

New group of Al-Qaeda suspects on trial



Some of the 11 group suspects before court Monday.

YT photo by M. al-qadhi

By MOHAMMED AL-QADHI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Sana'a Counter-Terrorism court will commence trying 13 people next week who are suspected of links to Al-Qaeda and accused of plotting terrorist attacks, a legal source said on Monday.

The new group of suspected terrorists will also be prosecuted on other charges, never before made against Al-Qaeda network members, including some linked to immoral activities.

Meanwhile the same court continued Monday the tribunal of 11 other Al-Qaeda suspects accused of planning to form an armed gang to carry out "criminal acts" in Yemen and abroad as well

as trying to join militants battling U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The list includes: Mohammed Saleh al-Kazmi, 35, Abdullah Yahya al-Wadaee, 27, Mansur Nasser al-Bihani, 31, Shafeeq Ahmed Omar, 26, Ibrahim Mohammed al-Mukri, 43, Mohammed Ahmed Hatem, 30 - all of who were born in Saudi Arabia - and Saddam Hussein Ismail, 24, Fares Mohammed Ali, 27, Abdul Raoof Abdullah Naseeb, 30 and Ahmed Mohammed al-Kardai, 27, and Ismail al-Husami.

The court judge questioned the defendant Fares al-Nahdi, 35, who denied charges of the prosecution. Yet, he said he took 12 Saudi passports which Khaled Fa'aq asked him to give

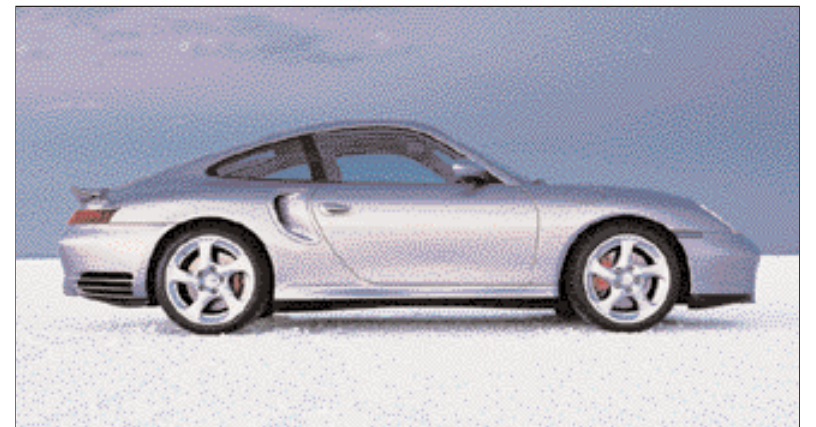
them to Amer al-Nahdi. He claimed the passports were not forged as the prosecutor said. He also admitted that he took 120,000 Saudi riyals which was collected in his region of Saudi Arabia for the Iraqi people after the US war. He said he was given the money by someone called Bakr al-Rabian and his role was to hand over to an Iraqi citizen called Yahia.

He said he was tried in Saudi Arabia and served eight months in jail plus 80 beatings. However, the prosecutor said that he got a letter from the chief of intelligence and that there are documents proving that four of the suspects were tried in Saudi Arabia but not copies of the verdicts. He said Al-Nahdi

was not included in this group who were tried in Saudi Arabia.

The court adjourned the case after dealing with procedural questions and fixed its next hearing for Feb. 28. It ordered that the two advocates appointed to defend the defendants should be given access to the case file.

On Feb. 5, the appeals court sentenced two men to death and jailed 13 other al-Qaeda militants who were accused of bombing the French oil tanker Limburg, plotting to blow up five Western embassies and assassinate the US ambassador along with other attacks terrorist operations in the country. It will deliver the verdict in the Cole case on February 26.



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US undersecretary of state to visit Yemen

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Paula Dobriansky, US Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, is expected to arrive in Sana'a today February 24 for a short official visit to Yemen, a source at the US embassy said.

Mrs. Dobriansky is going to meet with President Ali Abdullah Saleh and other high-ranking officials during her visit. According to the source, Dobriansky will be discussing the reform program in Yemen, particularly in human rights, press freedom, and economic reforms along with bilateral cooperation and agreements.

It is worth noting that many American activists and human rights defenders in the USA have called upon the Yemeni regime to halt the unprecedented attack against the free press in the country.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalist had issued continuous appeals to the President to stop the deterioration in press freedom in the country and prevent closure of newspapers and imprisonment of journalists.

A press conference will be held on this occasion at the Sheraton Hotel in Sana'a, which is to be attended by Abdul-Karim al-Eryani, President's Political Advisor along with the US ambassador to Yemen Mr. Thomas Krajeski.

Mrs. Paula J. Dobriansky was nom-



Paula Dobriansky

inated by President Bush on March 12, 2001, was unanimously confirmed by Senate on April 26 and sworn in as Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs on May 1.

Mrs. Dobriansky is responsible for a broad range of foreign policy issues including democracy, human rights, labor, counter-narcotics and law enforcement, refugee and humanitarian relief matters and environmental/scientific issues.

Economic Research Forum reveals scary facts: Yemen's future economy in serious trouble

YEMEN TIMES STAFF
COMPILED FROM A REPORT BY
ECONOMIC RESEARCH FORUM

A report was recently drafted by the Cairo-based Economic Research Forum on the occasion of the upcoming Arab summit in Algiers. The

report said that in Yemen, where 45.2% of the population lives below the income poverty line of \$US2 per day, the economic outlook is serious. Economic growth rates deteriorated noticeably in the past four years, slumping from 6.1% in 2000 to a tentative rate of 1.9% in 2004.

The government has failed to accomplish many targets previously set within the five-year plan. Declining oil production is likely to further reflect unfavorably on the current account and the fiscal balance as well as on the pace of real GDP growth. Yemen's national oil reserves also look likely to be depleted by 2012, close to a decade earlier than was expected.

Around 50% of the population is under the age of 15, and the government estimates that it must now deal with about 25,000 new job seekers on the market each year.

The World Bank had estimated that in 2002 that adult illiteracy in Yemen was a striking 54%. This compares with an average for low-income countries as a whole of under 40%. The statistics are even starker when broken down by gender, with 73% of Yemeni women being illiterate compared with 21% of men. This compares with around 45% and 20% for women and

men respectively in low-income countries as a whole, and around 35% and 20% for Middle Eastern countries.

Another important issue is the low level of access to basic education, particularly for girls. In 2002, 67% of Yemen's children in the relevant age groups were enrolled in primary schools and only 35% in secondary schools, while the figure for female enrolment drops to 49% and 21% respectively. This compares with an average of over 95% and 40% for all children and around 45% and 35% for girls in low-income countries. Supported by donor agencies, the government is now seeking to address these disparities, with the emphasis to be placed on access to basic education. Change is likely to be slow, as resources are limited.

Although Yemen's universities do have science, engineering and medical faculties, a substantial proportion of graduates are arts students. Yemeni and foreign businessmen therefore find it extremely difficult to find bilingual, literate and IT-proficient local workers. The World Bank and European donor countries have made technical, vocational training a priority in their aid programs, with Germany taking the lead in skills transfer initiatives.

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Oman grants former vice president's family citizenship

BY MOHAMMAD BIN SALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman, granted Omani citizenship last month to Ali Salem al-Beedh, Former Vice President of the Republic of Yemen.

The royal decree No 12/2005 promulgated the following: "We, Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman...have decided:

Article I: Omani citizenship is granted to the following:

- 1- Ali Salem al-Beedh
- 2- Amru Ali Salem al-Beedh
- 3- Tamani Ali Salem al-Beedh
- 4- Malky Abdullah Hassan al-Bahri

Article II: This decree is to be published in the Official Journal and comes into effect on date.

Issued on January 16, 2005.

The decree, which was not published

in Omani local newspapers for certain reasons- according to sources- was published in the Official Journal in its issue No. 784 on February 1, 2005.

An Omani source said that the naturalization decree might please the Yemeni neighbors.

"Such an initiative would nullify al-Beedh's political activity on Omani soil as he is now an Omani citizen. The Sultanate does not allow political activity of neither opposition nor the harbored."

The separatist southern Yemeni leader, who had fled the country after the 1994 civil war, was sentenced to death in absentia by a Yemeni court in March 1998. He has been living in Oman since then.

On 22 May 2003 President Saleh declared an amnesty for Al-Beedh along with 15 exiled political leaders who had fled Yemen in 1994 after the



Ali Salem al-Beedh

civil war.

Previously, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had granted Saudi citizenship to some 250 members of the ousted Imam's family under an agreement with the Yemeni government approved by the Yemeni Shura Council.

Bus drivers hold sit-in

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF
TAIZ BUREAU

A large number of bus drivers who work on the route between the al-Kamat station in the heart of Taiz, and the Military Hospital staged a sit-in on Feb. 21.

The crowd gathered at the headquarters of Taiz Governorate in a protest against the blackmail that they are subjected to by traffic men almost every day.

Drivers decided to gather at the headquarter of the governorate to demand their rights but many of them



Bus drivers protest against the alleged blackmail of the traffic men

were caught by the police, who claimed that they intended to bring violence and chaos to Taiz.

The prominent figures of the demonstrators are still being detained by the authorities.

WB: YCGSI symbol of private sector

TAIZ BUREAU

The World Bank (WB) praised the efforts expended by the Yemeni Company for Ghee and Soap Industries (YCGSI) in combating poverty and in the fields of environment and health by implementing the 'Fighting Bilharzias' Project in a number of Yemeni areas. The bank considered the YCGSI a symbol of the involvement of the private sector in Yemen's development.

This comes after the a field study



was conducted on means to combat poverty in Taiz which was carried out by a team from the WB including Mr. Behret Dahia, WB urban Specialist and Mrs. Rosanna Nitti, Capacity Building

Specialist at the WB Middle East and North Africa.

The study was followed by a workshop, which was attended by Governor of Taiz Ahmad Al-Hajiri, Manager of Trade Administration at the Hail Group Abdullah Sa'eed, and Manager of the YCGSI Shukri Al-Furais as well as a number of local council members from all over Taiz.

The workshop discussed many subjects related to environmental pollution and the proliferation of bilharzias

German journalists visit Yemen Times

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

A group of 12 journalists from Germany visited Yemen Times on Monday to get an idea about the situation of the independent press in the country and know more about the newspaper's activities.

In an hour-long meeting with Walid Al-Saqqa, the Editor-in-Chief of Yemen Times, the group asked about the level of press freedom and expressed concern about the imprisonment of journalists in the country, particularly the case of Abdulkareem Al-Khaiwani and the two chased journalists from Al-Hurriye Newspaper.

"Yes, we may be better, and in some cases much better, than neighboring countries in terms of the level of press freedom. But what we need to do is to improve further and not compare with the rest. We need to compare with the situation in Yemen years ago, particularly during 1990-1994 during which the freedom of the press was in its golden era." Al-Saqqa told the guests.

The journalists were also curious about



A group photo of the visiting German journalists. YT photo

the conditions of journalists and their income level. They were disappointed to know that journalists are barely able to survive with modest salaries, as most of them need to work multiple jobs to secure an acceptable standard of living.

At the end of the meeting, the group toured the newspaper's premises to learn more about the different activities and at

the very end of their tour, they also visited the printing press located near the newspaper's headquarters.

The group was impressed with the fact that the newspaper was able to cover all its expenses from its own sources of income without depending on subsidies or support from the state or any other side.

Authorities seize antiquities traffickers

BY MOHAMMAD BIN SALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

In collaboration with the General Antiquities Authority last week, police have caught a gang of five people led by a Jordanian national who had possession of large quantities of gold, statues and other rare antiquities, allegedly with the intention of selling them abroad.

Colonel Hisham al-Ghazali, General Manager of Terrorism Combat and Crime Department at the Ministry of Interior, was quoted by the September 26 weekly, which published the case in its Thursday issue as saying "the gang, led by a Jordanian national named Sameer Jadallah, was seized after extensive efforts stepped up so far to fight antiquities trafficking, the gang included a Yemeni national from al-Jawf who was also caught on the charge of selling antiquities to foreigners."

Al-Ghazali added that the suspect confessed that he collects antiquities and sell them to foreigners, the most prominent of whom was Sameer Humadi, a Palestinian who holds Jordanian citizenship and has been residing in Yemen for several years.

Antiquities Protection Authority Manager, Hashim al-Thawr, said to September 26 Newspaper "the seized antiquities exceeded 30 gold pieces weighing one kilogram and they are rare articles including earrings, jewels and ornaments dating back to the Abbasi and Himiari eras."

"The seized antiquities included large quantities of the pearls, precious stones, jewels and bronze statues," he added. "The gangster confessed during investigations that he has been, for a long time, smuggling Yemeni antiquities to a number of world countries through the UAE, Jordan and Syria, and the sale process takes place with the aid of specialized international gangs."

It is alleged that the man has been carrying out exploration operations in some of the ancient sites with the aid of many Yemeni nationals. He has been using modern devices, some of which not even available at the General Authority for Antiquities, Museums and Scriptures.

Al-Ghazali mentioned that the five suspects are still being investigated and pointed out that some other suspects have also been caught.

Readers' Voice

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

This edition's question:

Do you think that the regime is behind the defamation of Al-Ahmar in Al-Mithaq newspaper?

- Yes
- No, it was personally motivated

last edition's question:

Do you think that Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hassan al-Moayad had the ties with Osama bin Laden that he is accused of?

- No, al-Moayad was not actually tied to bin Laden 50%
- Yes, al-Moayad was tied to bin Laden 50%

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ALESC's 75th meeting recommends economic reforms

By Yemen Times Staff

Functions of the 75th meeting of the Arab League's Economic and Social Council (ALESC) were concluded at the end of last week in the city of Aden with recommendations that focused on economic reforms and initiatives to facilitate trade between Arab countries, enhance transparency and remove any barriers to investors.

Dr. Khalid Sheikh, Yemeni Minister of Industry and Commerce chaired the meeting sessions.

The concluding statement confirmed the importance of supporting the economic sector at the General Secretariat of the Arab League and

providing the human and financial facilities through the budget of the Arab League's member countries. It also stressed that specialized Arab organizations should abide by the decisions issued by the Arab league concerning the restructuring of the joint work of Arab establishments and the executive offices of Arab organizations particularly in fields related to financial and administrative affairs.

The meeting requested from the Arab Leagues' General Secretary to prepare the practical program to support the less-developing countries and help them join the Big Arab Free Trade Organization (BAFTO).

Regarding the customs-related restrictions in Arab countries, the

council decided the suspension of work in the agricultural sector and suspending the issuance of licenses of import and export according to what has been mentioned in the executive program of the BAFTO.

The meeting concluded that there is urgent need to ease of border procedures and developing transit agreements between Arab countries as well as practicing the principle of mutual cooperation to facilitate the movement from one country to another.

Concerning the Arab trade motion, the council left the subject to the public and private sectors in the Arab countries and recommended that custom managers should meet to present their own proposals in this respect.



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A Yemen Times survey

Yemenis speak out on frustrations

By KHALID AYEDH
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

The Yemeni people are anticipating with curious eyes since the beginning of the year saddening news from their government. The coming price hikes has become a topic of concern among a large number of people, particularly those of limited income and the unemployed.

Meanwhile, many other people are eager for the implementation of financial and administrative reforms. The civilian already has his own ambitions and hopes and the government, in contrast, has its own strategies and styles via which it attempts to justify its reforms.

To know more about what the average citizen wants from Prime Minister Bajammal's government, the Yemen Times did several person-on-the-street interviews. Following are some responses.

Action, not talk

Mohammad al-Ruba'ee talked to us saying: "We want from Bajammal's government actions not sayings and as Arabs are famous for our spellbinding speeches and know well how to attract others' sen-

timents.

But I think that the Yemeni nation knows the trickery beyond speeches of the government officials. The world became a small village and the Yemeni citizen is not today as it was a long time ago.

"If the Yemeni nation sees in 2005 an improvement in the living standards, 2006 will be a good initiative for the ruling party, but if the citizen remains as remarkable now under fabricated justifications, the government as well as the ruling party will face their inevitable fall," he added.

"Every thing has an end as it has a beginning and there are several powerful empires which fell down. The nature of the nations is that they do not tolerate the ruler for lifetime and the PGC's Government know well about this. Will it maintain its balance and power in the coming presidential elections? And will it carry out the necessary reforms quickly?"

Health and education

Lawyer Abdulfatah Aqeel believed that Bajammal's policy has to work according to the mechanism of offering education and health services for free, as well as it has to reconsider the policy of salaries and wages.

He shouted, "the civilian lives today in a miserable situation; his/her salary does not cover the monthly expenses. So, the government is recommended to sign contracts with construction companies to build houses for its employees and get the cost from his/her salary in installments."

Summing up he explained that Bajammal is bound to face obstacles if he does not carry out financial and administrative reforms and he should have no alternative but to accelerate the reform proceedings, and this will oblige the corrupts to surrender.

Saleh should control council

On his part, Lawyer Ali Saleh Hanash said: "the misleading government is existing in Yemen and if Bajammal has the will to carry out real reforms, he is expected to show resignation as like what happened to the government of Faraj Ibn Ghanim. However, I hope Bajammal's government to work in 2005 better than it did before and I suggest that the President of the Republic take charge of the Council of Ministers, in addition to his being the president of the republic."

Only solution to escape

Coming to Kamal al-Sunbuli, he said:

"in 2005, I hope the government of Bajammal to sign contracts with any other country in order to deport us from Yemen and this will help us get rid of the terribly prevalent poverty. The Government of Bajammal and his ministers proved unable to suggest possible solutions for such a widely spreading issue; his policy is lurching here and there without reaching touchable results. The price of gas and petrol is climbing up, life has become so difficult and the only solution for the citizen is to escape from this country.

Fight terror by caring for poor

"We hope Bajammal to draw attention toward the military and security forces, as their salaries are very low and soldiers have become the most troublesome people in the slice of public-sector recruits. The government has to care for the poor and the unemployed in order not to be attracted to the terrorist organizations, Major Abdulmalik al-Ashbat said.

Fix mistakes

Adel al-Tawili, an ordinary citizen, wondered: "will the Bajammal's government intend to correct its mistakes in 2005, and do its duties fairly compared to other governments across the world

who do their best to offer the best for their citizens? As the price of foodstuffs keeps on going high, how it will be possible for the jobless citizen to live."

He strongly confirmed that if Bajammal's government keeps its current policy without showing reforms in the long run, it would help open the door of terrorism with its both shutters for the poor, considering it the last solution.

Fix prices

"We want the government to accelerate the procedures of financial and administrative reforms, to make available a fixed price list and to create more job opportunities for the idle categories, said Safwat Al-Dhabab. "I hope the government to hold accountable the corrupts and intensify the role of the Central Organization for Control & Audit"

Wake up call

Faris al-Hanomi noted that the majority of youths are jobless and those who

have jobs are the sons of officials whose jobs have been guaranteed for them since they were born.

"I do not know upon which base the revolution happened. Did it erupt on the base of discrimination between layers, or on the base of equality between them", he added. "I hope Bajammal's Government to assess itself as the world always moves on constant changes forward but we in Yemen go backward with the passage of years. The government has to wake up."

Rich versus poor

Anis Zeid believes that the Yemeni ministers led extremely luxurious life and the poor and the needy, in contrast, endure hunger day after day, particularly as the price of the main foodstuffs gradually increases, the dose draws nearer and the government seems unable to put possible solutions in place. "I want our country to be built on base of wealth for all and jobs for all," he cried.

Job Opportunities

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Women are suffering in Yemeni society

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF
TAIZ BUREAU

Hana'a, aged 26, is a university graduate who could not find a government job, despite searching at various government offices every day. Finally Hana'a found a job working in a fast food

restaurant for a very low salary.

Hana'a noted that regardless of the low salary, the most important thing is that she has a job to help support her family. With such a small salary though, she now lives on one meal a day.

"What upsets me a lot is that during my university study I endured sleeplessness in the hope that I could secure

a job after my graduation," Hana'a said.

Hana'a's experience tells a lot about the labor market and the work of women who are compelled to seek work. Poverty and unemployment make numerous Yemeni families grant their girls access to university education, though this is generally limited to fields like education, medicine, and secretarial studies.

eradication institute and at the same time she has a government job with a monthly salary of YR10,000. In the afternoon she sells clothes to make some extra money.

"For my marital life, I live in constant suffering particularly because my husband is staying idle at home and it is me who became responsible for the needs of the children and my home," Hayat shouted.

Yemeni women's employment prospects are further harmed by the lack of employment laws to protect them from unfair or arbitrary treatment in the workplace.

YPF receives grant from Saudi Arabia

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni Presswomen's Forum (YPF) received a grant offered by H.H. Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy of Saudi Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Aviation, on Feb.20.

Mohammad bin Merdas al-Qahtani Saudi Ambassador to Yemen confirmed that the grant from Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz reflected his care for supporting the forum, which offers distinctive activities.

According to al-Qahtani, the forum

is one of the civil institutions that care for women and media issues. He added that his embassy cares about deepening the relationships between Yemen and Saudi Arabia in different areas.

Chairwoman of the YPF expressed her deep gratitude to Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz and the Saudi Ambassador for their interest in supporting civil society organizations in Yemen. She called on the Arab countries to play an important role in supporting non-government organizations.

Fathia, 24, is still studying commerce at the National Institute for Administrative Sciences and simultaneously she has a part time job as a physician's assistant with a monthly salary of YR16,000 to support her family.

These are not the only girls that face difficulties in finding jobs to support their families. Most of them prefer to work anywhere despite the very low salaries.

Hayat, aged 25, is a mother of four, her husband is a soldier but is out of work, so, she has resorted to working as a cleaner for YR 7,000 a month. She is pursuing her education at an illitera-

As Emirates lounge opens at Auckland Airport:

Convenient Emirates flights to Sydney

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Emirates, the Dubai-based international airline, announced two new developments concerning its services to Sydney and Auckland.

New flights to Sydney via Bangkok

On 1st May, Emirates' new Dubai-Bangkok-Sydney daily service will also be extended to Auckland in New Zealand, replacing the current Dubai-Sydney-Auckland daily service which will then terminate in Sydney. This move opens up new connections between Bangkok and Sydney, and Auckland and Auckland.

Emirates will fly its Boeing 777-300 aircraft in three-class configuration on the Dubai-Bangkok-Sydney-Auckland route, offering 18, 42 and 320 seats in first, business and economy classes respectively, plus 23 tonnes of bellyhold space for cargo.

The new service will increase Emirates' flights between Dubai and Bangkok from twice daily to three-a-day by May. It will also add to the airline's current daily non-stop service between Dubai and Sydney, bringing the total number of Sydney flights to twice-daily. Emirates will continue to fly to Auckland thrice daily.



Lounge opens at Auckland Airport

Meanwhile, Emirates has also opened its dedicated airport lounge for passengers in Auckland, New Zealand.

Simply called "The Emirates Lounge", the luxurious new facility at Auckland International Airport will cater to Emirates' premium passengers in First and Business class, as well as Gold members of its Skywards frequent flyer programme. The award-winning airline's NZ\$2 million (AED \$5 million) investment in the lounge reflects its dedication to providing consistently high standards of service throughout the customer's entire travel experience.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-

Maktoum, Chairman of Emirates, said: "We are delighted to offer our New Zealand travellers this new level of service. The Emirates Lounge is another way in which we can ensure that our passengers enjoy the unique Emirates experience even before they board their flight."

These lounge facilities are available to Emirates' First and Business Class passengers as well as Gold members of Skywards, Emirates' frequent flyer programme.

Emirates Airline operates 28 flights a week between Dubai to New Zealand. It currently flies daily to Christchurch via Melbourne, and offers thrice-a-day services into Auckland via Sydney, Melbourne, and Singapore-Brisbane.

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Internet the best solution for many Marriage seekers resort to the media

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF
TAIZ BUREAU

As more people turn to advertisements in magazines or on the Internet to find a marriage partner, one wonders how serious are those who actually respond?

On one website, there are thousands of men and women displayed along with personal details including their age, height and interests.

Is possible for anybody to expose themselves in two or three lines in order to make a genuine impression? This is just one example: "a 29-year-old cultured-beautiful asks for a suitable groom between 30 and 40 years upon the condition that he has to respect the marital life."

Teacher Iman al-Ghamid, 27, says "Frankly I do not encourage the idea of advertising for the sake of having a groom, particularly we live in a conservative society. This manner of merchandizing a woman contradicts her human dignity and if the life partner cannot be obtained according to the traditional ways, I would prefer to stay spinster for the rest of my life."

Arwa, 24, a university student says "I do not mind advertising in any media to find a groom, and this can come after a close investigation and complete study of the advertisement owner including his family origin. There should also be time to allow both families to recognize each other."

A lady requesting anonymity said "at the beginning I was amused by the idea and so I made an advertisement on the internet asking for a groom, not using my real name but revealing some of my personal qualities. I was surprised to find a large number of people who requested to marry me in



Marriage and dating website have become popular.

my email, including highly educated Yemenis. Some of them were already married and wanted to marry again."

Waheeb Thabet, university student says "it is possible for our society to accept the idea of publishing an advertisement of such kind for a variety of reasons. When a young man proposes to girl and her parents learn that there is already a love between the pair, they will refuse the marriage proposal. Besides, relatives of the young man prevent their son from marrying a lady after she made an advertisement of herself."

In the recent days, the number of Arab and Islamic websites that offer services for youths with respect to marriage facilities have increased, and a large numbers of Arab and Muslim youths were found to visit these sites in order to establish relationships and know about each other. As the girl is prevented by her parents to meet

someone who is not of her relatives in order to establish relationship, the internet and the other media means became a suitable way for finding a life partner.

In Yemen we find that the majority of youths (males and females) accept to have an access to marriage and recognize each other through the Internet, however a small minority use this way as a kind of entertainment."

Ahmad, 30, a university graduate, "I hate the traditional methods that helps one get married and during my university study, I recognized many of my female classmates and could not find my life partner. But now I think of marrying a lady from one of the gulf countries and I am ready to travel to her residence or to receive her here upon the condition that I should have an access to know about her family and behavior."

\$15 million Mercure Aden Hotel inaugurated

BY RIDHWAN A. AL-SAQAF
ADEN BUREAU

Minister of Culture and Tourism Khaled al-Rowaishan inaugurated the Mercure Aden Hotel on Feb. 21 along with the Governor of Aden, Dr. Yahya al-Sha'ibi.

The Minister drew the curtain and cut the tape before the launch of the Hotel's service. Then, the Minister made a tour of the hotel and listened to an account of the components of the hotel from Sheikh Omar bin

Laden who said that it is one of the great investment enterprises ever implemented by the Bin Laden Group in Aden.

Aden Mercure Hotel consists of six floors, 50 flats, and 25 wings as well as a swimming pool looking over the sea. The construction cost of the hotel, which is built over 14 thousand square meters, is estimated at \$15 million.

At the inauguration ceremony, the Minister of Culture delivered a speech congratulating the investors on their tremendous efforts in estab-

lishing the project stressing the government's commitment to the encouragement of investors.

Sheikh Omar bin Laden delivered a speech expressing his appreciation for the unconditional support from President Ali Abdullah Saleh for investors and businessmen. He also pointed out that the Group had conducted a visit to Socotra Island and seen the tourist attractions over there. He confirmed that a study has been made to establish investment projects on the Island to serve tourism in Yemen.



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Softly spoken Jaafari set to take on divided Iraq

BAGHDAD, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who is all but certain to be Iraq's next prime minister, is expected to use firm but understated diplomacy to navigate his country around sectarian minefields after last month's historic election.

The main Shi'ite alliance, winner of the Jan. 30 polls, on Tuesday unanimously approved Jaafari for the post, meaning the former exile and leader of the Islamist Dawa Party is virtually guaranteed to get the job.

Once in office, the softly spoken physician faces the daunting task of bringing minority Sunni Muslims once privileged under Saddam Hussein into the political fold after they boycotted the polls or did not vote out of fear of violence.

Saddam's henchmen killed thousands of Jaafari's fellow Shi'ites in the underground Dawa party during the 1980s and 1990s. But the low-key politician does not believe Iraq's repressive past will plunge the country into civil war.

After more than two decades of opposing Saddam, both in Iraq and abroad, Jaafari has learned skilled diplomacy. He also knows that American troops should not leave too soon, with Iraq plagued by suicide bombings, kidnappings and crime.

Majority Shi'ites gained unprecedented power by capturing 48 percent of the votes in the election, while Sunnis were marginalised, raising fears some could join the insurgency.

Jaafari, 58, fled to Iran in the 1980s after Saddam's crackdown on Dawa that culminated in the execution of the party's founder, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Sadr.

Having returned to Iraq in 2003 to serve as a member of the U.S.-appointed Governing Council that previously ran Iraq, he believes Iraqis want to avoid bloodletting.

Seasoned campaigner

Born in the southern holy city of Kerbala, he earned his medical degree



A file picture of Dec. 7 shows Ibrahim Jaafari, Iraqi candidate for the job of prime minister in the new Iraqi government, talking to reporters at a news conference in Damascus. Iraq's main Shi'ite alliance named Jaafari on Tuesday as its candidate for the job of prime minister in the new government, meaning he will almost certainly get the post. REUTERS

from Mosul University before joining Dawa — the oldest Islamic movement in Iraq — in 1966.

As vice president in the current interim administration, Jaafari's role is ceremonial, but he is among the top names on a Shi'ite list formed under the auspices of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the country's most influential Shi'ite cleric.

The list, called the United Iraqi Alliance, won 140 seats in the newly elected 275-seat National Assembly, putting it in the driving seat to run the next government.

Jaafari, a father of five whose family still lives in London, will need all his cool-headed negotiating skills to overcome Iraq's sensitive sectarian divides in a country with many factions, including within sects.

It is a challenge, like others, that Jaafari plays down, insisting that politics is not black and white and must be

handled with patience. Sunnis have a part to play in the new Iraq like everyone else, he says.

"The background of those who are victimising Shi'ites might be Sunni, but there is wide understanding that they do not represent Sunni thinking," Jaafari told Reuters recently.

"Neither Sunnis nor Shi'ites are prepared to accept civil war," he said. "Iraqis have been through many tests but coexistence has held."

Some Iraqis view Jaafari and others like him as politicians who have no right to power because they spent years abroad escaping Saddam while others suffered under his regime. They resent as outsiders those who rode into Iraq on American tanks.

But Jaafari said Iraqis were thankful the Americans had toppled Saddam. "Sometimes when I ride in an American helicopter people wave because they are thankful," he said.

Kuwait parliament to discuss women's vote in March

KUWAIT, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Parliament in the Gulf Arab state of Kuwait could next month view a bill granting women the right to vote, a government minister said on Tuesday.

Washington has been pressing its allies in the Middle East to bring in political reforms, saying lack of freedom and democracy have fostered violent Islamic militancy inspired by the al Qaeda network led by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden.

Asked when the female suffrage bill would be debated, Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet and Parliament Affairs Mohammad Sharar told reporters: "I think in March, God willing."

"We think it will be approved by parliamentarians in light of international circumstances," Sharar said after a meeting to urge lawmakers to speed the bill up.

"We're not isolated from the rest of the world."

U.S.-allied Kuwait last May proposed the legislation allowing women to vote and run in parliamentary elections after a previous attempt in 1999 was shot down by Islamist and tribal lawmakers in Kuwait's all-male parliament.

Social Affairs and Labour Minister Faisal al-Haji said on Sunday the government was committed to allowing women to vote and run for political office.

The Umma party, a new Islamist grouping with influence among hardliners, also said this week women should be allowed to vote.

Several Islamist lawmakers said last year said they would back allowing women to vote but not run in elections.

Gulf Arab states Bahrain and Qatar allow women to vote and stand for election.

Lebanon opposition seeks no-confidence vote in govt

BEIRUT, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Lebanese opposition deputies, capitalising on public anger over the killing of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, said on Tuesday they would seek a no-confidence vote in the Syrian-backed government next week.

The opposition has blamed Syria for Hariri's assassination, demanding that Damascus relinquish its military and political grip on Lebanon and that top pro-Syrian officials resign.

But the government has a solid majority in the 128-member parliament and is unlikely to lose a no-confidence vote despite unprecedented public protests since Hariri's death on Feb. 14.

Thousands of Lebanese demonstrated in Beirut on Monday, calling for the government to resign and Syria to pull out its 14,000 troops from Lebanon, while the United States and France piled up international pressure on Damascus.

U.S. President George W. Bush, in a speech at the start of a trip to Europe, branded Syria an "oppressive neighbour" to Lebanon and insisted Damascus must "end its occupation".

Later, Bush and French President Jacques Chirac issued a joint call for a Lebanon "free from foreign domination".

Bush and Chirac, whose country formerly ruled both Lebanon and Syria, condemned Hariri's killing.

Their joint statement did not blame Syria but backed a U.N. investigation into the attack.

The 25-nation European Union called for an international probe into Hariri's death and underlined its support for a United Nations resolution calling for Syria to withdraw.

Hasty accusations

But Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said calls for an international probe were premature and Beirut should be allowed to hold its own investigation.

He said in remarks published on Tuesday that countries should not rush to accuse Syria of involvement in the killing.

"We cannot accuse one side before we know the facts," the London-based Asharq al-Awsat daily quoted him as saying.

"Those who accuse Syria without evidence will be open to criticism."

Hariri, who holds Saudi citizenship, had close business, political and personal ties to the Saudi royal family.

He was also an ally of Syria for much of his dozen years in and out of power, finally quitting in October after Damascus insisted on extending the term of his rival President Emile Lahoud.

Syria, which has denied any involvement in the huge bomb blast that killed Hariri, indicated on Monday it would start withdrawing some of its troops from Lebanon soon in line with the Taif Accord which ended Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war.

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Strong earthquake hits Iran, hundreds dead

ZARAND, Iran, Feb 22 (Reuters) - A powerful earthquake hit a mountainous region of southeast Iran on Tuesday, killing almost 400 people, injuring hundreds and destroying villages, officials said.

The tremor, with a magnitude of 6.4, was centred on the town of Zarand, about 700 km (440 miles) southeast of Tehran and just 250 km (160 miles) from Bam, devastated by an earthquake that killed 31,000 people just over a year ago.

Distraught and weeping villagers carried dead bodies wrapped in bloodied blankets and bed sheets and scabbled with their bare hands through rubble in search of friends and relatives.

"It's completely devastated, there's almost nothing left of the buildings," Kari Egge, UNICEF representative in Iran, told Reuters by telephone from Douhan village, about 20 km (12.5 miles) from Zarand.

Egge said locals estimated at least 200 died in Douhan alone.

"There are 12 other villages which are also affected, one of which is not accessible due to a blocked road."

There are still people unaccounted for, that's for sure," she said.

Major towns and cities in the area, however, appeared to have escaped heavy damage, officials said.

This meant the toll would not be as high as the many thousands killed in some quakes in Iran in the past.

"The toll now stands at 377 dead and more than 1,000

injured," Ali Komsari, a spokesman for the Kerman provincial governor's office, told Reuters.

A Reuters photographer in another village close to Zarand said local residents had already started burying the dead.

"I saw four children, wrapped in blankets, being buried," he said.

"My whole family is dead," one man cried in images broadcast on state television.



A television grab shows an overall view of a damaged village near the town of Zarand in the Kerman province, about 700 km (440 miles) southeast of Tehran Feb. 22. REUTERS

Cold night ahead

UNICEF's Egge said survivors would need to move to nearby towns and villages to find shelter before nightfall.

"It's at 1,800 metres (5,400 feet) here. It's cold and has been raining. There's no shelter, nowhere for people to stay," she said, adding the U.N. children's agency had calculated that around 80,000 people had been affected by the quake.

Television showed groups of villagers huddled together in the rain, striking their heads and chests in grief. Hospitals in Zarand were full to capacity, it added.

Some of the injured were ferried by train to nearby Kerman where bandaged and crying children clutching bags of serum stood at the railway station.

Poor weather conditions had slowed down the rescue effort, preventing the use of helicopters, officials said.

The Geneva-based International

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said relief teams from the Iranian Red Crescent were distributing food, tents and blankets.

Mostafa Mohaghegh of the Federation, who spoke with Iranian Red Crescent officials, told Reuters in Geneva: "We were told there is no need for international rescue teams. Everything is under control, this size (earthquake) is manageable," he added.

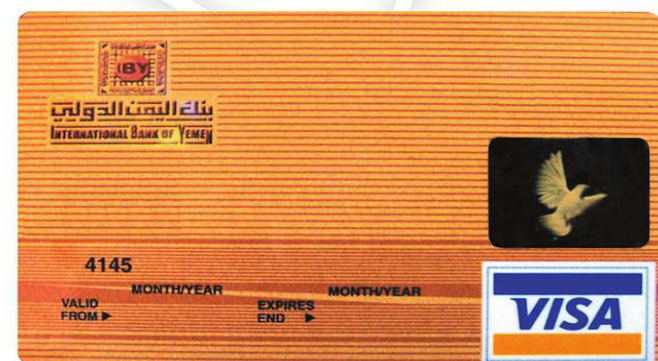
Criss-crossed by several major fault lines, Iran is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the tremor's depth was estimated at 42 km (26 miles) — much greater than the December 2003 Bam quake, which was 10 km (six miles) deep and was also slightly more powerful at 6.7 magnitude. Experts said the greater depth would reduce the impact on the surface.

No major oil or gas production facilities are located in the affected area of OPEC's second largest oil-producer.



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Cambodia police open fire to end factory protest

PHNOM PENH, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Cambodian riot police fired assault rifles and used electric batons on Tuesday to break up a protest by 1,300 workers demanding redundancy payment from a garment factory that shut down last month.

"We are just shooting into the air to scare them away," military policeman Chan Heng told Reuters at the demonstration outside the South Korean-owned Sam-Han Fabrics Co.

factory on the northern outskirts of the capital.

The factory closed in January, but in an unprecedented attempt to ease tension in an industry that employs some 240,000 people, the government stepped in to lend the company \$1.2 million to pay workers' final monthly wages, officials said.

But Khieu Savouth, Cambodia's chief labour dispute negotiator, said the money only covered outstanding monthly wages and not the severance payment to which some of the workers would have been entitled.

"They should go through the courts to solve this problem," he said.

With the expiry this year of preferential trade quotas for small countries



A Cambodian garment worker flees from police during a protest demanding redundancy payment near South Korean-owned Sam-Han Fabrics Co. on the outskirts of the capital Phnom Penh Feb. 22. Cambodian riot police fired assault rifles and used electric batons on Tuesday to break up a protest by 1,300 workers demanding redundancy payment from a garment factory that shut down last month. REUTERS

such as Cambodia under the Multi-Fibre Agreement, its garment factories are coming under pressure from cut-price giants China and India.

Even though the war-scarred country has built a reputation as a relative haven of labour rights and acceptable working conditions, protests are increasingly

common.

In Tuesday's clashes, which appeared to have been brewing for two days, workers threw bricks and rocks at police although no officers were wounded, witness said.

One worker injured his toe running away from a police baton charge, and

another was arrested, police said.

"They should not treat us like this when we are just protesting to get the factory to pay our final wages," said 30-year-old worker Sor Samnang, rallying protesters with a loudspeaker.

The company was not available for comment.

At least 20 garment factories have closed in and around Phnom Penh in the last four months, putting several thousand women out of work, and possibly pushing them into the sex industry, the United Nations said at a recent seminar.

"This is a concern for us," Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh told Reuters. "They used to send money home to their parents. Now some of them have lost jobs. The question is where they are going?"

Cambodian officials remain optimistic that entry last year into the World Trade Organisation will lead to a long-term increase in exports, and not just in the garment sector.

The industry is the impoverished country's biggest foreign exchange earner, accounting for around 80 percent of its \$1.4 billion official annual exports.

N.Korea indicates return to stalled nuke talks

SEOUL, Feb 22 (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong-il said his country would return to six-party nuclear disarmament talks if conditions were right and the United States showed sincerity, his official KCNA news agency said on Tuesday.

It was the first statement by the reclusive Kim since North Korea explicitly declared for the first time on Feb. 10 that it had atomic weapons and was also pulling out of the talks with South Korea, China, Russia, the United States and Japan.

Analysts and officials said Kim's pledge may be a sign the North is backing down from its high-stakes brinkmanship in the face of unified international pressure, including a push by its main benefactor China to restart the stalled talks.

China sent Wang Jiarui, head of the Communist Party's liaison department, to Pyongyang on Saturday to try to revive the talks.

"We will go to the negotiating table anytime if there are mature conditions for the six-party talks thanks to the concerted efforts of the parties concerned in the future," KCNA quoted Kim as telling the Chinese envoy.

Kim said he hoped the United States

would show "trustworthy sincerity and move," KCNA said.

That remark was an apparent reference to North Korean demands that Washington drop what Pyongyang calls its hostile attitude and provide guarantees for North Korea's security.

China has played host to three rounds of the six-way talks aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear programmes in return for aid and security guarantees. However, a fourth round planned for late last year never materialised.

North Korea had never opposed the six-party talks and was committed to de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, said Kim whose country has been branded by U.S. President George W. Bush as part of an "axis of evil" along with Iran and pre-war Iraq.

The new U.S. lead negotiator to the talks, Ambassador to South Korea Christopher Hill, said he was aware of Kim's remarks.

"The DPRK's (North Korea's) future depends on coming to these talks," Hill said at a breakfast meeting.

China is reclusive North Korea's closest friend and its main supplier, and U.S. officials, while grateful to Beijing for already having brought it to the negotiating table three times, had fault-

ed the Chinese for failing to exert more influence.

Speaking to reporters on his return from Pyongyang, Wang said Kim had stressed his commitment to the six-party talks process.

"We clearly expressed our concerns about the statement North Korea made on February 10," said Wang, emphasising to the North's supreme leader that China opposes nuclear weapons on the already highly militarised Korean peninsula just across its border.

Kim had replied that he wanted talks, Wang said.

"He said that our goal and position of de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and resolving the issue through dialogue has not changed," Wang said of Kim.

Future depends on talks

North Korea had not expected Washington, Seoul and Beijing to be as unified as they were in their response, said Ralph Cossa, president of Pacific Forum CSIS based in Hawaii, referring to the Feb. 10 boast to have nuclear weapons.

"The North Koreans pushed a little bit too hard with their last announcement. This one backfired on them," Cossa said.

Prosecutors argue Indonesia's Bashir knew of bombs

JAKARTA, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Indonesian prosecutors made their final push on Tuesday to convict militant Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir on terrorism charges by arguing he was aware of plans for deadly bomb attacks but never tried to stop them.

Prosecutors wound up their case against 66-year-old Bashir on charges that link him to the October 2002 nightclub bombings in Bali that killed 202 people, many of them foreign tourists, and the 2003 blast at Jakarta's JW Marriott Hotel in which 12 died.

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

Prosecutors had earlier cited a lack of evidence when they dropped a primary charge that Bashir had incited terror attacks as the leader of the militant, al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiah (JI) network in Southeast Asia.

On Tuesday, state prosecutor Salman Maryadi said Bashir knew about Jemaah Islamiah's explosives training when he visited a training camp in the Philippines' restive south.

"The defendant is aware that in the military training they teach bomb-making and explosions to participants who are JI members," Maryadi told a Jakarta court.

"The defendant never prevented JI members from executing the bombing.

S.Africa's Mbeki rebukes U.S. over Zimbabwe

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 22 (Reuters) - South African President Thabo Mbeki has criticised the United States for listing Zimbabwe as one of the world's "outposts of tyranny", saying his country could help its neighbour hold free elections next month.

In an interview with London's Financial Times, Mbeki said placing Zimbabwe on Washington's list of six renegade nations last month had discredited its proclaimed policy of promoting world freedom.

New U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice named Zimbabwe alongside Cuba, Belarus, Myanmar, Iran and North Korea as "outposts of tyranny" in a recent speech, but Mbeki told the newspaper he did not view Zimbabwe in the same light.

"I think that it's an exaggeration and I think that whatever (the U.S. government) wants to do with regard to that list of six countries, or however many, I think it's really somewhat discredited," Mbeki said.

"To put all these countries together and say Zimbabwe's one of these outposts of tyranny, how do you justify that? It doesn't mean that there's nothing that's gone wrong in Zimbabwe, but to describe it as an outpost of tyranny..."

Critics say Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has hobbled the opposition in a bid to hang onto power and plunged the country into political and economic turmoil through a policy of

land redistribution using intimidation and violence.

Zimbabwe will hold parliamentary elections on March 31 amid fresh opposition accusations that the political playing field has already been tilted in Mugabe's favour.

Mbeki has remained steady in his quiet diplomacy approach to solving the crisis in Zimbabwe, despite criticism from the West. He defended his stance, saying he too had at certain times publicly criticised Harare over certain policies but that he respected Mugabe with whom he had "very good" relations.

Mbeki said he supported sending a team from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to monitor the Zimbabwean elections and to help create free and fair polls.

But he indicated that he saw little benefit in overt and public criticism of Mugabe's government.

"We agree that there must be land redistribution but the manner in which it is being handled is incorrect, and the way the conflict has arisen between black Zimbabweans and white Zimbabweans is not what we want," Mbeki said.

"But, you see, to take a posture which would say — which I think could be quite easy — we would sit here and say we are going to shout at the Zimbabweans, that's the beginning and the end of any contribution we would make."



Indonesian Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir waves as he leaves court after prosecutors make their closing arguments in his trial in south Jakarta Feb. 22. REUTERS

So, if the participants of the camp's military training made and exploded the bomb, in the name of jihad, there is obviously an intention of the defendant," he said.

The trial, which began in October, was adjourned until February 25 when the defence will make their final statement. A verdict is expected in early March.

Last week, Bashir told the court the charges against him were ordered by U.S. President George W. Bush, who "hired the Indonesian police to catch me and send me to the United States".

Prosecutors stopped short of demanding the death penalty for Bashir, asking instead for jail sentence of eight years.

The relatively light sentence they asked for could raise concerns in

Indonesia and the international community among those who have been watching the trial as a litmus test for Indonesia's commitment in the war of terror.

Officials say Bashir was the leader of the Jemaah Islamiah network, which intelligence experts describe as the regional arm of al Qaeda and blame for carrying out and plotting violence across Southeast Asia.

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

The white-bearded cleric did, however, serve 18 months for immigration violations. He was re-arrested using anti-terror statutes as soon as he was released last April.

Villagers fear security zones will fuel Thai unrest

TOH DENG, Thailand, Feb 22 (Reuters) - A Thai government plan to withhold grants from Muslim villages deemed sympathetic to separatist militants in the far south will intensify the year-long insurgency, villagers said on Tuesday.

"I disagree with what the government is trying to do," said Awaeroh Sarae, a village chief in Toh Deng, where a Buddhist man was beheaded last year in one of the more gruesome episodes of an uprising that has claimed nearly 600 lives since January 2004.

Security officials have classified Toh Deng, a cluster of seven largely Muslim villages of 7,000 people, as a "red" or "dangerous zone" — one of 358 trouble spots so identified out of almost 1,600 communities in the region.

"If we are made red, people will be in even more hardship and be cut off

from development. Many poor people in our village will become poorer," Awaeroh told Reuters.

Muslim leaders, academics and politicians have slammed the plan unveiled by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra soon after his landslide re-election, saying it will only encourage support for the separatist insurgency.

Under the scheme, the 1,580 villages of the three provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat are categorised as red if they are deemed sympathetic to militants, yellow if they are semi-cooperative, and green if they are peaceful.

But a former army commander-in-chief and adviser to King Bhumibol Adulyadej said the security plan would make people feel they were being segregated.

"If this feeling is abused, it's like throwing oil onto a fire," Surayud Chulanont said.

Despite flooding the three provinces

with troops, Thaksin appears no closer to identifying the ringleaders of the unrest, which has variously been blamed on drug gangs, local politicians or smugglers.

Analysts fear international militant groups such as al Qaeda or southeast Asia's Jemaah Islamiah could be trying to tap into the unrest.

RED TO GREEN Thaksin, who was told by the King last December to listen to his critics, has told opponents of his tough stance they have no idea what they were talking about, and challenged them to "live in a red village and try to turn it to green".

But residents of Toh Deng, most of whom work in rubber plantations or orchards, said they did not believe their villages were militant hideouts, but had won a bad reputation only because they had suffered violence over the past year.

They said they chose not to cooper-

ate with the authorities because they were afraid of being arrested by police or soldiers as much as being killed by militants.

"People are upset that they are being accused of living in bandit villages because they've never been in favour of anything bad happening," said Suthipong bin Jaemu, head of Toh Deng administrative council.

"But they don't believe authorities had enough evidence before arresting anyone in their villages," he told Reuters.

Community leaders said police and the army paid more attention to arresting suspects and looking for tip-offs rather than nurturing local well-being.

"If the authorities provide proper development projects for villagers and really take care of them, they will definitely gain trust, unlike now when they just visit us for intelligence tip-offs," said Suthipong.

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مختار محمد حمود المظلافي
بمناسبة عيد الفطر وقرب الزفاف
فألف ألف مبروك
الممننون:
مجموعة شركات المجموعة اليمنية للمقاولات والهندسة
عنهم المدير العام المهندس / حمود عبد الملك المتوكل
وكافة موظفي المجموعة اليمنية

U.S., EU offer to stage Iraq conference

BRUSSELS, Feb 22 (Reuters) - The United States and the European Union have offered to stage a joint conference to coordinate international help in rebuilding Iraq. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's office said on Tuesday.

The announcement came at a NATO summit in Brussels where the two transatlantic partners were at pains to show they wanted to move on after two years of divisions over the Iraq war.

"This will be decided in conjunction with the newly elected Iraqi government.

This is not something we should impose but we want to work with them if they find it useful," a spokesman for Blair told a news briefing on the margins of the summit.

Asked why a joint EU-U.S. conference had been mooted rather than in a format such as the United Nations or NATO, which is looking to boost its political role, the spokesman said:

"There is a need to find a mechanism to coordinate this in the best way possible. The consensus is that this is the best way

to do it."

He added that various locations, mostly in Europe, were under consideration for the conference.

He said it could go ahead once a new Iraqi government was in place and had reacted favourably to the idea.

After NATO, President George W. Bush goes on Tuesday to the European Union for a summit with European leaders, who will present him with EU plans to train some 770 senior Iraqi police officers and magistrates.



Delegates pose for the official photo at NATO headquarters in Brussels Feb. 22. Heads of state and government from the 26 NATO countries met for a discussion on transatlantic issues at the highest level on Tuesday. REUTERS

Recovering Pope receives Croatian prime minister

VATICAN CITY, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Pope John Paul received Croatia's prime minister on Tuesday in the Pontiff's first private audience with a politician since he left hospital nearly two weeks ago.

The 84-year-old Polish Pope met Ivo Sanader privately for about 10 minutes in what the Vatican said was a courtesy call. Sanader was in Rome to open an exhibition at the Vatican Museums on Roman-era archaeology in Croatia.

During the public session open to journalists following the private talks, the Pope seemed alert but did not speak as he sat in an armchair next to Sanader in the Pontiff's private study.

Sanader introduced his ministers to the Pope and thanked the Pontiff for allowing him to be the first non-cleric to be received after the Pope's return to the Vatican from the hospital on Feb 10.

"We are praying for your health," Sanader said in Italian to the Pope, who has received a number of bishops in the past few days.

The Polish Pope was rushed to a Rome hospital on Feb. 1 suffering from breathing problems brought on by a bout of influenza.

He was allowed home 10 days later. In a sign that he still has not fully regained his strength, the Vatican has



Pope John Paul II is presented with a gift from the Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader during a private meeting in his private library at the Vatican February 22, 2005. The 84-year-old Pope received Croatia's Prime Minister on Tuesday in the first private audience for a politician since he left hospital nearly two weeks ago. REUTERS

said the Pope will not hold his weekly general audience on Wednesday but instead will only bless the faithful from his window overlooking St Peter's Square.

The weekly general audience takes place either in St Peter's Square or in

the Vatican's modern audience hall and is attended by thousands of people.

A general audience would require the Pope to sit before the crowd for between an hour and 90 minutes.

France's Chirac condemns racism, Jews demand action

PARIS, Feb 22 (Reuters) - French President Jacques Chirac on Tuesday condemned an attack in which swastikas were daubed on the main mosque in Paris, and faced pressure from Jewish groups to intensify the fight against anti-Semitism and all racism.

The graffiti scrawled on the outer wall of the Grand Mosque and an arson attack on a railway carriage that is now a monument to Jews killed by the Nazi Germans, were the latest in a wave of racist attacks that have alarmed Muslims and Jews in France.

Chirac telephoned Dalil Boubakeur, the rector of the Grand Mosque, to express his indignation over the graffiti.

"Everything will be done to find the culprits", Chirac said, according to a spokesman accompanying him on a trip to Brussels.

A dozen swastikas, the SS initials of Adolf Hitler's guard and the words "Get out!" were found on Monday written in black paint on the outer wall of the mosque in central Paris.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which Boubakeur called an "intolerable act of Islamophobia".

There has also been no claim of responsibility for the attack on the rail-

way carriage at Drancy, just outside Paris. Police said a petrol bomb was thrown at the carriage on Sunday night but it was not badly damaged.

The Nazi Germans transported Jews by train from a transit camp at Drancy to death and concentration camps during World War Two.

Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin condemned the Drancy attack on Monday, but a Jewish leader said on Tuesday French should step up its fight against anti-Semitism.

"It's true that the authorities do the maximum to fight this curse of anti-Semitism and racism, but one must fight it more intensely," Roger Cukierman, head of the CRIF umbrella group of French Jewish organisations, told RTL radio.

He said all French people must make an effort to help prevent racist attacks. "Public opinion must understand that these are not viewpoints but crimes which have to be punished," said Cukierman, who has criticised French sentences for anti-Semitic crimes as too light.

About 600,000 Jews live in France, the largest Jewish population in Europe.

It is also home to 5 million Muslims,

Europe's largest Muslim minority.

Despite Chirac's drive to crack down on racist attacks, more than 300 tombs or graves have been desecrated in eastern France since April - many in Jewish cemeteries but also some Muslim and a few Christian graves.



French President Jacques Chirac. Police have not found any organised effort behind the sporadic attacks but

have blamed them on neo-Nazis.

French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin pledged earlier this month to boost police numbers and hand down stiff sentences to those who commit anti-Semitic violence.

He also said schools were a key place

Annan defends United Nations as 'vital to humanity'

NEW YORK, Feb 22 (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan defended the United Nations, which is beset by scandals from the Iraqi oil program to sexual abuse by peacekeepers, as "vital to humanity" in the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday.

"I have served the U.N. all my life. I have done, and am still doing, everything I can to correct its imperfections, and to improve and strengthen it," he wrote in an opinion piece. "And I believe profoundly in the importance of that task, because a strong U.N. is of vital importance to humanity."

Annan addressed charges of mismanagement and corruption in the U.N.'s now-defunct Iraqi oil-for-food program, admitting there were failings while accusing some critics of hyperbole.

U.S. lawmakers and an independent inquiry by former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker have uncovered lax management, a shortage of auditors and procurement irregularities but no crimes.

"The interim report of Paul Volcker's independent inquiry has helped put the Oil For Food program in perspective. Some of the more hyperbolic assertions about it have been proven untrue," Annan wrote in the Journal.

"Yet I am the first to admit that real and troubling failures - ethical lapses and lax management - have been

brought to light. I am determined, with the help of member states, to carry through the management reforms which are clearly called for by Mr. Volcker's findings," he said.

Annan also addressed the U.N. probes of allegations against peacekeeping soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo of sexual exploitation of women and girls.

"Both the U.N. Secretariat and the member states have been too slow to realize the extent of this problem, take effective measures to end it, and punish the culprits.

But we are now doing so, and I am determined to see it through."

Annan said the U.N. had demonstrated its importance both in helping with the Asian tsunami disaster relief effort and the war in Iraq.

"The war in Iraq two years ago caused many people on all sides to lose faith in the U.N.," he wrote.

But he added: "Precisely because the United Nations did not agree on some earlier actions in Iraq, today it has much needed credibility with, and access to, Iraqi groups who must agree to join in the new political process if peace is to prevail.

"The U.N. can be useful because it is seen as independent and impartial. If it ever came to be seen as a mere instrument or prolongation of U.S. foreign policy, it would be worthless to everyone."

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Oxfam GB is a development, relief, and campaigning organisation dedicated to finding lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world. We believe that every human being is entitled to a life of dignity and opportunity; and we work with poor communities, local partners, volunteers, and supporters to help this become a reality.

Words of Wisdom

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

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

OUR
OPINIONDr. Saqqaf was
right... again!

The visit of the World Bank's President to Yemen days ago reminded again of the need to implement economic reforms. But when I listened to the World Bank President's statement and also to the rhetoric of the President and government, I decided to republish an article published in Yemen Times in 1998 written by the founder of the paper Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf (1954-1999).

I was reminded about the article by one of our readers who once sent me a letter saying, "He said our reform will not work six years ago. May his soul rest in peace."

"A Hard Look at Yemen's Reform
Program: WILL IT WORK?"

By Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf,
Professor of Economics, Sanaa University.

The Government has dished out a lot of talk on how important is the economic reform program it is implementing. That is actually true. The reform program is very important, and its success is quite vital for the future well-being of the nation.

There is another truth. The Republic of Yemen is far worse off without this reform program than with it. In spite of the major hardships that resulted from implementation of the reforms, our people would have faced far more hardships if there was no program.

There is a third truth. By and large, the main thrust of the reform package is good and useful. These include the efforts to free the economy from bureaucratic muddling; to correct price distortions by making product and factor costs reflect their true market worth; to re-structure the laws to increase accountability, transparency, etc.; to enable the private sector to lead economic activities, through various measures, especially privatization; to remove monopolistic and oligopolistic rights and privileges in trade, labor and capital relations leading to better terms for consumers.

Having said all that, it looks weird that I should still pose my question: "Will Yemen's reform program work?"

There are two worries behind my question.

1. Sweet talk and good on paper:

The best way to describe the system that we have today is that its representatives or officials sweet-talk everybody. They know what the donors want to hear, and they give it to them.

As a person who sat in a few of the meetings of our senior officials with visitors, I often get bewildered, as I hear the visitors come out saying, "What a great guy!" The phony show of our senior officials has fooled a lot of people. But now, more and more people are beginning to discover that the system does not deliver on many of the pledges it makes. This is a tricky conclusion, because it is not exactly accurate.

There have been times when the regime delivered, in terms of biting the bullet. Aah, but that is when the sacrifice has to be borne by people other than the men of the system. Look at the record, and you will find that most of the hardships have been passed on to the general public.

2. System needs overhaul:

One of the reasons why the reform program so far looks successful is that the World Bank and IMF have poured in almost a billion dollars since implementation of the reforms started in 1995. Other donors - bilateral and multilateral have also contributed handsomely.

With that kind of unearned inflow of hard currency, any situation can be bailed out. What the donors, especially the IMF and World Bank people should realize is that the day the financial subsidy stops, the economy of Yemen will collapse.

So, what is needed?

The system needs an overhaul. To be able to use the resources now available to Yemen in order to create a sustainable growth condition, it is important that the very system change. Our system is like an old shirt. You can only patch up so many holes. At the end, you need a new shirt.

Most of the key people who manage our affairs today have been at it for the last thirty years. In fact, they are directly responsible for the mess we are in today. These men need to be changed. The structure of our administration needs to be changed. Our value system and incentives have to be changed.

I worry about the future of my country. Literally, this is a daily worry. I look at two, three, five years down the road, and I worry.

And I feel disgusted with foreign bureaucrats who appease the system while they know something serious is wrong. Biting the bullet and introducing meaningful change in a gradual manner today is far better for Yemen and for regional stability.

There are many signals that change is necessary. But the regime fails to accept, let alone comprehend the need for change. It is here that Yemen's friends can play a helpful role. Actually, Yemen today needs good advice from its friends, more than it needs their money.

In my opinion, the present reform program and the people managing it will not lead us to the results we want."

Dr. Saqqaf was right again, six years after his death... His vision was so accurate and knowledge so broad. He saw it happening years before we did.

May his soul rest in peace...

The Editor

Former UNSCOM inspector Scott Ritter:
US to hit Iran in June;
Iraqi elections manipulated

BY MOHAMMED ALI
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

The former head of the UNSCOM team that was inspecting for Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction in the mid 1990s announced that George W. Bush has given the green light for bombardment of Iran in June of this year. This follows the press reports that the Bush Administration has set out on plans for making Iran the next target for American unilateral action against states that it alleges are not falling in line with what the Administration's claims to be the international community demands that Iran ceases its nuclear program "and assisting terrorist acts", as Washington claims. In Olympia, Washington State's Capital Theater, "the ex-Marine turned UNSCOM weapons inspector said that George W. Bush has 'signed off' on plans to bomb Iran in June 2005" and he claimed that the US had manipulated the Iraqi elections held last January 30, to make sure that the United Iraqi Alliance does not get the 56% of the votes they actually got but only 48%.

Ritter also suggested that the bombing raid Bush allegedly approved was only the start of the efforts of the Bush Administration to force a regime change in Iran as it did in Iraq, which is something that Ritter was rather skeptical about.

Ritter said that the source for the lection rigging report was an official involved in the manipulation and that *New Yorker Magazine's* Seymour Hersh will publish the details later.

Seymour Hersh had previously reported of the American plans to carry out covert activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran for not falling in line with demands that it stop its nuclear program. On Jan. 17, the *New Yorker* posted (on the net) an article by Hersh entitled *The Coming Wars* (*New Yorker*, January 24-31, 2005), in which he suggested that the White House has put in place plans for turning against Iran, which include possible bombing raids. Ritter's announcement was the first specific allusion that indeed the operation has gone beyond the planning stage and the first indication of actual involvement by US forces. There had been reports that Vice President Dick Cheney has suggested that Israel might carry out possible air strikes against Iran. According to Hersh, "Defense Department civilians, under the leadership of Douglas Feith, have been working with Israeli planners and consultants to develop and refine potential nuclear, chemical weapons, and missile targets inside Iran. . . Strategists at the headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, in Tampa, Florida, have been asked to revise the military's war plan, providing for a maximum ground and air invasion of Iran. . . The hawks in the Administration believe that it will soon become clear that the Europeans' negotiated approach [to Iran] cannot succeed, and that at that time the Administration will act."

Scott Ritter's talk was the culmination of a long evening devoted to discussion of Iraq and U.S. foreign policy. Before Ritter spoke, Dahr Jamaal narrated a slide show on Iraq focusing on

Fallujah. He showed more than a hundred vivid photographs taken in Iraq, mostly by himself. Many of them showed the horrific slaughter of civilians.

Ritter was hopeful that by revealing this development early enough, cries for peace and a sensible US foreign policy would prevail in due time before the situation gets out of hand as he believes that the operations in Iran would be minuscule for what is to occur as the sound of war drums is heard against Syria and Iran, which Ritter believes to be the Bush Administration's next targets.

Ritter and Dahr spoke in an evening discussion last Friday sponsored by a local community college and some peace activist groups.

It is worth pointing out that Washington and the International Atomic Energy Agency are not in agreement on the state of the Iranian nuclear program and the IAEA asserts that there is no substantiation of claims that Iran is proceeding to build its nuclear weapons as far as the IAEA has been able to determine so far. Dr. Mohammed Al-Baradie, the General Manager of IAEA has also said that the Iranians have been generally cooperative with the Agency's investigations of the program and they have not been able to find proof that Iran is indeed carrying out a full fledge program to build nuclear weapons. The European Union is also of the belief that the best way to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue is through negotiations and there are really no grounds to justify harsh measures or military action against Iran.

Is Yemen for the educated
Yemenis or for the expatriates?

AHMED ABDULLAH
YEMEN

What made me to write this article is that we the jobless educated Yemenis are facing a lot of problems such as unemployment, relegation, exploitation, mistreatment, atrocities etc. We are here for about 4 Yemenis sitting on a Qat session and each one faces a problem or problems etc. Among those educated Yemenis who are here in this Qat session today have not find a job. They have passed their limit of frustration and passed their age of marriage.

However, we decided to share our pains and let us know each other. I was introduced a fellow who is educated from one of the Asian countries. We had chit chatted on many topics but main part of our discussion was related to his misfortunate life. Mr. X is really a qualified person, he speaks perfect English. But unfortunately he is facing the above-mentioned problems.

He is contemplating to migrate somewhere in Africa or Europe. And not

dreams to go and work Arabian country. He some times sees Arab expatriates who are not qualified and can not write or speak proper English but are working for leading companies and organizations in Yemen.

The question is what is wrong with us? Can't Yemenis be valued or be able to work in his own country? Where can you find in the world where a citizen gets less than \$100 where as other Arabian teachers here in Yemen get \$200 to \$250 per month. For your information, Yemen is a country where the citizen is to be treated as lower class category than any other nationality. Furthermore, there is one fellow who has recently appeared for an interview. His result was positive and is working for that organization but not happy with the way his boss treats him. Moreover, his boss is a European - Yemeni citizen but born in Yemen.

He had been in Europe quite a long time but behaves like a greedy person and threatens Asian expatriates (Indians & Pakistanis) like leaders who are the ones leading the organization plus Arabs (Iraqis, Palestians & Egyptians) like trustful ones. Plus there are private as well as

multinational oil companies and NGOs who they prefer to recruit Ethiopians and Sudanese. Also, we should not forget that there are Yemenis who run after their Yemeni brothers in the same organization. He might be considered as a colleague and enemy.

He/she forgets that this destiny comes from Allah and is written above there and cannot oppose or take it away. For instance a Yemeni professional driver applied for a job at one of the NGOs in Yemen and he was selected that was his best day.

But his worst second day was when the Yemeni watch man told him that he is not being selected and told him not to approach the gate. But all were fake stories but managed to

approach head of the personnel department. Luckily, the head is a true Muslim who has made the driver's face smiling appreciation, etc but the poor watchman could not control himself. He might be willing for that post one of his family members. But any way it is not in his hand cannot designate for some one that post. He is a simple human being who not believed that destiny from Allah.

And now back to Mr. X's topic, He has been in Yemen for about one year but faced many strange things from Sana'a International Airport to Government offices and private companies. He was asked as an obligation to pay 50 to 100 YR for a two-wheeler to carry his luggage, but imagine He was not having a single Riyal Yemeni.

However, they were aware that he was having currencies other than the Yemeni currency. Moreover, their expectation was not less than ten dollar or open for negotiation with our brother Yemeni guest. Any way he had managed to escape from Sana'a International Airport and now is arranging to abandon his motherland for good. He has lost his confidence, nationality, country, family, and family name.

If not us where are the Yemeni educated leaders? Can't those authorities concerned see what is going in this country? When will Yemen be like any other Arab country? Don't you know that Malaysia was worse its economy situation than Yemen? And see how they have developed their country.

It is the only Muslim country where you can see all Malay Muslims praying together like Friday praying? Can't our leaders (All Arabian Leaders) be called devoted Muslim leader like how they call Bush a devoted Christian? Why I have mixed our problem with politics is that "We are not united Arab and Muslim nation," so that has created to us a lot of problems, disloyalty, nepotism, tribalism, hatred, discrimination, racism among Muslims and Arabs.

The meaning of "Islam" means "Peace" where as at this stage Muslims are being labeled as "Terrorist"? Then when Muslims are going to liberate our second holiest Muslim place (Jerusalem). There are true Muslims who are ready to liberate Al-Quds if not you fake Muslims.

To my main part of my topic I must openly inform you that we are here helpless and hopeless. Then if you are the educated Yemeni, company owners and Ministers concerned to our problems we appeal you to consider your Yemeni brothers their application. And all the above mentioned are not faked or exaggerated.

COMMON
SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haifi

What is looming
in the horizon?

With the Bush administration seemingly entrenched for the second term of George W. Bush's presidency, it is unlikely that the previous term will be any helpful guide for the President to follow, in light of all the obvious faults that materialized. Needless to say, it is hard to determine if President George W. Bush recognizes any faults having occurred in the last term, because there is a looming aura of, it is "more of the same and then some". Leadership of the world based on the assumptions of might makes right is a scary venue to consider, and the experiences of the last term have shown that it is not always taken to heart, even by the close-set of allies or friends. How long can the US continue to ignore the feelings of a sizable segment of the population of the world, who were hoping that the United States will give weight to their opinions on the proper conduct of US policy vis a vis the rest of the world? Therefore, one wonders how Mr. Bush's attempts to make amends with the European allies will filter down to also convince the European people to be less skeptical of the United States. They are far more intelligent than to allow themselves to forget being ignored, since after all their leaders had voiced their opinions about the US unilateral approach to deciding the fate of nations, based on their reading of the feelings of their constituencies. In addition, Mr. Bush will find it difficult to convince the Europeans that the US wants to go places with them, especially as there is still very little consultations on matters of international concern: the Iraq War and when it should see an end, the increasing sound of war drums looming over the Persian Gulf with outright threats of possible engagement with Iran, when Iran has neither harbored any direct animosity to the United States nor carried out any acts that have threatened world peace. The sad part is that the only friend or ally that Washington has open ears to has been Israel and it is Israel that has managed to get all that it wants Washington do get done without any hesitation or calculation of the consequences of such actions by the latter.

Israel may be biding time with some minor overtures to a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian problem, but it is far from being really clear how far Israel wants to indeed reach a peaceful conclusion of a messy conflict that has been made the more messy because Washington has given Tel Aviv all the green light it needed to make a mess out of Gaza and the West Bank over the last four years. This is not to mention the fact that Israeli intelligence was a heavy basis for the entry of the US into Iraq and even to this day Israeli intelligence continues to play a heavy role in the formulation of US policy towards Iran. It is becoming harder and harder to dismiss the likelihood that the US is indeed seeking to get into direct engagement with Iran and this is reinforced by the continued belligerence displayed by Washington with strong rhetoric that may not be all that convincing that the US is merely trying to disarm any nuclear agenda that Iran has. One only has to recall how the mounting belligerence and strong rhetoric that preceded the Iraqi invasion was both baseless and had reason and logic prevailed in the White House and the Pentagon, Iraq and the rest of the world might have been spared a lot of senseless bloodshed, in which scores are dying every day and life has actually deteriorated for the Iraqi people rather than improved.

On the other hand, the tragic death of former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Al-Hariri and the rising political instability that arose seems to reinforce the notion that the area as a whole is in for more instability and a climate of unpredictability, and as Iraq has shown that is not something to look forward to.

It is time for Washington to lay everything out on the table. How long must it continue to become a source of instability at the behest of a right wing establishment that believes it should have the power to impose its own values on the rest of the world and a Zionist establishment that believes that Israel's perpetual might and unchallenged military superiority in the Middle East should be its only guarantee to coexistence with the indigenous populations of the region? Israel must never forget that the overwhelming majority of the people in the region have not gotten any closer to trusting Israel, just because Washington is so cozy with it and is out to make sure that Israel has its way, no matter what. Israel has never sought peace, because its charter does not allow for peaceful coexistence unless the Zionist agenda of Israel from the Euphrates to the Nile is fully achieved. Oh, it will give lip service to peace, as is the case now, to make it easier for Washington to pursue other objectives for her, such as to come to a showdown with Iran. However, the experience has shown that its actions in the Holy Land over the past four years and its annihilation of previous venues of a hopeful peace, are nowhere near helpful to the achievement of peace. You can talk to anyone in the region and they will tell you without a doubt that Israel is goading the US into more trouble than could possibly be borne by Washington and creating a very uncomfortable environment for the people of the region to continue their lives without tension and fear of bloodshed coming their way.

Thank heavens it is over

The recent uncomfortable situation by the tit for tat between the two former strategic allies, the People's General Congress and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform did raise eyebrows here and there and there was an almost scary feeling that political differences are going to reach violent stages. Thank God however, the leaderships of both parties realized that Yemen's interests would not be served by any further exchange of verbal lashes between them. The Yemeni people would do better without any political violence for now as there are really very many problems that should keep everyone busy for some time, to have to worry about certain personal differences between grown men on both sides of the political spectrum of the PGC and Islah. God bless our country and keep it immune from all political commotions. Really we have better things to do, like fighting poverty and eliminating corruption.

Yemeni Press,

A week in review

Presented by Mohammed Khidr



Al-Sahwa weekly,
17 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- In a statement by the supreme committee of Islah,
- Condemnation of GPC'S campaigns against the national personality Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar
- Islah renews its sticking to constitutional rights
- Islah condemns confiscation of rights and freedoms, calls for comprehensive reform
- Held the government the responsibility, President of the World Bank warns of economic disaster in Yemen
- Leadership of physicians and pharmacists union praises its members stance, denounces despotic and suppressive practices against its members to prevent strike
- All-out strike by teaching staff at government universities

Columnist Zaid al-Shami says in his article the 3rd general conferences of Islah party concluded the meetings of its second session to prove the Islah commitment to the institutional work. The conference has issued a final statement calling for cordiality and fraternity and cooperation in good deeds. The statement announced its condemnation of terror and violence and its condemnation of all acts that would offend our religion, nation and homelands.

The Islah confirmed in its statement its commitment to the legitimate peaceful struggle that is guaranteed in the constitution for obtaining freedoms and rights. It has denounced the wrong practices that violate the human rights, calling for justice, equality and non-discrimination between the sons of the homeland. It has also criticized corruption eating out in the body of the nation and destroying the country.

It has not been expected from the Islah to praise the government and its officials, not just because it is an opposition party, but also because corruption and weakness in performance of the government in administration of the public property have become characteristics of the government. This is what mentioned by the prime minister and not denied by the authority apparatuses. It was expected from the ruling party to deal in positive manner with what the Islah party has submitted in its conference and to discuss and hold dialogue. But, as it is the habit, the ruling party's media and the official media embarked on declaring their war against the Islah and other opposition parties. To continue in refusing the other and showing pride of ones own opinion is an indication of totalitarianism and haughtiness and this would lead only to more political congestion and deterioration.



Al-Ummah weekly,
organ of al-Haq party, 17 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- Al-Haq party condemned the crime and sent condolences to the Lebanese people, Grand funeral for al-Hariri, rejection of internationalizing the investigation into his assassination
- Islah party denounces media campaign against it, opposition MPs propose minister of information to be accounted for
- Appeals for releasing al-Ghadeer detainees
- Demands for the release of al-Khaiwani
- Following their hunger strike, demand for allowing the visit to Dailami and Muftah
- Open strike at Yemeni universities
- Symposium o the Yemeni-German political heritage concluded
- Seminar on journalistic legislations and horizons of their development

The political editor of the newspaper wrote an article saying just a few weeks have elapsed since the authority was praising the Islah party and its patriotic stands in the war of 1994 and the events of Saada and regarding other opposition

parties as disloyal. Now the authority and the ruling party newspaper are launching an unprecedented attack on the Islah and its leadership. It is expected that that this would expand the degree and extent of the [political crisis in the country. Fluctuations of the authority and its attitudes towards others do not serve the national interest or contribute to solve the overwhelming political, economic and social problems. We consider this campaign in the ruling party newspapers as having no justification at all. The Islah party, in person of sheik Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar, leader of the Islah congregation, has demanded all political and social forces to adopt a stand characterized by sense of responsibility regarding the present situations and the work for giving priority to the national interest to any other individual and partisan interests in order to take the country out the dark tunnel it is heading for. The Islah conference has seen that the relation between the GPC ruling party on the one hand and the Islah party and all other opposition parties as not serving the supreme interest of the country and that the constitutional legitimacy of the country's authority would remain to be measured by the degree of its respect for the constitution and the law and the adoption of reform as well as working for formulation of an initiative for the comprehensive national reform and the call for a national dialogue.



Al-Jamahir weekly,
organ of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, 16 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- Great Arab Free Trade Zone on table of the economic conference in Aden
- The Mossad assassinates al-Hariri
- Yemeni students in India complain delay of finance
- Iraqis continue ferocious resistance

The newspaper editorial says since the Lebanese decision of refusing the American agenda, pressures have been following on it with all means and ways with the aim of forcing it accept those dictates. Lebanon's national choice and the interrelationship of its course with the Syrian one means linking its destiny to the national project that refuses occupation, opposes to colonialism and works for unity of the nation, as Lebanon is part of it.

Hence, the Lebanese, while taking the decision of refusal, have not ruled out the consequences they are going to face due to their decision and it has not been out of their mind that the enemies would attempt to split the national rank in order to weaken its will. Conspirators of the past are the same ones who conspire today and what they are creating of political confusion in Lebanon under foreign support the attack on al-Hariri motorcade and the assassination would be only the beginning of the road.



Annas weekly, 21 Feb. 2005.

Main headlines

- GPC & Islah in confrontation: ramifications of the crisis
- World Bank threatens not to aid Yemen
- Anssi renews his accusation to al-Mouyad, demands the millions he was promised to get
- Physicians begin their gradual strike
- Government university professors would continue strike until their demands are met
- Special committee embarks on investigation into causes of the fire erupted outside Aden airport
- Five security men in Taiz sent to court

Columnist Dr Hosni al-Jawshaie says in his article undoubtedly the assassination of al-Hariri has targeted Syria in the first place and the stability of Lebanon in the second. The operation is a serious side in the triangle of conspiracy aimed against stability of the region and meant for strengthening and consolidation of Israel's security.

It is rather amazing that the opposition forces in Lebanon to so speedily gather at the house of the assassinated former prime minister to come out with a

statement pouring oil on fire and rake the fire of internal dispute just for narrow political calculations prevailed by the personal interest without putting the higher interest of Lebanon into consideration.

The Syrian presence in Lebanon has become a burden on both Syria and Lebanon and both countries' leaderships have during the past three or four years stricken an implicit agreement that Syria would start a gradual withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon.

It has been expected that the withdrawal would be completed in a year or two. The speeding up of the operation of withdrawal by international powers and in seizing the opportunity of the Syrian presence by the United States of America and some western countries has been just for achieving personal and Zionist interests.

Syria is now the only strong Arab country that has not yet obeyed the Zionist hegemony and the American-Israeli expansion. Therefore, Syria has to be subdued. I definitely think that the operation of assassinating al-Hariri is the first of the steps in this direction.



Al-Wassat weekly,
16 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- Sheik al-Ahmar: I am convinced about my speech, campaign against me launched by the sick inside the authority
- In confirmation of what the Wassat has published, Scandals of plundering oil continue
- Yemen among the poorest countries in the Middle East
- GPC opens fire against al-Ahmar
- Parliament presidency committee agrees on passing the concluding account

Columnist Mohammed Zain al-Kaf says in his article now it is time to tackle issues of the citizens clearly. Democracy that we talk about would remain mere loose slogan used by radios, televisions and press if it does not touch ambitions and goals the Yemeni citizen aspires for. The homeland is for the all, this must be seen on the ground and tangible from the highest political positions, and there must be a departure from domination and monopoly.

First of all, there must be an actual national unity based on equal citizenship, social justice and practical partnership in the frame of all civil and military establishments and then there must be a reconsideration of the structure of the political and social system. The reforms we are repeatedly talking about would be just outward if they were not comprehensive, drawing a new map for the future of the country and beginning to demolish bridges of backwardness and ignorance. Moreover, if we are serious in effecting a change, the main condition of it is the carrying out of constitutional amendments to fill the gaps in the legislative, executive and judicial establishments.



Al-Wahdawi weekly,
organ of the Nasserite Unionist Organisation, 15 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- 22 February, the tenth general national conference of the Organisation
- NUO secretary general: the conference a qualitative transfer and important attitude in the history of the Nasserite Organisation
- Corruption lobby aborts weapons draft law
- Islah concludes its third general conference
- Nasserite Organisation calls on the Lebanese avoid their country the dangers of partition and division

Writer Faisal al-Safwani says the situation to which the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate has become in lately, does not augur well. Some have wanted to absorb enthusiasm of the syndicate's council and to disappoint hopes of the journalists and their aspirations of their elected council.

At the beginning, we have been full of hope as we were listening about programs and plans drawn up by



members of the syndicate's council for the improvement of the journalists and the profession conditions. What has really happened is that the syndicate got preoccupied with issues of defending the freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, which in turn led to deterioration of the union situations.

The syndicate was not capable of defending the rights of opinion and expression nor was able to maintain its work regarding the press profession.

The responsibility of defending the freedom of opinion is not only that of the syndicate as much as it is the responsibility of the society as a whole as well as the political parties and civil organizations.

The syndicate has to lay its role in this regard, but that is a partial responsibility in participation with all political and trade unionist entities. We do not want our professional duties to be an extension to political stands that are taken by the mentality of old revenges. We realize that reality of the right to expression and freedom of opinion are not as stipulated in the constitution, but the syndicate alone cannot change the

situation.



26 September weekly,
organ of the Yemen Armed Forces, 17 Feb.2005.

Main headlines

- During his meeting with president of the World Bank, President Saleh: We are determined to enhance successes of the economic, financial, administrative and judicial reform
- MPs and businesspersons to accompany the German Chancellor in his visit to Sana'a
- Yemeni-Senegalese summit in Sana'a
- Arab Economic and Social Council concludes its meetings in Aden
- A gang for smuggling Yemeni antiquities headed by a Jordanian national seized

The newspaper has devoted its editorial to discuss Yemen's hosting meetings of the 75 session of the Arab Economic and Social Council in the port city of Aden. It says holding those

meetings in Aden gives prominence to the national and Arab importance of the city as Yemen's trade and economic capital.

Convening the meetings has come in the midst of very complicated Arab circumstances and the deep realization of the necessity of encountering them.

Maybe I this context the establishment of the Arab common market is the first step in this direction and unanimity of the participants in the 75 session of the Arab Economic and Social council in Aden on the necessity of its establishment confirms an Arab collective awareness differentiating between what is primary and major and what is secondary at a time the world states have exceeded the concepts of regional blocs according to political and ideological concepts to be replaced by economic interests and exchange of benefits. These could be embodied by trade and investment among countries of those groupings.

They develop their relations economically in a manner enhancing their political relations to take the shape of balanced integration.

وَسُبِّحَ لِلَّهِ الْمَظْهَرُ الْبَاطِنُ وَاللَّيْجُونُ

نقدم بأحر التعازي وأصدق المواساة إلى الأستاذ

عبد الفتاح جمال

وكافة آل جمال

لوفاة المغفور لها - بإذن الله تعالى -

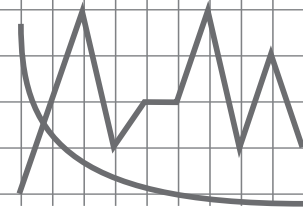
والسدته

سائلين المولى عز وجل أن يتغمدها بواسع رحمته
وعظيم غفرانه ويسكنها فسيح جناته ويلهم أهلها وذويها الصبر
والسلوان

الأسيفون:

أحمد قائد الأسود، عبد الفتاح الأسود،
عماد السقاف، محمد نعمان الحكيمي

YT Business



Exchange Rate for the Yemeni Rial

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	187.2200	187.4800
Sterling Pound	355.5000	356.0000
Euro	244.7200	245.0600
Saudi Rial	49.9200	49.9900
Kuwaiti Dinar	641.1100	642.0000
UAE Dirhem	50.9700	51.0400
Egyptian Pound	32.2500	32.3000
Bahraini Dinar	496.5900	497.2800
Qatari Rial	51.4400	51.5100
Jordanian Dinar	264.0300	264.4000
Omani Rial	486.2900	486.9700
Swiss Franc	158.4500	158.6700
Swedish Crown	26.8400	26.8800
Japanese Yen	1.7719	1.7744

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

Regional trade Private sector needs to help: Bajammal

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Prime Minister Abdulqader Bajammal announced last week that soon-to-rise exports of liquid gas out of Yemen means that more than ever Aden Port as well as the Free Zone are open for investors to make businesses.

The PM called on all the investors to be accurate and work properly according to the legal procedures in dealing either with each other or with the concerned investment parties. He briefed the investors about the stability of dealings, increasing trust and achieving interests for all parties.

The PM also called on the Yemeni and Arab private sectors to activate and

enhance their roles in the economy of Yemen and the other Arab countries, indicating that the economy depends on the private sector to contribute to the economic and social development.

In the 75th cycle of the Economic Council meetings which was held in Aden including a number of Yemeni and Arab businessmen, Bajammal discussed with the participants the issues related to the Yemeni and Arab investment and trade activities.

He confirmed that the private sector has to think of building a sailing line to connect ports in the Arabian Peninsula and enhance trade. He also pointed out that the industry & development-funding establishments have to reinforce the national capital and increase its power in the economic and investment sectors.

How the ruling party views economic reforms

BY MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The meeting of the General People Congress's Permanent Committee at the conclusion of its fourth cycle from February 19-20, has shown both the government and opposition support economic reform.

Explaining GPC's undeniable achievements, President Saleh's speech called on national political parties to keep away from media friction and partisan mischief.

"What the GPC is achieving through its democratic course is attributed to its will emanating from the transparency in GPC's national work theory."

President Saleh stressed the importance of finding out new alternative resources to bolster the national economy by exploring more oil, gas, and mineral reserves and encouraging investment especially in fisheries, tourism, and agriculture.

"We should adopt new mechanisms to promote tax and customs income, fight tax evasion, address the overpopulation problem, and practice family planning," he said, calling for the need to take care of youth and women and enhance their role in the process of the national development.

Contrary to what many observers expected, the Permanent Committee did not disapprove of the coming economic reform package. It appreciated the development achievements of the

GPC's government and the economic and monetary stability which curbed the inflation rates at 2-10%, the growth rate (4-5.5%), and improvements in education, health care, social security, and infrastructure projects.

Those achievements would not have been accomplished if the economic reforms program had not been implemented. The program of financial, administrative and economic reform has saved the country from deterioration and enabled it to recover confidence and restore relations with partners either on bilateral basis or with international and regional funds and organizations.

The Permanent Committee supported the plans and visions proposed by the government to upgrade economic

conditions and improve living standards of the Yemeni citizens. It also welcomed the Wages Draft Strategy, which has been passed by the parliament. This approval means that the Ruling Party is standing by the government and supporting the reforms although GPC's representatives at the Parliament pledged in the past to oppose any reforms that might impact upon poor people.

The opposition Islah Party had previously lashed out at the economic reforms and the policy of starvation on the part of the government.

Business links to improve with Germany and Eritrea

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Yemen and Germany will sign two agreements to protect and encourage investment and to terminate dual taxation between the two countries during the prospective visit of the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder on March 2-3, 2005.

"German businessmen accompanying the German Chancellor will sign a number of commercial and investment agreements and contracts with Yemeni



businessmen," said Mr. Frank Marcos, German Ambassador to Yemen.

The visit, which is the first for a German Chancellor, is expected to

open horizons to Yemeni-German cooperation. "Representatives from the German company of Siemens will come with the delegation to finalize the

contract of establishing a gas-powered electricity station which will add some 300 megawatt to the present amount of electricity," added the Ambassador.

The joint Yemeni-Eritrean committee is also expected to hold its meeting in Asmara at the end of March, 2005. "The Yemeni side will be headed by

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, while the Eritrean will be headed by his counterpart Ali Sayid Abdullah," said Hashim Sharaf, Deputy Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

The Committee will discuss a number of issues, most important of which is the investment and economic cooperation between the two countries such as the establishment of a joint fishing company.

Many cooperative agreements will also be signed in areas of culture, transportation, higher education, security, commerce, industry, and fisheries.

Overlooking Taiz

Sheikh Zayed Park handed to MOWR

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni Ministry of Public Works and Roads (MPWR) was handed the park of Sheikh Zayed, which is one of a series of projects that were contributed to Yemen by late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan.

The park was built in a place 2,150 metres above the sea level and at a total cost of UAE's dirham 25.3 million.

According to the Ministry of Public Works and Roads, the project consists of three stories, and it

has a restaurant with a total area of 400 square meters and many other tourist facilities.

The building contains 24 rooms in the first floor with a total area of 38 square meters each, a wing for highly ranking guests, another two setting rooms, a kitchen and a car park. It also has fountains, flowers and is equipped with electricity and water pipes.

The park was wholly furnished including the restaurant and the kitchen.

The park is connected with Taiz by a tarmac-covered road and it looks over the fascinating city of

Taiz.

The project aims at providing picnic facilities and promoting tourism, in addition to being a natural sight.

A statement released by Abu Dhabi's Development Fund, which is to implement the project, reads that the project reflects the support lavishly offered by Late Sheikh Zayed to Yemen and its people and the depth of cooperative relations between both nations.

The statement clarified that the Park of Sheikh Zayed is a clear signal of cooperation between the two countries.



Sheikh Zayed Park.

Funding Opportunity for Grassroots Reform Projects

The Middle East Partnership Initiative Small Grants Program The U.S. Department of State

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is pleased to announce a funding opportunity for local members of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and universities, to undertake reform projects. Funding is now available for projects that increase political openness, expand economic opportunities, enhance education systems, and empower women. Interested parties should contact the Public Diplomacy Office at the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a for further information on how to apply for grants that range in size from \$10,000 up to \$25,000.

Application Information

Applications should be submitted to the U.S. Embassy in English no later than April 1, 2005, to be considered for the current year's funding. Proposals should not exceed seven pages. Each application should contain the following information:

- project title
- a one-paragraph abstract
- a description of proposed programming which includes the program's potential impact, specific deliverables, success indicators, and public diplomacy plan
- a timetable for scheduled activities and performance benchmarks
- a short profile of the participating organization and biographical data for project leaders
- a detailed project budget that includes line item information for salaries, travel, equipment, supplies, and other costs. A cost share of 20 percent of total project cost is normally expected.

Background on MEPI

MEPI is a U.S. Presidential initiative to promote positive change in the Middle East and North Africa through diplomatic efforts and through results-oriented programs, both regional and specific to individual countries. Reform is of strategic, long-term importance to the United States and to the goal of ensuring that the people of the Middle East and North Africa experience the benefits that come with more open economies, greater educational opportunities, and political freedom. MEPI has a special interest in building new linkages among the different civil society sectors, supporting internships that offer youth the skills to succeed, and buttressing indigenous networks that support reform. Through last year's small grants program, MEPI funded 55 projects in 15 different Middle Eastern and North African countries that together totaled more than \$1.2 million.

Contact Information

To find out more about the MEPI small grants program, please contact Waleed Al-Khayat, Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, telephone 1-755-2272, fax 1-755-2282, or email alkhayatwk@state.gov.

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Supporting the cancer patients:**Embracing cancer patients now possible**By FAHMIA AL-FOTIH
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

We are used to hearing about adopting orphans or homeless street children. But the Charity Establishment for the Support of Cancer Patient Centers (CESCPC) has just taken a pioneer step entitled "Embrace a Cancer Patient". The charity held on Sunday 20th

February a reception to declare its aforementioned new project to serve cancer patients with sincere dedication.

A number of businesswomen, wives of diplomats, female journalists and interested individuals attended the event. The program contained various activities that helped raise awareness about cancer and its victims and means to support them.

Ms. Mariam Ibrahim Mohammed, the head of CESCPC said that her organization was established on 19th October 2003 with direct support

from President Ali Abdullah Saleh who donated YR 500 million to the charity, which obviously resulted in a tremendous impact on cancer patients and also resembled an encouraging incentive to wealthy businessmen and charitable people, who then contributed to the CESCPC generously.

"Since the initial donation of the President, rapid progress in the establishment of the center was made. This contributed to the establishment of the National Center for Treatment of Cancerous Diseases, which was

officially inaugurated in September last year in a ceremony attended by the President of Republic," she said.

She also added that the "CESCPC, did not stop here, but went further to build a charity pharmacy at a cost that exceeded YR120 million to grant free medicines to the poor and at a nominal cost to others. Those endeavors exerted by CESCPC, are still within the framework of its plans to establish the "Support to Cancer Patients Project", one of the most prominent charity projects to be carried out in Yemen.

She concluded, "CESCPC, with the intensives and efforts of all charitable parties, still has many hopes and ambitions, which it hopes will achieve in the coming months and years. It is our dream to guarantee each and every cancer patient free or low-cost treatment in Yemen or abroad. By joining forces, we will turn this into a reality and one day, cancer may disappear and be uprooted from our country once and for all. But this can only happen if all of us cooperate to achieve this goal."

The CESCPC's main objective is

to facilitate the treatment of cancer patients in Yemen with the least possible costs instead of traveling abroad for treatment.

It is noteworthy that cancer patients who are lucky enough to travel abroad for treatment suffer tremendously from financial and psychological burdens away from home. There are tremendously high travel and accommodation fees and extremely high costs of treatment and medicine, making the option of treatment abroad available only to the wealthy in the society.

Misery for countless women in region**Attacking female genital mutilation**

FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

A growing movement to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision has been noticed lately in various parts of the world, including the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

International organizations dealing with women's rights and healthcare have expressed commitment to fight this phenomenon, which has caused miseries to females throughout the African continent and in some Arab countries including Yemen.

Genital mutilation is practiced in 28 countries in Africa and also in some regions in Yemen.

The African countries practicing female circumcision range from Somalia in the east coast and stretching westward to Senegal on the Atlantic.

The rite is believed to have originated more than 2,000 years ago in Egypt or the Horn of Africa (what is now Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia).

The World Health Organization estimates that more than 130 million women have undergone the procedure.

Although it is most often associated with Islam, it is also practiced by Christians, adherents to traditional African religions, and one Jewish sect.

Types of FGM

There are generally three different types of circumcision: clitoridectomy, the amputation of the clitoris; excision of the labia minora as well as the clitoris; and infibulation, the removal of all external genitalia including the labia majora, after which the edges of the wound are stitched together, allowing for only a tiny opening.

The risk of infection and problematic childbirth are naturally greatly exacerbated by infibulation, and it is estimated that 20% to 25% of sterility cases in the Sudan have resulted from the procedure.

The prevalence of circumcision and the type of procedure vary enormously from country to country.

According to a study by Demographic and Health Survey, 93% of women in Mali and 98% in Djibouti and Somalia undergo genital cutting, whereas in Uganda and the Congo the number drops to 5%.

Clitoridectomy is the most common procedure.

Infibulation accounts for about 15% of women, with an estimated 80% to 90% of all infibulations occurring in Djibouti, Somalia, and the Sudan.

The only country where the genital mutilation is noticeably decreasing is the Central African Republic, where the practice was not widespread to begin with.

Egypt baby improving after extra head removed

CAIRO, Feb 22 (Reuters) - An Egyptian baby who underwent a 13-hour operation to remove an extra head will soon be able to breathe on her own, a doctor treating her said on Tuesday.

Ten-month-old Manar Maged was suffering from one of the rarest birth defects — craniopagus parasiticus — a problem related to that of conjoined twins linked at the skull.

The head that was removed from Manar in the operation which ended early on Saturday had developed no body, and was capable of smiling and blinking, but not independent life.

Doctors have already said that Manar could move all her limbs and showed no signs of paralysis after the operation in a children's hospital in Benha, near Cairo.

"At the moment only about 15 percent of her breathing is through the ventilator and in about 48 hours we will switch the ventilator off," Abla el-Alfy, a consultant in paediatric intensive care, told Reuters.

Alfy, part of the team of 13 Egyptian doctors who carried out the operation, said it was too early to say whether Manar could have suffered brain damage.

"In four days or less we will do a ... scan of her brain to see what the situation is," Alfy said.

Craniopagus parasiticus occurs when an embryo begins to split into identical twins but fails to complete the process.

One of the conjoined twins fails to develop fully in the womb.

Professor Lewis Spitz, a leading expert on conjoined twins at Great



An Egyptian baby recovers after an operation in Egypt Manar Maged, an Egyptian 11-month-old baby, recovers after an operation in a hospital in Banha 40 km, 25 miles, north of Cairo Feb. 19. REUTERS

Ormond Street Hospital in London said the vital question for Manar was whether brain tissue and blood vessels were shared between the two heads.

He said it was critical that the blood flow away from the surviving twin was not interfered with during separation.

Spitz did not know how many cases of craniopagus parasiticus have occurred or the number of attempted separations. He said the fact Manar survived is a big achievement in itself.

"It must be quite rare. In about 2 percent of conjoined twins the heads are fused," he said, adding that an incomplete conjoined twin joined at the head is even rarer.

He said the incidence of live born conjoined twins is about one in 200,000.

ألف مبروك
أطيب التهاني القلبية نهدبها للأخ
أحمد مرشد الخولاتي
بمناسبة ارتزاقه مولوداً أسماه
بشار
تمنين لمولوده الجديد الصحة والعافية والعمر المديد
المختلوه:
جميع موظفي صحيفة يمن تايمز
وجميع الأهل والأصدقاء

أجمل التهاني والتبريكات للأخ
محمد حيد الله لقمان
بمناسبة ارتزاقه مولوده البكر والذي أسماه
عبد الله
فالك ألف مبروك
المهنتون:
فؤاد العطشي - إسماعيل الفضيل - جمال العنسي
وليد العمري - شفيق العمري - أحمد العنسي

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College basketball Oklahoma, Connecticut win

NORMAN, Okla. (Sports Network) - Terrell Everett scored a game-high 19 points and David Godbold added a career-high 15 to lead No. 22 Oklahoma over No. 8 Kansas, 71-63, at the Noble Center.

Johnnie Gilbert contributed 12 for the Sooners (20-6, 9-4 Big 12), who have won three straight.

Wayne Simien scored 17 for Kansas (20-4, 10-3), which lost its third straight game for the first time in 11 years. Keith Langford had 16 in the loss.

The Sooners led by as many as 19 in the opening half and were on top, 37-22 at the break. Kansas, though, was within four, 45-41, eight minutes into the second half.

A three-pointer by J.R. Giddens cut the Sooners' lead to one, 47-46, with 9:36 left. The game would remain close, but Oklahoma would not relinquish the lead.

With Kansas trailing 56-52, Langford missed the front end of a 1-and-1 and Taj Gray made two free throws for a six-point lead. Godbold's putback off the glass increased the lead to 60-52 with 2:36 left and the Sooners held on for the eight-point win.

Down one in the early going, the Sooners used a 15-2 run to take the lead. Godbold scored to give Oklahoma a 5-4 edge and the Sooners would not trail again. A three-pointer by Lawrence McKenzie capped the run to give the Sooners an 18-6 advantage with just over 11 minutes to play in the first half.

Oklahoma, which made 15-of-29 shots from the field in the half, continued to add to its lead. Threes by Everett and McKenzie made it 24-9 and the lead reached 19 at 37-18 after another shot from beyond the arc by Godbold fell through the hoop with just over a minute to play before the break.

The Jayhawks, who made just 9-of-19 attempts from the field, scored the final four points of the half to trail 37-22.

In Albuquerque, N.M., Mark Walters scored a season-high 22 points to lift New Mexico to a 65-54 win over 13th-ranked Utah at the Pit.

Walters sparked a late second-half surge with five straight points, ending 7-of-11 from the field and 3-of-6 from three-point range, for the Lobos (20-6, 7-4 Mountain West), who have won three straight and six of seven.

Danny Granger, who missed New Mexico's 69-58 loss to Utah earlier this season, added 15 points and nine boards for New Mexico, which has beaten a ranked Utah team six of the last seven times at the Pit.

Andrew Bogut had 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Utes (23-4, 11-1), who had an 18-game winning streak halted. Marc Jackson added 12 points for Utah, which failed in its attempts to become the first MWC team in history to finish the season undefeated in conference play.

New Mexico scored 13 of the first 17 points of the game to get started. Utah responded with a 13-2 run to take a 17-15 lead on a Tim Drisdorn three-pointer with 7:46 left in the half.

Then, after David Chiotti tied the game with a layup, Bogut's short jumper with 4:51 remaining gave the Utes their final lead of the game, 19-17. Chiotti followed with jumper less than 20 seconds later and Walters' three-pointer with 2:52 remaining extended the lead to 22-19 and the Lobos went into the break with a 31-26 advantage.

In the second half, New Mexico opened the stanza with a 7-1 run to grab its first double-digit lead, 38-27. A Granger three-pointer started the burst and two free throws by Walters

2:44 into the half capped it.

Later, the Lobos scored eight straight points to open up a 12-point advantage, 46-34 with 10:19 on the clock.

Utah made it a seven-point contest, 49-42, on a Jonas Langvad jumper with 5 1/2 minutes left, but the Lobos put the game out of reach by scoring the next seven points. Alfred Neale followed a Granger missed jumper with a putback dunk to make it a nine-point game. Then, after a Bogut missed hook, Walters hit a layup and capped the burst with a three-pointer at the 3:44 mark to extend the cushion to 56-42.

Utah shot just 37 percent from the floor, including 4-of-21 from three.

New Mexico shot 46 percent from the floor, including 7-of-17 from behind the arc.

In Hartford, Conn., Charlie Villanueva had a career-high tying 25 points and Marcus Williams fell one assist short of a triple-double, as 17th-ranked Connecticut downed Notre Dame 88-74 at the Hartford Civic Center.

Williams ended with 17 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists for the Huskies (18-6, 10-3 Big East), who won their third straight game and avenged a setback earlier this season at Notre Dame.

Denham Brown tallied 18 points for UConn, which has won six of seven heading into Saturday's rematch at No. 18 Pittsburgh. The Panthers beat the Huskies earlier this season in Connecticut.

Colin Falls hit 6-of-10 three-pointers on his way to a 19-point night for the Irish (16-8, 8-6), who had a two-game win streak halted. Chris Thomas ended with 16 points and Torin Francis had 15 for Notre Dame, which has dropped five of its last nine contests.



University of Connecticut's Charlie Villanueva (C) shoots between Notre Dame's Omari Isreal (R) and Torin Francis (L) in second half NCAA action in Hartford, Connecticut February 21. Reuters

Scott wins playoff to capture rain hit Nissan open

TORONTO (Reuters) - Australia's Adam Scott won the rain-hit Nissan Open in a sudden-death playoff in Los Angeles on Monday, becoming the first PGA Tour winner in nine years to be crowned champion after 36 holes.

The 24-year-old edged out American Chad Campbell at the first extra hole, where he tapped in from three feet for a par, after the tournament was reduced to two rounds following four days of heavy rain at the Riviera Country Club.

The Nissan is the first PGA Tour event to decide a winner after two rounds since Michael Bradley won the 1996 Buick Open.

"It has been a tough week, a very unusual week...a win is a win and it's nice to be playing well here," said a jubilant Scott. "Tough break for Chad, he's had two days off then (had) to come play one hole but I'm pretty pleased with my week."

Campbell stepped onto the 475-yard par four 18th tee, already rated the hardest hole on the famed Riviera layout, having not struck a ball in tournament play since Friday.

A superb drive gave the American



Adam Scott of Australia watches the flight of his drive at the par four 18th hole during a one-hole playoff against Chad Campbell of the U.S. in the rain shortened Nissan Open at Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles Feb. 21. Reuters

an early advantage but he missed the green to the right with his approach and a botched four-foot putt to save par sank any hopes of a victory.

"I finished up Friday afternoon and didn't get to play any golf until then," shrugged Campbell. "But I just hit a bad second shot and not a very good putt. It's not the easiest of holes to slide in a four-footer. I should have made it."

Overnight rain

Organizers were forced to abandon the proposed third round on Monday morning after two inches of overnight rain had left the par-71 layout saturated.

Scott made a playoff necessary when he sank a 21-foot birdie putt on his final hole on Sunday to finish with a five-under 66 to join Campbell on a nine-under total of 133, a stroke ahead of Britons Darren Clarke and Brian Davis.

"It was very timely to make that one," said Scott. "I knew what I had to do back there yesterday (Sunday) and it has worked out in the end."

His victory was worth \$864,000 but does not count as an official win,

meaning he will not gain the usual two-year tour exemption or a place at the season-opening Mercedes Championship in Hawaii.

Seven-time European number one Colin Montgomerie, whose 64 on Sunday was the lowest score of the tournament, was a further shot back in a tie for fifth with American J.L. Lewis.

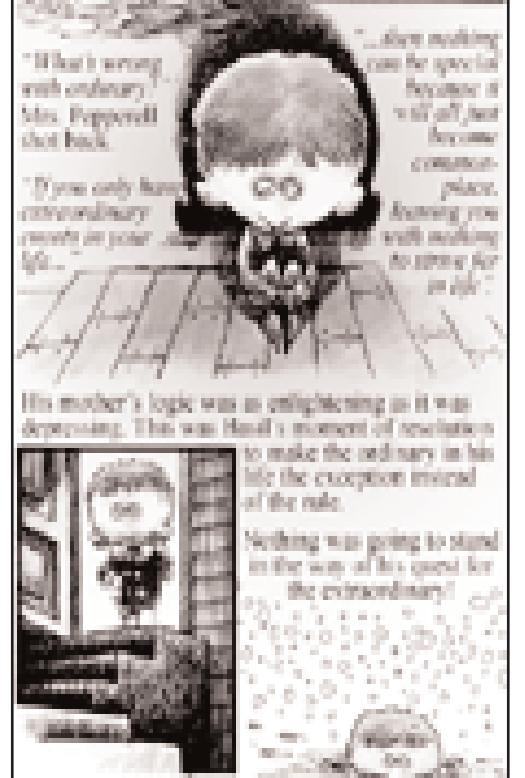
Tiger Woods, who needed to finish no worse than outright third in the reduced event to reclaim the world number one spot he lost to Vijay Singh in September, had to settle for a share of 13th after a 70.

The golfers will now move quickly down the coast to Carlsbad for the World Golf Championships match play event, which is scheduled to start on Wednesday.

But heavy rains have continued to sweep across Southern California forcing organizers to close the La Costa Golf Club course on Monday to practice.

However, Scott has not been deterred by the weather.

"It's another big week coming up... and I want to keep the momentum going," he said.



THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY BY Eugenia. Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 19) Be careful not to make decisions based only on what you can see when there will be so much that is yet to be revealed. Cancer (Jun 21 - Jul 22) If you overreact to things that don't really matter, you will miss out on the eventual happenings going on in your own back yard. Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22) You may have to deal with institutions or government agencies today. Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20) This is not the day to be uncertain about your abilities. Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22) You would rather be giving the orders than taking them. Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21) A new creative direction is in the picture. Gemini (May 21 - Jun 20) Just when you think you have everything done, something else will come up that sends you off on another whirlwind. Virgo (Aug 23 - Sep 22) Not everyone will understand what you are trying to do, but as long as you have a handle on the situation, you will be successful. Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21) Don't start something new or make changes, especially if it requires dealing with other people. Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19) You have everything in place and everyone willing to do what you want, but if you are too sure of yourself, you will probably make a costly mistake. Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18) Everything will come back to ownership, legalities and money. Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20) You may feel a little weepy today if you haven't taken care of personal matters like you should have.



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YEMEN: Tsunami damage over US \$1 million: UNEP assessment

SANA'A, 22 February (IRIN) - The effects of December's Asian tsunami on Yemen's shores will cost more than US \$1 million, according to an initial assessment conducted by the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Emergency Unit (EEU), together with an emergency mission of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

"We were lucky: our coasts are not populated, otherwise it would have been much worse," Abdulkhaliq al-Ghaberi, director-general of the EEU, told IRIN in the capital, Sana'a.

Nonetheless, the huge tidal wave has severely affected the livelihoods of the fishing communities of Socotra, a unique island, and its archipelago, 350 km south of the mainland, close to the tip of the Horn of Africa, and the coastal region of al-Mahrah governorate in the east of mainland Yemen, bordering Oman.

The tsunami hit parts of South East Asia on 26 December 2004, killing an estimated 300,000 people. Many bodies have still not been recovered.

Although the main tsunami passed to the south of Socotra, crashing into the coast of Somalia, waves of up to six metres hit Yemeni shores and washed boats up to a kilometre inland.



An Acehese child stands in front of a meat stall at Lamreh refugee camp near Banda Aceh Feb. 22. The tsunami and the massive Indian Ocean earthquake left more than 122,000 dead and nearly 114,000 missing in Aceh, and drove some 400,000 into relatives' or friends' homes or camps like this one. REUTERS

Of the two confirmed deaths, one was a five-year old boy on Socotra, who ran out to pick fish stranded when the sea went out prior to the main wave rushing in. In the city of Aden, the major port on the south-

ern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, a boatman was swept out to sea, though there waves reached only 80 cm.

However, there have been reports of up to five people killed, and al-Ghaberi told IRIN that there might have been more deaths which remain unreported.

The emergency EEU/UNEP assessment was conducted only on Socotra and in al-Mahrah, the worst affected areas. It concluded that a further assessment was required of other coastal areas and a UNEP/OCHA mission is to arrive in Yemen on 3 March.

The initial report found that in Socotra and al-Mahrah, 50 fishing boats and 69 outboard motors were destroyed and a further 108 boats were partly destroyed, though it's known that boats were also lost on the coast of Abyan governorate, east of Aden. At least 1,000 lobster and octopus traps and more than 600 nets and long lines were lost.

On shore, five cars and trucks were lost, an ice-plant was destroyed and various storage and market facilities were damaged and goods ruined, including a dried fish catch worth US \$200, sacks of salt and barrels of fuel. Houses were damaged, two farms were lost to land erosion and many crops and palm trees destroyed.

The cost of the damage in al-Mahrah and Socotra totals some \$935,000 and \$175,000 respectively and the minister of water and environment, Dr Mohammed Lutf El-Eryani, has stated that the total cost to Yemen would be \$3 million.

Yemen is not included on the list of countries suffering damage or needing help from the 2.5 billion dollars pledged for recovery efforts. The Yemeni government has no funds for compensation for those affected by the tsunami and the Yemeni people themselves are largely unaware of the extent of damage to their own country.

However, they have been responding generously to the international relief effort. So far, private donations totalling over \$6 million have been made.

This is a remarkable figure as, unlike its oil-rich Gulf neighbours, Yemen is one of the world's poorest Least Developed Countries (LDC), with per capita annual income at just \$510, according to the World Bank.

Yemen's president, Ali Abdullah

Saleh, was deeply moved by the natural disaster affecting South East Asia and was one of the first Arab leaders to announce that the people should contribute to the relief effort. On 10 January a presidential order announced that everyone should donate a day's salary. This was followed on 13


January by a live TV campaign.

Khaled Afif, general manager of the Federation of Yemen Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which coordinated the fund-raising campaign with the government, explained to IRIN that "the day's salary donation was mandatory in the public sector but the private sector also reacted positively".

For example, one of the largest donors was the Hayel Saeed Anam

Group, which raised funds from its employees totalling \$322,580. However, many other donations were anonymous, in line with the tenets of Islam.

Afif told IRIN that the total was likely to reach \$9,140,000. He expects the money raised to be given to the UN. He stressed the need to "concentrate on early warning systems, especially as Yemen and the Red Sea are in an earthquake region".



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Former U.S. president Bill Clinton chats with a book buyer as he autographs his autobiography at a bookstore in Hong Kong Feb. 22. Clinton is in Hong Kong after a whirlwind tour of tsunami-affected nations in the Indian Ocean with former U.S. President George Bush to lead U.S. fund-raising for tsunami relief. REUTERS



A Sri Lankan fisherman stands on a barrel to repaint a tsunami damaged boat at Beruwala in southern Sri Lanka on Feb. 22. Life of fishermen in Sri Lanka's coastal area is nearly back to normal after weeks of disruption following the Dec. 26 tsunami. REUTERS

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