required.

Applicants should be fluent in English and preferably with American or British accent. Interested candidates are requested to contact the following phone numbers:

Tel. No.: 440353, 4 extension 2.
Mobile: 77206705.

CARE international Yemen-YWU Capacity Building project is envisaged recruiting a consultant for three months (3 months starting from March - May 2005) to train the YWU in Arabic on Advocacy and development of advocacy strategy.

Expected output:
The expected output of this consultancy will be:

- To have devised a 3 training rounds each rounds include 7 of the YWU branches.
- To have developed a simple manual on Advocacy in Arabic for the YWU training unit.
- To develop an advocacy strategy for the three identified areas by the YWU.

Qualifications and experience
The candidate should have a strong background and experience in advocacy, with a comprehensive experience in training facilitation, and development of training manual, and development of advocacy strategy. For detailed TOR please contact 298780 fax 298718 email: ywu@yemen.net.ye
Deadline to receive consultant proposal is 20th of February 2005

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Asia quake, tsunami moved islands, shortened days

By JIM LONEY

JAKARTA, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The massive earthquake that triggered the Asian tsunami wobbled the earth on its axis, forced cartographers back to the drawing board and changed time by a fraction, but there's no need to adjust your clocks.

Six weeks after the tsunami that may have killed 300,000 people on the shores of the Indian Ocean, scientists are discovering more about the changes wrought by the magnitude 9 quake, the fourth-largest in the last century.

It caused upheaval on the sea floor near its epicentre off the northwest coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island and moved several other islands, but scientists say any movement of land mass can be measured in centimetres rather than tens of metres.

Chen Ji, a seismologist at the California Institute of Technology, said he found movement along the fault line of about 10 metres (33 feet) laterally and four or five metres (13-16 feet) vertically.

But reports that the entire island of Sumatra — 1,700 km (1,060 miles) long and 400 km (250 miles) wide — moved 35 metres (115 feet) or more are wildly inaccurate, scientists say.

"We know we have movements of over a metre, perhaps a couple of metres," said

Ken Hudnut, a California-based geophysicist with the U.S. Geological Survey. "But the idea that Sumatra has moved 100 feet is just wrong."

Scientists are working on precise measurements by comparing geographic points whose locations were known before the quake with their new positions using the Global Positioning System, which reads exact locations by satellite.

High-tech British and U.S. ships are investigating changes to the sea bed and local authorities are measuring depths in critical shipping channels.

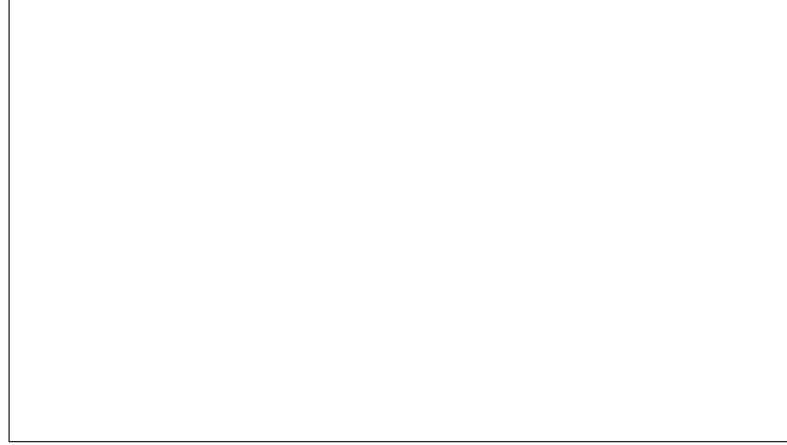
Shorter day

Scientists at NASA, the U.S. space agency, said the Dec. 26 quake — the largest to rattle Earth since 1964 in Alaska — disrupted the planet's rotation and shaved 2.68 microseconds, or millionths of a second, from the length of a day.

NASA scientists B. F. Chao and Richard Gross calculated it shifted Earth's mean north pole about 2.5 cm and made the planet slightly less oblate, or flattened at the poles.

"Physically, this is analogous to a spinning skater drawing arms closer to the body, resulting in a faster spin," they wrote in an article in *Eos*, a publication of the American Geophysical Union.

But they said these changes are based



An aerial view of Marina beach after a tsunami triggered by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean hit the area in the southern Indian city of Madras in this Dec. 26, file photo. REUTERS

on calculations rather than measurements. The changes are so small they are either difficult to measure or too small to detect.

Many earthquakes shake the planet's axis and affect its rotation, scientists added, but their impact is too small to measure.

But environmental damage from the tsunami was vast. The killer waves gouged beaches, crushed coral reefs, smashed thousands of hectares of mangrove forests and refashioned coastlines from Thailand to Somalia.

A preliminary survey by Indonesia's government and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) estimated the economic cost to the environment at \$675 million in Indonesia alone.

The survey said 25,000 hectares (60,000 acres) of mangroves and 29,000 hectares (70,000 acres) of coral reefs were damaged.

Reefs, mangroves

Some coral reefs — undersea gardens that act as shelter and nursery to a wide range of marine species — were crushed by the waves. Corals grow slowly, some only a few centimetres a year, so their recovery could take decades.

John Pernetta, a UNEP official in Bangkok, said the extent of damage to some of the coral reefs around Thailand

was very high — up to 80 percent in some places. Their recovery was uncertain.

Mangroves torn out by the waves will fare better, he said, as they leave behind roots and seeds that will help them regenerate.

"Long-term damage to mangroves by hurricanes or tsunamis doesn't really happen," Pernetta said. "After five to 10 years you don't even know anything has happened."

Vast stretches of Sumatra's west coast were turned brown by the tsunami as rice paddies and other vegetation were swamped by salt water. It could take two or three rainy seasons to wash the salt from the saturated land, experts say.

The tsunami waves ate away beaches and coastal areas in Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, radically changing maps.

The waves also carried sediment ashore, said Phil Liu, a Cornell University wave researcher who led a scientific team to Sri Lanka in mid-January.

"There is evidence that a lot of sediment was being brought onshore," he said. "A post office on the east coast was found with sediment deposits on the roof."

But it remains to be seen whether such sediment is good for the land or a bane because of its high salt content.

Make it accessible: The importance of health education

By TAMMAM ALI AL-BARMAKI
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES
TAMHAM2005@HOTMAIL.COM

By being treated in hospitals and dispensaries people learn a new attitude to disease, for example, that some diseases are caused by germs, which can be killed by drugs and whose spread can be prevented. They should also learn other things, like appreciating cleanliness, understanding the importance of good food, especially for children, and realizing that careful nursing is as important as medicines and injections.

Knowledge about children's health and the treatment of sick children is not enough. It is also necessary to teach, to explain what is known in a simple way so that knowledge about the care of children will spread among people in the surrounding villages. This must be carried out by all means possible. The following people maybe taught: in patients and out patients. Of all of these the antenatal mothers and parents of children will be most receptive.

People maybe taught individually or in groups. With group teaching, it is important that the health education must be varied to suit the group. Even those who have spent a year or two in primary school may be prepared to listen to a proper course of lectures and perhaps even attend a course at the end of which they can take a test and receive a certificate.

It is unwise to talk too long to people who have never been used to classroom discipline, as their attention will wander. They will be most interested in news items and practical demonstrations. News items include items of immediate interest. For example, that there has been an outbreak of dysentery in the village, and this is how it is possible to prevent children from becoming infected. Or that it is hoped to immunize all the children at the clinic against whooping cough, with an explanation of how and why this

is to be done. Practical demonstrations include bathing a baby, bathing a child's eyes, preparing various kinds of food. These should always be given in a place where everybody can see what is being done in an interesting way. It is most useful if one of the parents can be asked to do the demonstration while the others comment.

Nursing procedures (e.g. precautions against the spread of diarrhea) can also be used for health education. Ideally, the preparation and serving of meals in the children's ward should always be a demonstration of the proper feeding of infants and children. Discussion is always the best way of teaching because people can only learn by asking questions and thinking for themselves. It is also helpful in finding out ideas that mothers have, and also their problems.

There are some possibilities for cooperation with health education outside the hospital such as community development. Assistance may be given with health education in clubs and other groups in the area. It may also sometimes be possible to obtain help from community development staff in carrying out health education at the hospital.

There are from often ways in which schools can co-operate with hospitals to help make health education more interesting. However, health education in schools is mainly by learning from clean healthy surroundings with a good water supply and adequate latrines, and by having a nutritious school meal. Teachers themselves should learn about health in their training so that they may in turn teach their pupils. No poster or model can take the place of practical demonstrations.

It is sometimes possible to prepare special programmes for broadcasting as part of a local health education campaign. Also it is very useful to have simple leaflets and booklets in the local language available to give away to interested parents with advice about the most important aspects of infant feeding and child care for the particular locality.

An Acehese man leaps through the ruins of a house near the tsunami-hit city of %DQGU@eh on the Indonesian island of Sumatra in this Jan. 8, file photo. REUTERS

Ministry of Finance
Civil Service Modernization Project
Implementation Project Unit

Accounting & Financial Management Information System (AFMIS)
Request for Expression of Interest of International Advisor/An AFMIS Component Test Third Party Consultant

The Government of Yemen, GOY, is conducting a Civil Service Modernization Project, CSMP, which comprises, among other component, the computerization of a Financial and Accounting Management Information System, AFMIS that is supervised by the Ministry, MOF, through a Project Implementation Unit, PIU, and funded by the International Development Agency, IDA, of the World Bank, WB and the Government of Yemen.

AFMIS is designed to address three major parts of public finance management reform; those are budget preparation, budget execution and accounting. AFMIS is a main component of the whole modernization project, and will accommodate certain agreeable sets of reform steps in the public expenditure process, of Yemen, both at the Central and Local Authority Levels. The system in its first stage will be rolled out the three large spending units, and ultimately to all other governmental spending units. At this stage of implementation it has been agreed between the GOY and World Bank that technical assistance (TA) is needed to mitigate potential project implementation risks in the areas of Project management, treasury design and third-party testing. To address these needs and help ensure that the target milestones of the AFMIS component are met, the Bank has proposed deploying the above-mentioned three advisors, and this TR is the subject of the third party tester for AFMIS application Software to be produced by the project contractor.

Responsibilities
In general, the Contractor selected to do the testing should be familiar with the following aspects while doing the testing of AFMIS. The contractor is expected to perform, inter alia, five main testing activities. These five activities collectively ensure that the AFMIS software that has been written and produced by Yemen soft is error and bug free. The major testing activities are:

- Creating a Test Plan
- Designing Tests
- Implementing the Test cases
- Executing Tests
- Evaluating Test results

Each of these activities has inputs and output test assets associated with each; each activity will require certain assets as inputs produce other test assets as outputs and may use these assets interchangeably.

- Ensuring that all Software component comply with the approved conceptual design documents, the following tasks should be carried out
- Performing application Software test process in accordance with all General Condition clauses and special condition clauses stated on the project contract signed between AFMIS and the contractors (Yemen Soft and CEW) on 31/5/2003:
 - The deliverable, modules, and sub-modules must be provided as part of an integrated system with clear specification for the central role of the general ledger.
 - A transition path for an AFMIS move to full accrual base accounting is well defined, implemented, and produced
 - While remaining on a cash basis of accounting, a GFS2001 compliant budget classification is to be implemented as a main part of AFMIS
 - A confirmed chart of accounts is developed and implemented
 - A budget execution function currently undertaken by the CBY is taken over by MOF through AFMIS application
 - Business process description for each modules and sub-modules is reflected in AFMIS deliverables through input process and outputs.

Qualification

- MS/PHD in computing with extensive knowledge of governmental public expenditure computerized system.
- Perfect English Language.
- Experience in AFMIS Conceptual Design, Networking and Implementation.

Deliverables
For each module and sub-modules of AFMIS in accordance with the responsibilities mentioned above a testing procedures document includes the following:

- Test processes
- Test indicators
- Test data
- Test indicators and measurements
- Test results

Scope of the Mission
Short term visit to Yemen each two months for a period of one year.
The consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank guidelines selection and employment of consultants by World Bank borrowers (current edition, January 1997, and revised in September 1997 and January 1999, May 2002 and may 2004)

Males and females will be accepted in this position
Candidates who have the necessary qualification are invited to submit their Curriculum Vita with a copy of their qualification no later than 28 of February, 2005 to the following address:

Ministry of Finance
AFMIS Project coordinator's Office
OVDILD6DQDDNemen Tel: 504164, 504161
Or by email: afmisyemen1@yahoo.com

Ministry of Finance
Civil Service Modernization Project
Implementation Project Unit

Accounting & Financial Management Information System, AFMIS
Request for Expression of Interest of International Advisor for the AFMIS Project Management, IAPM

The Government of Yemen, GOY, is conducting a Civil service modernization Project, CSMP, which comprises, among other component, the computerization of a Financial and Accounting Management Information System, AFMIS that is supervised by the Ministry, MOF, through a Project Implementation Unit, PIU, and funded by the International Development Agency, IDA, and the Government of Yemen.

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Responsibility
It is the responsibility of all involved to ensure that the Project management Advisor has the ability to independently with all parties concerned within the ministry of Finance. He should be present when possible as an active participant in the work of the steering committee.

The International consultant/Project management Advisor will report to the PIU Manager. He/she is to advise and evaluate the coordination of technical, management and user requirements; advise the MOF on international best practices and develop a strategic action plan for the next 12 months on the major milestones and specific deliverables/He will undertake two-week VSHUYLVLRQBLVVLRLQW/RBDQDDDBFRQWIRUW/HQHWLBRQVWVW/RBNDL and assist the GOY in implementing the AFMIS component.

International consultant will work closely with the AFMIS Ministerial Committee comprising of senior MOF officials and key user groups/he would also work with relevant line ministries and the AFMIS vendor. S/he will have equal reporting responsibility to the Minister of Finance and the World Bank.

The project management advisor will, inter alia, carry out the following tasks:

- Ensure progress of AFMIS implementation in relating to timing and recourse
- Advise and review and revise the project plan in accordance with the conceptual design to be produced by the International Advisor for AFMIS conceptual Design and the project vendor have it submitted to the AFMIS Ministerial Committee and Adopted by the Minister of Finance/Vice prime Minister by the end of June 2005
- Supervise and support the work of the International consultant for the conceptual design and of the AFMIS vendor
- Ensure coordination between AFMIS development and GFS adoption for budget classification (action plan to be adopted by may 31, 2005 for GFS), and help ascertain which GFS measures may be adopted by AFMIS depending on technical resources and capacity
- Report to the AFMIS Ministerial Committee on a bi-monthly basis on AFMIS progress, raise issues needing to be solved before the next step, ensure that support and help are provided to the relevant units of the Ministry of Finance as needed.
- Ensure Ministry-wide information and dissemination on AFMIS progress.
- Ensure timely information of the Minister of Finance/Vice Prime Minister
- Build capacity and transfer knowledge

Qualification and experience

- MS. In business administration Information systems, Public finance, or related subject. A minimum 11 years experience in project management.
- Demonstrated experience in the management of comparable projects in developing countries, particularly in the Middle East Region.
- Superior proficiency in the English language; knowledge of Arabic would be asset (otherwise a translator will be provided by the IDA credit)

Deliverables
Regular/Periodic Report at the end of each visit

Scope of the Mission
Two weeks visit per month for a period of six months.
The consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank guidelines selection and employment of consultants by World Bank borrowers (current edition, January 1997, and revised in September 1997 and January 1999, May 2002 and May 2004.)

Males and females will be accepted in this position
Candidates who have the necessary qualification are invited to submit their Curriculum Vita with a copy of their qualification no later than 28 of February, 2005 to the following address:

Ministry of finance
AFMIS Project Coordinator's Office
OVDILD6DQDDNemen Tel: 504164, 504161
Or by email: afmisyemen1@yahoo.com

Carter Hits Milestone, Nets Overcome 76ers

TORONTO (Reuters) - Jason Kidd notched a triple-double and fellow All-Star guard Vince Carter poured in 43 points to reach 10,000 in his career as the New Jersey Nets rallied to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 107-97 in overtime Monday.

Kidd had 22 points, 11 rebounds and dished out a season-high 16 assists to collect his 62nd triple-double and help the Nets extend their home winning streak to five games.

Carter, obtained in a trade with the Toronto Raptors earlier this season, became the 41st player to reach the 10,000 milestone. His final five points in regulation forced overtime.

To complete a productive night, Carter also contributed 14 rebounds.

The 76ers were without Allen Iverson, the NBA's leading scorer missing the game with flu.

Six Philadelphia players scored in double figures, led by 28 points from Willie Green.

In Atlanta, Antoine Walker collected 26 points, Tony Delk added 25 and Josh

Childress had his first career double-double as the Hawks upset the slumping Los Angeles Lakers 114-108.

Childress recorded season highs in points (19) and rebounds (11) as the Hawks, last in the Eastern Conference, claimed only their 10th victory of the season.

Los Angeles almost erased a 29-point deficit, closing to 98-97 with three minutes to play.

Kobe Bryant, who continues to nurse a badly sprained ankle that has sidelined him for nearly a month, watched from the Lakers's bench.

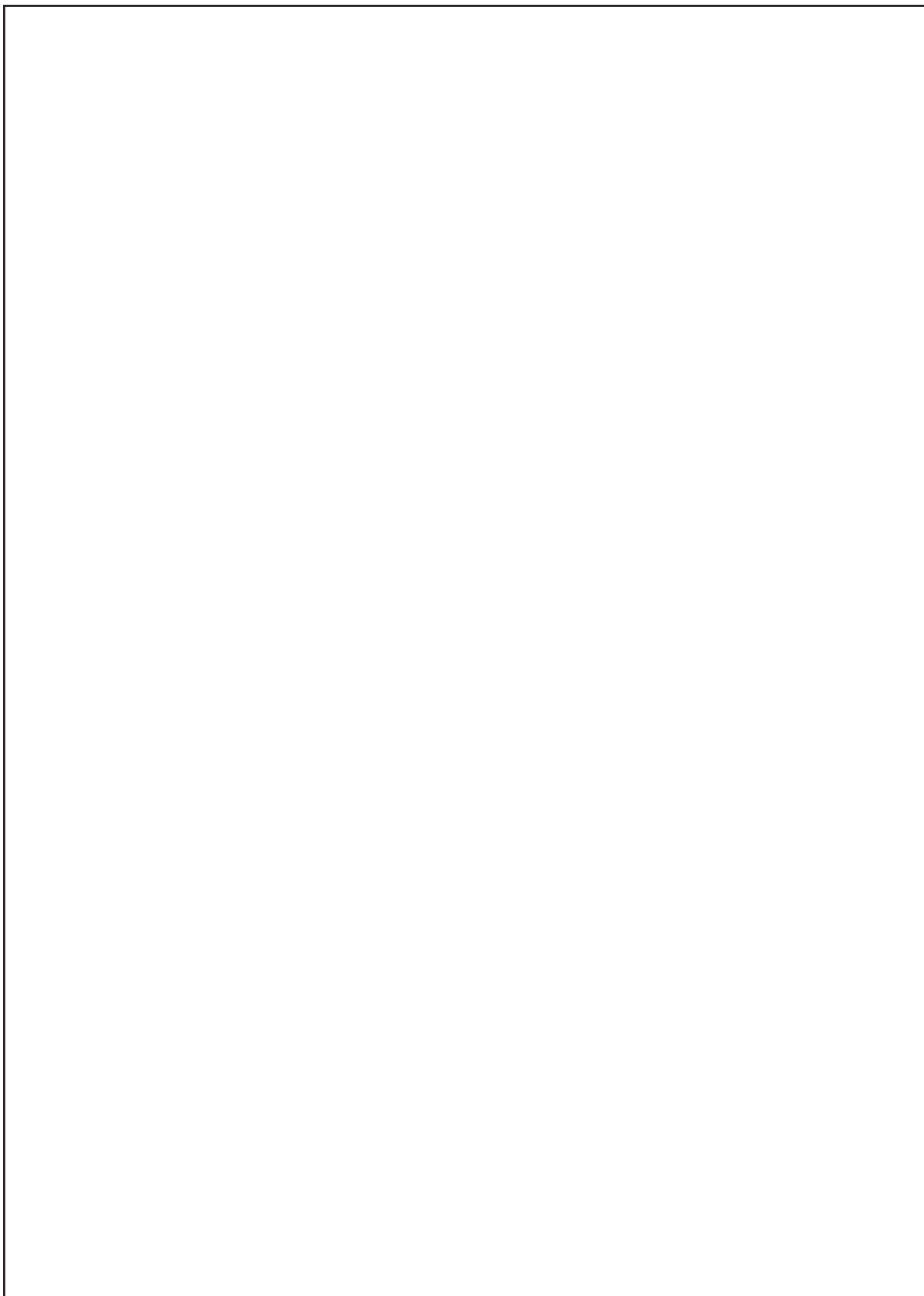
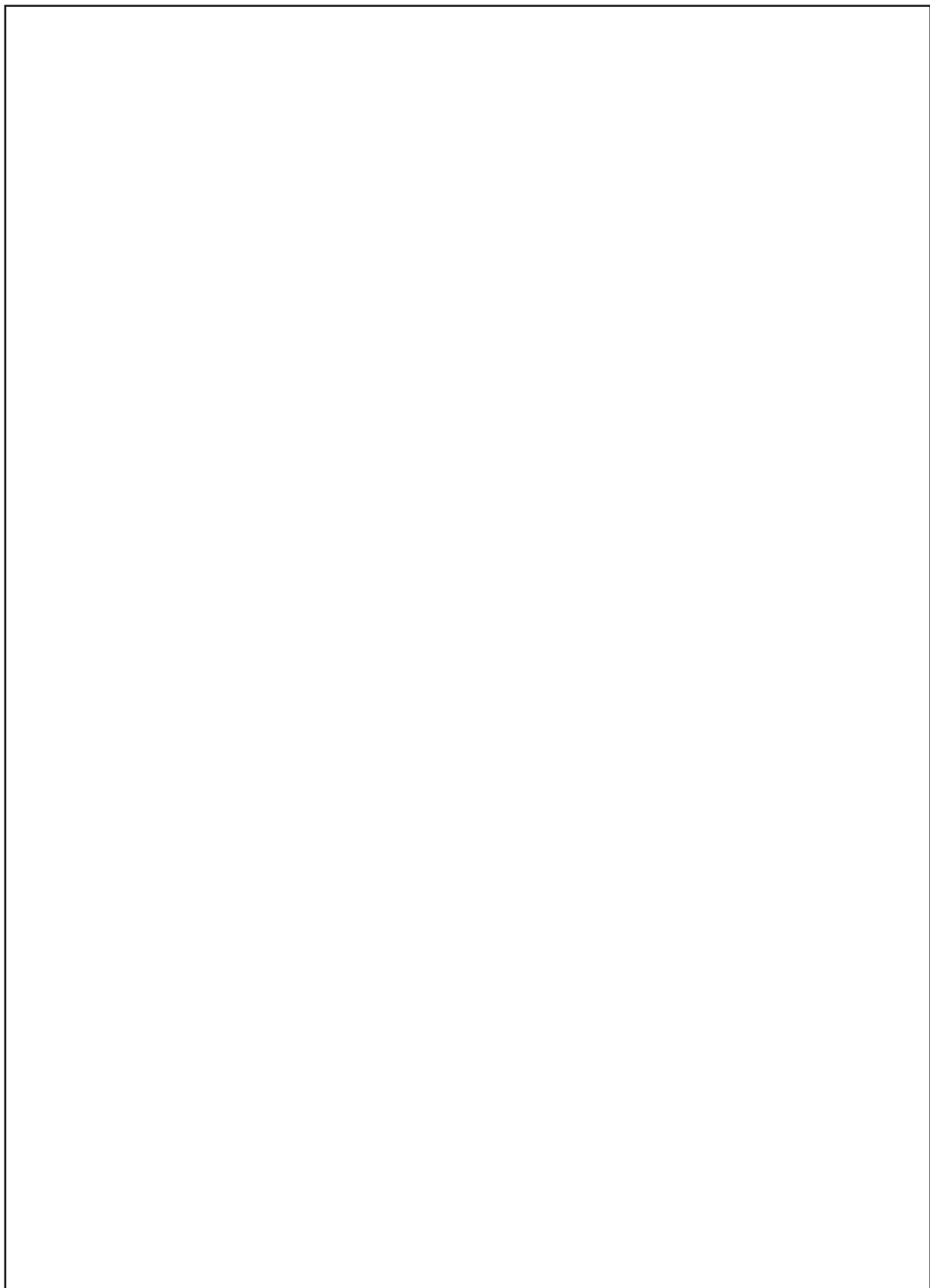
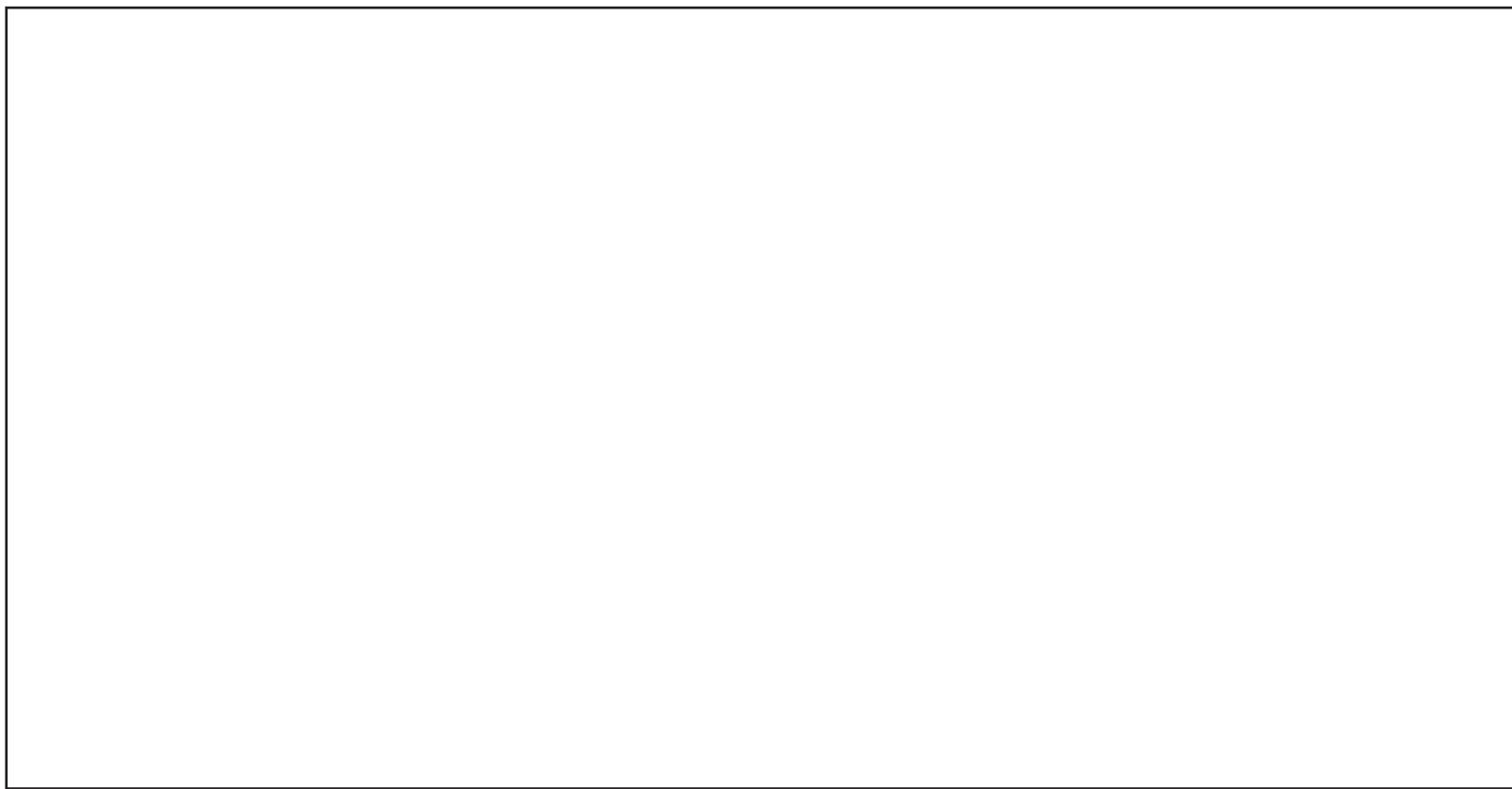
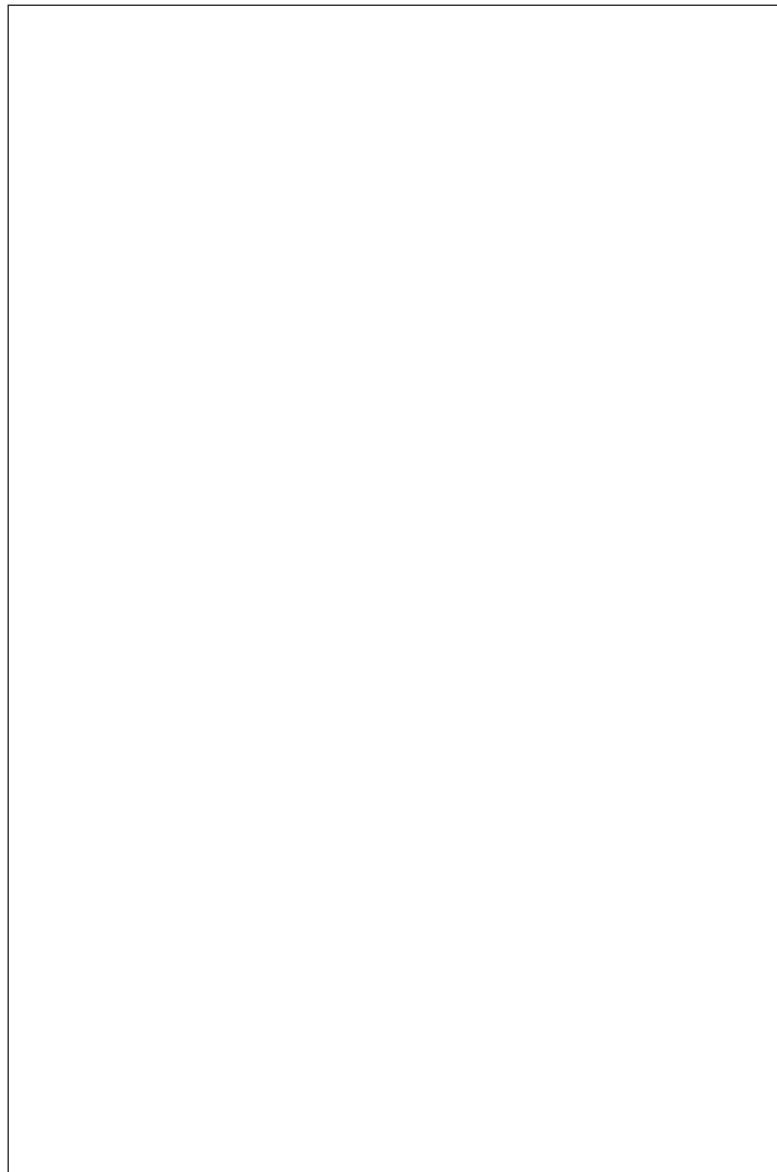
Lamar Odom led the Lakers with 28 points and Tierre Brown added 27.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas tied his career-high with 43 points, including 16 in the fourth quarter, to lead the Wizards to a 108-104 triumph over the Indiana Pacers.

Antawn Jamison added 24 points for the Wizards.

Jermaine O'Neal had 30 points, 13 rebounds and blocked five shots for the Pacers while Stephen Jackson picked up 29 points.

New Jersey Nets guard Vince Carter celebrates after he scored against Philadelphia 76ers guard Aaron McKie in the second quarter of their game in East Rutherford.
Reuters



Conference reflects growing interest:

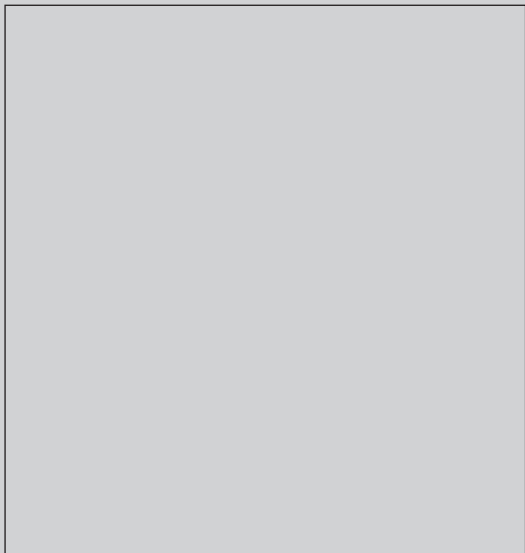
Yemeni women's sporting events promoted

INTERVIEWED BY ADEL AL-KHAWLANI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni Olympic Committee (YOC) is enthusiastic about the importance of women's representation in international events and has played an integral role in boosting the presence of women in various sporting organizations. They also encourage hand-capped women competitors in the annual Olympic Day Run.

One of the most important events to be hosted in Yemen under the supervision of the YOC is the conference on Woman and Sports scheduled for May 11-12, 2005.

To discuss events behind the scenes of the conference and Yemen's interest in women's sports, the Yemen Times forwarded the following questions to Mrs Naseem Ahmad al-Milaiki, Head of Woman and Sports Group at the Yemeni Olympic Committee and Coordinator of the Conference.



Naseem Ahmad al-Milaiki, Head of Woman and Sport Group at the Yemeni Olympic Committee. She is also a Member at the Asian Work Group and Member at the Development Committee in the Islamic Union for sports and Woman.

Q: What can you tell us about the history of women's sport in Yemen, and which games practiced by Yemeni women?

A: The movement of women's sports in Yemen has a long history dating back to the period prior to the foreign occupation. Yemeni girls have reached advanced positions at the Arab and regional levels in different Olympic games. After a suspension of women's sports which lasted for a few years, women's sport activities recovered once again to be practiced by large numbers of Yemeni ladies all around the country. The most important games currently practiced by ladies are chess, table tennis, volleyball, handball, basketball, judo, and gymnastics.

Q: What about the sporting event to be hosted by Yemen in May 2005, do you expect that there will be some obstacles facing the organizing committee during the event?

A: Yemen represented by the YOC is making the necessary arrangements to host the Third Asian Conference on Woman and Sports. The event will be organized by the YOC in cooperation with the Asian Group Work and supported by the Cabinet and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. We hope not to face any obstacles and we do not expect so as we have received so much cooperation and encouragement via which the decision was made to host the conference.

Q: How has Yemen's prepara-

tion for the event been and how would you describe Yemen's interest in women's sports?

A: Hosting the Third Asian Conference on Woman and Sports reflects Yemen's interest in women's sports and its readiness to spread several sport activities among ladies.

Supporting such an event is important and is in compliance with the recommendations of UN General Association, which called for the spreading of development and peace through sports.

The association called on the member countries to support sport activities either through private or public sector initiatives. The UN made a significant contribution to the concept through its universal declaration for sports and physical

education.

Concerning Yemen's interest in women sport, there are some procedures taken by the government to support women's sport activities. These include an agreement that was reached between the UN General Association and the YOC to increase by 20 per cent the number of women participating in different sport activities in compliance with recommendations of the International Olympic Committee. While amending the by-laws related to the sport federations, the concerned bodies approved the presence of at least one woman in every federation to be responsible for women sport activities. The Cabinet has also given approval to YR2 million of funding to support women's sports and establish the necessary infrastructure including clubs, big halls and other annexes.

The strategies adopted by the government during the period 2000-2004 reflect Yemen's strong interest in women sports

Q: Where is the event scheduled to take place?

A: The conference is scheduled to take place at Sheraton Hotel on May 11-12, 2005.

Q: You have just mentioned that there are many strategies associating with women sport activities and have been adopted by the Yemeni Government during 2000-2004, what are they?

A: There have been several strategies adopted by the government from 2000 to 2004:

The first Strategy concerns women sports and The Ministry of Youth and Sports, and stipulates that attention should be drawn towards the creation of women's representation in the structure of sport federations. So far, women's representation has been created in chess, table tennis, volleyball, judo and karate federations.

Allotments of funds for activities and internal and external participation of a fixed annual fund totaling YR 5 million has been approved.

Another strategy involves women's sports and the Ministry of Education.

A joint program has been executed between two ministries providing schools with the necessary sport equipment for volleyball, chess, handball, basketball, and table tennis. Within this strategy, regular courses are organized to qualify women

instructors in the subject of physical education at schools.

Q: Do you have any information about the number of countries due to participate in the conference, what are these countries?

A: We extended invitations to all the Asian countries, 15 of which have already accepted the invitations and now we are waiting for the remainder.

Q: What is the strategy adopted by Yemen with respect to the preparation of participants? Are the women participants selected from places all around the republic or from certain governorates, and what are the Yemeni governorates interested more in women sports?

A: As many as 20 male and female participants from Youth and Sports, Education and Higher Studies Ministries are due to represent Yemen in the conference along with the UN organizations and sport committees in the Yemeni governorates. Besides many civil society organizations as well as the skilled female players who have previous achievements will partake in the conference.

Q: Are there any non-governmental organizations participating the Ministry of Youths and Sports in supporting and organizing the event?

A: There are a number of non-governmental organizations who promised to participate the Cabinet and the Ministry of Youth and Sports in supporting and organizing the event.

Q: How do you see the future of women sports in the country?

A: Women's sport should be constantly supported and adopted by the state and priority should be given to the infrastructure of women sports in the future as well as supporting sports among ladies in schools. Ladies have to be motivated to join different colleges of physical education in order to make up a well-qualified school.

Q: Do you have any final comments about the event?

A: I would warmly thank The Yemen Times for being highly interested in women sports in specific and women-related issues in general. I would also thank the Prime Minister and the Minister of Youth and Sports for their support.

I urge those who promised to contribute to the conference and support us not to go back on what they said.

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

% Eugenia

Aries
♈ 21 - Apr □
Not everyone will be up front with you about money, investments or legal matters. You will have to make your own assumptions today. Relying on someone else will be futile and result in frustration and costly mistakes.

Taurus
♉ 20 - May □
You need a change of scenery. Join a group that will get your mind racing. You will be at your best when you are contributing to something worthwhile. Someone new will impress you on many different levels.

Gemini
♊ 21 - Jun □
Stick to your game plan and GROW! Emotional matters slow you down. If you are to the point and know what you want, you will get your way. Changes may alarm you, but you can make them work to your advantage.

Cancer
♋ 21 - Jul □
You can make some very subtle changes today that will result in clearing up financial or legal matters hanging over your head. Confront a situation at home that has been bothering you.

Leo
♌ 23 - Aug □
You may have to make a decision that will affect your living arrangements or financial situation. Do DWDs necessary to protect what you have. Honestly coupled with a little Leo finesse will win support.

Virgo
♍ 23 - Sep □
Work is where LW! If you have a job, strive to advance; if you GROW! up interviews or apply for positions. A business or personal partnership that can alter your future is apparent.

Libra
♎ 23 - Oct □
You will have some terrific creative ideas that can lead to a moneymaking deal. Changes regarding your work will be to your benefit. ROW!bok back; do your own thing and you will succeed.

Sagittarius
♐ 22 - Dec □
You may be tempted to believe someone who is unpredictable. Focus more on love than financial deals or work. This is a day for action, not words. You will do better if you GROW! discuss serious matters.

Scorpio
♏ 23 - Nov □
You will find yourself in a difficult situation if you have not been honest about something. You may have to make a promise in order to keep the peace. Make sure you GROW! back on your word.

Capricorn
♑ 22 - Jan □
You can move mountains today if you put your mind to it. Your ideas are solid, and your ability to take one of your dreams and turn it into a reality will be most rewarding. Changes will be beneficial.

Aquarius
♒ 20 - Feb □
You have much going on right now, but what is most important is that you follow your heart and your dreams. Follow the path that you know will bring you the greatest satisfaction.

Pisces
♓ 19-Mar □
You will be emotionally unpredictable. ROW!let your own uncertainty lead to an irreversible mistake. Finish one thing before you start another. You have to be honest about what you want in order to get ahead.

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German annual support for Yemen up to \$ 40 million

BY MOHAMMAD ANSALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The German Ambassador to Yemen held on Monday Feb. 3 a press conference at the premises of the German Embassy in which he reviewed the development of Yemeni-German ties in a number of cultural and developmental areas.

The conference included many activities relevant to learning German in Yemen that started ten years ago in Sana'a and Aden.

The German Language started to be taught in 9 secondary schools in Sana'a as a first step, as well as at the German House. The German Language is also being taught at the German Consulate in Aden.

The German Ambassador announced in the press conference that his embassy will support the learning of German in Yemen with \$3600 for the year 2005 to pay for salaries of the four teachers who are to teach at the secondary schools in the capital.

He talked about the German support saying that his country supports the development activities in Yemen with \$40

H.E. The German Ambassador

H.E. The German Ambassador receives a \$3600 Cheque from Mr. Treuem Fels, Representative of Dermalog Organization

million per year.

On his part, Mr. Treuem Fels Representative of the German organization, Dermalog, said that his organization will offer 250 thousand typed cards with special techniques based on thump print and photo as well as other job-related descriptions.

This technology will help stop the phenomenon of job duality in

public-sector institutions. He added that the project started being implemented in the middle of the last month and there will be 22 centers to overgeneralize job cards all over Yemen.

Additionally, the organization provides Yemen with special techniques for discovering fraudulent passports of those entering Yemen.

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Global warming could make mars a second home

Injecting synthetic greenhouse gases into atmosphere proposed to make planet hospitable. Greenhouse gases may be a problem on Earth, but injecting them into the Martian atmosphere could make Mars a second home.

A team of researchers has proposed injecting synthetic "super" greenhouse gases into the Martian atmosphere to raise its temperature and melt its polar ice caps to provide conditions suitable for biological life.

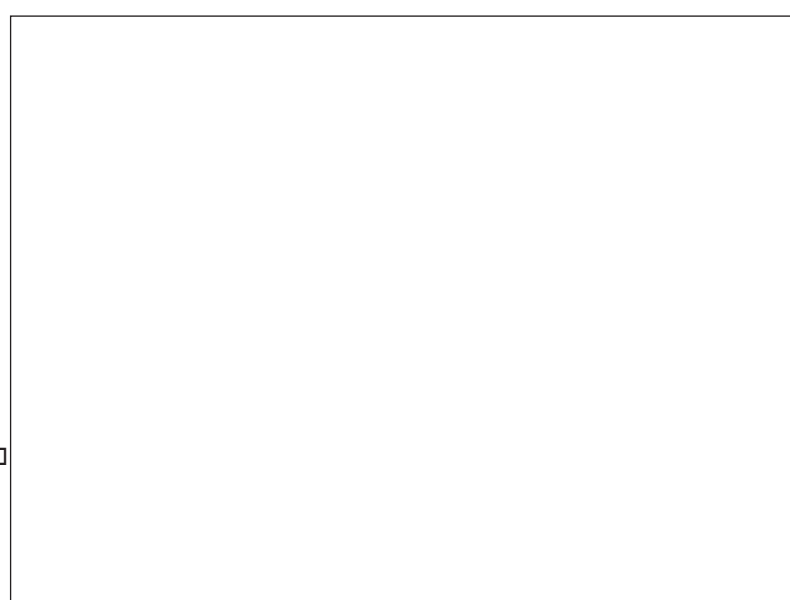
While the researchers were the first to propose the use of greenhouse gases in terraforming Mars, they developed a detailed approach that could be initiated by human visitors to the Red Planet.

"Bringing life to Mars and studying its growth would contribute to our understanding of evolution, and the ability of life to adapt and proliferate on other worlds," says Margarita Marinova, the VWG lead author. "Since warming Mars effectively reverts it to its past, more habitable state, this would give any possibly dormant life on Mars the chance to be revived and develop further."

Fluorine thawing

The approach developed by Marinova and colleagues involves artificially created greenhouse gases nearly 10,000 times more effective than carbon dioxide.

Using a computer model of the



A new proposal for creating a runaway greenhouse effect on Mars could feasibly make the planet more hospitable in centuries.

Martian atmosphere, the researchers analyzed four of the best candidate gases individually and in combination.

Focusing on fluorine-based gases, which are composed of elements readily available on the Martian surface, the found that a compound called octafluoropropane produced the greatest warming alone and even more warming in combination with several similar gases.

Adding about 300 parts per million of the gas mixture in the current Martian atmosphere, the researchers say, could spark a runaway greenhouse effect that

causes the evaporation of carbon dioxide on the Martian surface. This in turn would lead to further melting, temperature increases, enhanced atmospheric pressure and a thicker atmosphere.

While it could take centuries or even millennia before Mars became hospitable to life, astronauts could create the fluorine gases on a manned mission to the planet because the raw materials exist on Mars. This makes the proposal the most feasible yet for raising temperatures and increasing atmospheric pressure on the planet, the researchers conclude.